

= THE BATTLE OF BAY RIDGE, P4 =

THE INDYPENDENT

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RESCUERS, P12**

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AFTER CHARLOTTESVILLE

**HOW TO FIGHT THE FAR RIGHT
MIKE BEN ZEV, LINDA MARTIN ALCOFF &
NICHOLAS POWERS, P10**

One protester comforts another on Aug. 12.



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

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
Peter Rugh

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Ellen Davidson, Alina
Mogilyanskaya, Nicholas
Powers, Steven Wishnia

ILLUSTRATION DIRECTOR:
Frank Reynoso

DESIGN DIRECTOR:
Mikael Tarkela

DESIGNERS:
Steven Arnerich, Anna Gold

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:
Elia Gran

INTERN:
Cole Boyd

GENERAL INQUIRIES:
contact@indypendent.org

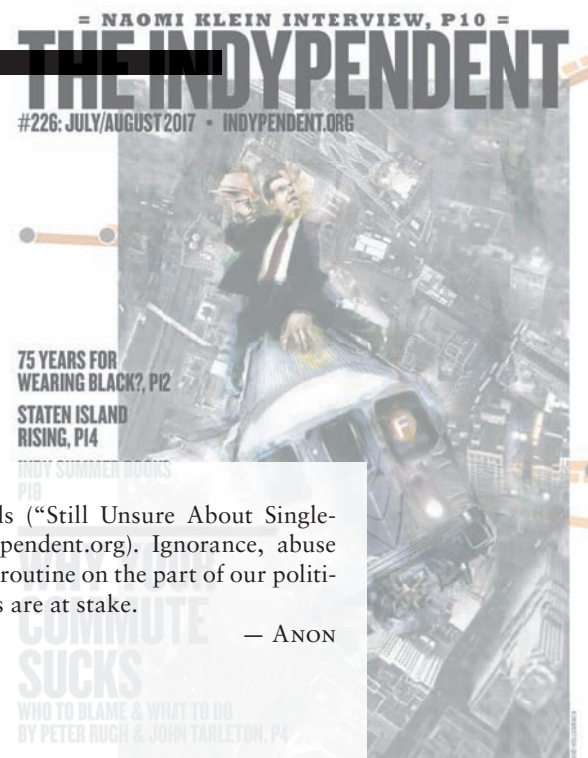
SUBMISSIONS & NEWS TIPS:
submissions@indypendent.org

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION:
ads@indypendent.org

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS:
Sam Alcott, Linda Martín
Alcott, Gino Barzizza, Bennett
Baumer, José Carmona,
Leia Doran, Renée Feltz,
Lynne Foster, Priscilla
Grim, Lauren Kaori Gurley,
David Hollenbach, Gena
Hymowech, Dondi J, Colin
Kinniburgh, Gary Martin,
Erik McGregor, Mike
Newton, Astha Rajvanshi,
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Amy Wolf.

VOLUNTEER DISTRIBUTORS:
Arun Aguiar, Eric Brelsford,
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READER'S VOICE



THE F-YOU TRAIN

The ABCs of Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Metropolitan Transit Authority: Authoritarianism, bureaucracy, corruption (“Why Your Commute Sucks,” July *Indypendent*). Mismanagement, underinvestment and waste are rampant as well. They better get their act together.

— PEDRO RIVERA JR.

THE GREEN LINE

As Howie Hawkins' gubernatorial running mate on the Green Party ticket in 2010, our campaign regularly targeted Gov. Cuomo and the Democrats for their continuing role in using the MTA as a cash machine (“Why Your Commute Sucks” July *Indypendent*). Radicals and revolutionaries need to take every opportunity to not only point out bad behavior by individual Dems but call out the Democratic Party itself for selling out the working class. Leaving left, independent and Green Party candidates and spokespeople out of the narrative leaves out a big part of the real resistance.

— GLORIA MATTERA

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Staten Island is the whitest of all New York boroughs and incomes are higher than average there too (“Building Resistance on Trump Island,” July *Indypendent*). Them giving Donald Trump such a substantial portion of their vote is not at all surprising.

— CLEM

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Staten Island is a different country (“Building Resistance on Trump Island,” July *Indypendent*).

— STEVIE A.

SHAPING UP

We have some heavy lifting to do (“Will the Democratic Party Open its Doors ... ?” *indypendent.org*). Most of us old-time rank-and-file Democrats would welcome some new blood and fresh ideas. A number of us remain devotees to New Deal and Great Society policies. Let's regain those programs of the people and go forward together.

— RICHARD AUSTIN

ROUTINE OPERATIONS

People in this country must ignore all the phony wedge issue, divide-and-conquer tactics, and come together to demand their needs be addressed first and foremost by their

elected government officials (“Still Unsure About Single-Payer Health Care?” *indypendent.org*). Ignorance, abuse and greed have become too routine on the part of our political leadership. People's lives are at stake.

— ANON

BLAME THE VICTIM

I am certainly not advocating treating prisoners like animals (“From Solitary to Shackles on NYC's Rikers Island,” *indypendent.org*). However, I think we are starting to move too far in opposite direction with prisoner rights. I am sorry, but I don't give a crap about whether solitary confinement or restraint desks seem cruel or emotionally damaging to prisoners. A lot of these prisoner rights groups are defending prisoners that would kill them for a pack of cigarettes and not even think twice about it. If the prisoners don't like solitary confinement or restraint desks there is a very simple solution: Don't be so violent and unruly to get yourself put in solitary confinement or restraint desks.

— ROBERT K.

DAMNED IF YOU DO

Al Gore is proposing a step in the right direction from what we are doing now and what Trump and Republicans have planned (“Al Gore's Convenient Infomercial for Green Capitalism,” *indypendent.org* and page 15). In either case, humanity is doomed from its own hubris.

— RUDY MCCORMACK

A DANGEROUS MOONLIGHT

In the 1941 British film, *Dangerous Moonlight* (*Suicide Squadron* upon its U.S. release), a Polish composer, now a fighter pilot, takes part in the struggle against the 1939 German invasion of his country.

As a composer, he writes the *Warsaw Concerto*, a romantic-heroic piece which became renowned both in the film itself and in real life as a symbol of the resistance to the Nazis.

Is there an equivalent today to the composer-fighter pilot's combined bravery and creativity?

What might that be? The dilemmas of our era seem unresolvable.

The wars must end.

— DONALD PANETH

COMMENT ON THE NEWS AT INDYPENDENT.ORG.

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INDY AUDIO & INDYSTRUCTIBLE
AT INDYPENDENT.ORG/SECTION/PODCASTS.

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FRANCIS D'AM

THRU SUN SEP 3

TIMES VARY • \$25 ADULTS, \$17 SENIORS, \$12 STUDENTS (SUGGESTED)
EXHIBITION: THE BODY POLITIC: VIDEO FROM THE MET COLLECTION
 Historically, the phrase "body politic" is used to describe a community comprising disparate individuals. Today, the phrase can also connote the politics of the body, how individual bodies not only suffer political violence but also wield political authority, especially in terms of their race, ethnicity, class and gender. Each of these meanings is relevant to the video works featured in "The Body Politic." Visit metmuseum.org for hours.
 Metropolitan Museum of Art
 1000 Fifth Ave.

THRU SUN SEP 17

TIMES VARY • FREE
PERFORMANCE: CHECKS & BALANCES AND BOTTOMS UP
 Theater for the New City is taking its production of *Checks and Balances and Bottoms Up* to parks across the city. This operetta for the street pairs a Catholic school girl and a subway conductor against a monster puppet as they fight for the health and safety of all New Yorkers, the civil rights of America and, finally, the future of our planet. Visit theaterforthenewcity.net for locations and showtimes or call (212) 254-1109.

THRU SUN OCT 22

TIMES VARY • FREE
EXHIBITION: IVAN VELEZ: BRONX HAIKU
 Bronx-born Puerto Rican cartoonist and educator Ivan Velez exhibits a series of drawings related to comics and activism spanning his 30-year career. From his groundbreaking work on LGBTQ youth issues during the AIDS crisis to his subversive writings for DC Comics and Marvel, this exhibition offers an engaging survey of Velez's mission to affect change and to diversify an art form that plays an indelible role in American popular culture. See bronxmuseum.org for hours.
 The Bronx Museum of the Arts
 1040 Grand Concourse

FRI AUG 23

11PM • \$5 ONLINE, \$10 AT DOOR PARTY: VIBRAS NYC: ISSA FÊTE!
 If you mixed together the carnivals from the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa in one room you'd

get Vibras NYC: Issa Fête! Pure dancehall, soca, afrobeats, champeta, reggaeton, calypso, baile funk and more. Prepare to dance, prepare to sweat, prepare to fête. Tickets available in advance at vibrasnycfete.splashthat.com.
 Starr Bar
 214 Starr St.

SAT AUG 26—SUN AUG 27

10AM—4PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: KIDS FOOD FEST
 Kids will learn about the importance of achieving a balanced diet through fun activities and food samplings. Appetites of all ages will be satisfied. Hands on cooking lessons available for \$25. More info at kidsfoodfestival.com.
 The Oculus at Westfield World Trade Center
 185 Greenwich St.

SUN AUG 27

7PM • \$10
PERFORMANCE: YIDDISH FOLK SONGS FOR WOMEN
 French violinist and singer Eleonore Biezunski has been exploring Yiddish musical traditions of the old and new world for quite some time — both as a musician and as an archivist. Together with Lauren Brody (vocals, accordion) and Joanna Sternberg (vocals, double bass), she will explore the "yerushe," the heritage of women's Yiddish folk songs, orally transmitted to her or preserved with great care and love by folklorists such as Ruth Rubin.
 Barbès
 376 9th St.

THU AUG 31

7PM—9:30PM • FREE
WORKSHOP: MAKE YOUR OWN ZINE WITH TIGER BOMB MAGAZINE
Tiger Bomb Magazine is an international teen magazine that highlights youth activism, culture influencers, zines, art and literature. This event includes an overview of zine culture, followed by a lesson in making zines and a tutorial on using social media to promote self-published work.
 Bluestockings Bookstore
 172 Allen St.

MON SEP 4

11AM • FREE
PARADE: WEST INDIAN DAY PARADE
 More than a million spectators turn out annually to bump it to reggae and calypso, chow down jerk

chicken and fried plantains and admire the revelers in elaborate costumes at this annual celebration of New York City's Caribbean culture. The parade stretches from Schenectady Avenue to Grand Army Plaza on Eastern Parkway and then continues down Flatbush.

THU SEP 7

7PM—9PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: RECLAIMING GOTHAM
Democracy Now!'s Juan González launches his latest book, *Reclaiming Gotham: Bill de Blasio and the Movement to End America's Tale of Two Cities* with a public talk followed by an onstage conversation with New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, moderated by Amy Goodman.
 Alvin Johnson/J.M. Kaplan Hall, The New School
 66 W 12th St.

THU SEP 7

8PM • \$20
MUSIC: KEVIN MORBY
 He's the Walt Whitman of contemporary rock n' roll. Check him out with Shannon Lay.
 Music Hall of Williamsburg
 66 N 6th St.

FRI SEP 8

7:30PM • \$10 SUGGESTED DONATION
PERFORMANCE: ENCHANTED FORMOSA
 Enchanted Formosa travels across 100 years of Taiwanese history, from the Qing imperial era, to the Japanese colonial decades, to the current republic. With songs from indigenous tribes, Hoklo groups and Hakka villages, singer-songwriter Yu-Wei Hsieh and his band perform a repertoire that combines folk, pop, and rock.
 Flushing Town Hall
 137-35 Northern Blvd.

SAT SEP 9

10:15PM—11:30PM • \$15
COMEDY: JANEANE GAROFALO
 The actress, comedian and political commentator headlines the line-up at this event, part of the Cinderblock Comedy Fest taking place throughout Brooklyn from Sept. 8 to Sept. 10. Tickets and more info available at cinderblock-comedyfestival.com.
 Bar Matchless
 557 Manhattan Ave.

SUN SEP 10

1PM—4PM • \$30
CLASS: FEMINIST ART CLUB
 Why is there an enormous triangular table at the Brooklyn Museum covered with genitalia-shaped dinner plates? Why was that Intro to Art History course you took in undergrad all about white men from Europe? How are art and feminism related and what does it even mean for an artist to be feminist? Art educator Stefanie Lewin explores these questions and more. Register at brooklyn-brainery.com.
 Brainery Annex
 1233 Prospect Ave.

SUN SEP 10

1PM—5PM • FREE
MUSIC: THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK FOLK FESTIVAL
 Now its seventh year and set in the birthplace of the '60s folk renaissance, this festival features string bands, Blues, traditional Turkish and Balkan music and rounds out with a good, old-fashioned square dance.
 Washington Square Park

WED SEP 14

7PM—9PM • BY DONATION
READING: TELL ME HOW IT ENDS
 Essayist Valeria Luiselli reads from her acclaimed book, *Tell Me How it Ends; an Essay in 40 Questions*, which examines the plight of migrant children arriving in the United States from Mexico and Central America. All donations support the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York City.
 Judson Memorial Church
 55 Washington Sq. S

SAT SEP 16

2PM • SLIDING SCALE \$6—\$15
LECTURE: DAS CAPITAL & REVOLUTION
 Kevin Anderson of the University of California, Santa Barbara reconnects Karl Marx the revolutionary with Marx the social theorist in his analysis of this seminal 19th-Century text. Anderson is the author of several books, including *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*.
 Marxist Education Project at Brooklyn Commons
 388 Atlantic Ave.



COURTESY OF NEW PRESS

LIGHT AS A FEATHER: Don't miss the carnival in Brooklyn at the West Indian Day Parade on Sept. 4.

EQUALITY NOW: Veteran reporter Juan González presents his new book on our divided city.

MAN VS. MACHINE

PALESTINIAN-BORN DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST KHADER EL-YATEEM WANTS TO BE THE FIRST ARAB AMERICAN ELECTED TO CITY COUNCIL. THERE'S JUST ONE PROBLEM: THE ENTIRETY OF THE DEMOCRATIC ESTABLISHMENT STANDS IN HIS WAY.

BY PETER RUGH

It's a summer Sunday morning in Brooklyn's Bay Ridge, and services are in full swing at Salam Arabic Lutheran Church at the corner of 80th Street and Fourth Avenue. There are candles burning, statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mother, Byzantine-esque placards displaying the Stations of the Cross. Light pours in through the stained-glass windows, shining on thick billows of incense.

This might seem like a funny place to find a socialist, but there's at least one here. He's handing out communion to the 30 or so parishioners taking turns kneeling at the altar. A few minutes previously, he read from Matthew 13, where Jesus tells his followers "pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat." The subsequent sermon, along with most of the service, was in Arabic, but Khader El-Yateem later explained to me that he used the passage as a metaphor for the Syrian refugee crisis.

El-Yateem, who founded the church 20 years ago, insists that welcoming the refugees is the Christian thing to do. That's a radical proposition to some in Bay Ridge, a neighborhood that was once a bastion for white-ethnic Catholics and is now home to a growing Arab population.

The Lutheran minister is one candidate in a crowded field running in the Sept. 12 Democratic primary to succeed City Councilmember Vincent Gentile, whose term expires this year. El-Yateem's main opponent is Justin Brannan, Gentile's director of communications and legislative affairs. Also in the race: Kevin Pete Carroll, an aide to Councilmember Stephen Levin of Brooklyn Heights-Williamsburg, and Democratic State Committeewoman Nancy Tong. Three Republicans are also in the contest in the 43rd District, which includes Bay Ridge, Fort Hamilton and parts of Dyker Heights and Bath Beach — all historically among the city's more GOP-friendly areas.

Six weeks before the primary, El-Yateem has a very different scene waiting for him once he leaves the church he helped found two decades ago. His storefront campaign headquarters a few blocks away buzzes with volunteers making phone calls to potential voters on behalf of "Father K," as they fondly refer to him. The walls surrounding them feature maps of Bay Ridge and a big piece of butcher paper reading, "These volunteers have put people before money in politics," cluttered with signatures. Dunkin' Donuts detritus mingles with printouts of voter-registration data on desks and tables. The campaign ought to be sponsored by the coffee chain, a young volunteer jokes.

A combination of energized youth, white working-class voters and minority communities — Arab Americans chief among them — helped Bernie Sanders carry Bay Ridge during last year's Democratic presidential primary when much of the city went strongly for Hillary Clinton. El-Yateem is hoping a similar coalition will give him the Democratic nomination on Sept. 12, and with it, the inside track on winning the seat in the November general election.

Linda Sarsour, a Palestinian leader from Bay Ridge who has risen to national prominence, has endorsed El-Yateem. "We were never outnumbered, we were

just out-organized," she told attendees at the People's Summit in Chicago this summer, where activists working to continue Sanders' mission of pushing the Democratic Party leftward gathered. Sarsour called for building "a political revolution that centers the most marginalized communities among us."

El-Yateem's council drive is an early test of such a strategy. All citywide offices and all 51 seats on the council are up for election this year. Yet the 43rd District is one of the few where an insurgent candidate is running strong against a Democratic Party favorite, in part because El-Yateem has raised over \$100,000 while refusing to take money from the real-estate industry and similar special-interest groups. Along with the citywide housing crisis spurred by hyper-gentrification, illegal home conversions are a hot topic in Bay Ridge. The practice of turning the neighborhood's two- and three-story houses into multi-unit residences is on the rise, forcing tenants, many of whom are undocumented, to live in cramped, unsafe conditions.

"I'm going to fight the greedy landlords, fight the developers who are taking over our neighborhood, fight for affordable housing," El-Yateem says, speaking in an alley outside his campaign headquarters, away from the commotion — a spot his campaign manager, Kayla Santosuosso, jokingly calls "our second office."

Much of the money that has come into El-Yateem's campaign is from the neighborhood's Arab community, where the pastor has deep roots. He has served on the local community board for 12 years, and is also on the board of the Arab American Association. Many in Bay Ridge trust him to fight for immigrant rights, and are excited that he might be the first Arab American elected to the council. Voting rights for pre-citizens and an end to broken-windows policing, which can bring the undocumented to the attention of immigration agents, are among the causes El-Yateem has championed in his campaign.

Exactly how many Arabs live in Bay Ridge is tricky to determine, because "Middle East" falls under the category of white on U.S. Census forms, but it is common to see Arabic lettering above the butcher shops, cafes and groceries in the neighborhood.

"Bay Ridge has a heavily Italian, Irish, Greek and German voting-age citizen population but it has a rapidly growing Arabic-speaking population too," says John Mollenkopf, who directs the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center. Citing the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, conducted between 2011 and 2015, he noted that just 5.7 percent of voting-age citizens in Bay Ridge speak Arabic at home: "Bottom line, Rev. El-Yateem is going to have a hard time winning the nomination."

Mollenkopf, however, also says it's possible that Kevin Pete Carroll, an Irish-American, could divide the white ethnic vote with Justin Brannan, who is of Italian descent.

ENTHUSIASTIC ALLIES

El-Yateem has another ace up his sleeve, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a once small socialist grouping that since its involvement with Sanders counts 25,000 members nationally, at least 2000 of whom reside in New York City. He's one of two council candidates the group has endorsed this year; the other is Jabari Brisport, an upstart tenants-rights advocate running on the Green Party ticket in the 35th District, which includes Prospect Heights and Bed-Stuy.

In Bay Ridge, DSA has sent dozens of volunteers out weekly to canvass on El-Yateem's behalf. The group looked for candidates and campaigns that would help it advance its socialist message and grow roots in communities where it has been absent, says Tascha Van Auken, a member of its New York electoral working group. El-Yateem, who supported Sanders and joined DSA after Trump's election, fit the bill.

"He's the only candidate in this race who is not taking money from developers," she says. "I don't understand why anyone would be supporting Democrats who call themselves progressive and are taking money from developers. That seems like an obvious line we can draw."

Justin Brannan has been endorsed by Public Advocate Letitia James, the Working Families Party, and unions including Transport Workers Union Local 100, Service Employees International Local 1199,

WILL A NEIGHBORHOOD THAT VOTED FOR BERNIE SANDERS LAST YEAR VOTE FOR ANOTHER POLITICAL OUTSIDER THIS YEAR?

and Communications Workers of America District 1, as well as Councilmember Gentile. He too has raised more than \$100,000.

Brannan also portrays himself as an outsider, highlighting the AIDS and animal-welfare activism of his youth and his salad days as a punk-rock musician. He played guitar with the straight-edge hardcore band Indecision throughout the '90s and early 2000s, and describes sleeping in squat houses and performing in veterans' halls. He performed as recently as last year with the Indecision off-shoot, Most Precious Blood, and is still listed on the band's Facebook page as a member.

"I think it's adorable if anyone thinks I'm 'the establishment candidate,'" he said. "That's really precious."

Brannan's life has taken a more middle-of-the-road turn of late, however. He worked for Bear Stearns until the investment firm went under in the 2008 financial crash it helped spawn. He then took a job working for Gentile.





PETER RUGH

“I’m an outsider that decided I could effect change from the inside out,” Brannan explained.

IS DE BLASIO PLAYING FAVORITES?

Kayla Santosuosso is frustrated that more unions haven’t gotten behind El-Yateem. “I feel like we’re running a campaign against the mayor of the City of New York,” she said, explaining later in an email that Bill de Blasio’s director of intergovernmental affairs, Emma Wolfe, was apparently whipping labor behind the scenes to back Brannan. Wolfe failed to respond to requests for comment. Neither City Hall’s press team or de Blasio’s campaign responded to inquiries either.

Brannan denies anyone from the mayor’s office is advocating on his behalf and says the endorsements he has received are the result of the relationships he has built up over the years. The money he has raised for his campaign, he says, speaks to the roots he has in the community.

“I’m not taking money from anyone I don’t have an existing relationship with,” he says. “That money is not coming from developers.”

A look under the hood at Brannan’s campaign filings shows that some real-estate money has crept in. Sal Raziano, a senior realtor at Casandra Properties, gave Brannan \$2,000. James Vavas, operator of Vavas Insurance and Financial Services, which provides commercial property insurance, chipped in \$1,000. Anthony Constantinople of Constantinople & Vallone, and Samara Daly of DalyGonzalez offered smaller amounts. Constantinople & Vallone is a consultancy whose clients include the Trump Soho Hotel, TD Bank, TMobile, and the private prison company Geo Group. Daly’s clients include Hudson Companies Incorporated, The Durst Organization and BFC Partners, the company behind the recent attempt to redevelop the Bedford-Union Armory into luxury high-rises.

When asked about these donations in an interview on Aug. 9, a member of Brannan’s staff asked me to move the conversation in a different direction.

PALESTINIAN ROOTS

New York’s Democratic machine, composed of elected officials and the unions and advocacy groups who depend on having the politicians’ ear, appears to be operating under its

usual quid-pro-quo guiding principle, backing Gentile’s anointed successor. But a rising minority group in Bay Ridge is challenging that, trying to win a place of its own in city government.

“People are angry; people are alienated in this neighborhood,” El-Yateem says. “They see the Democrats here are not doing anything to change that. We have a lot of Democratic clubs. It’s the same people that look the same way. They’re not doing anything to represent the people of color who are outside of their cliques. The neighborhood is changing and it is changing rapidly. The status quo has to wake up and realize you cannot be in office forever. The people that are here are getting engaged and organized.”

El-Yateem was born and raised in Bethlehem, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. That experience led him to cross another red line in American politics. In addition to his vocal support for socialism, he backs the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which seeks to apply economic pressure on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian lands. DSA endorsed the boycott at its national convention in Chicago in early August.

“My movements were always controlled,” El-Yateem says of his childhood. “I was not able to play outside my house after dark. My mother would send me to school and not know if I would come home or not.” When he visits his birthplace, Israel does not recognize his U.S. citizenship and insists that he travel with Palestinian documents. “You cannot choose issues of justice that are convenient to you, that only serve your political career,” he says. “When you are committed to justice you have to be committed all the way.”

Last year, the City Council passed a resolution condemning the BDS movement as anti-Semitic. It echoed an executive order signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo a few months earlier to have the state boycott companies and institutions that boycott Israel. The law created a public blacklist of BDS-related organizations available on the state’s Office of General Services website.

“I strongly oppose the BDS movement that at its core seeks to delegitimize the state of Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state,” Brannan says. “Israel is a vital U.S. ally and the only democracy in the Middle East. And, frankly, BDS is counter to the inclusiveness and tolerance that we value in this district.”

El-Yateem’s Palestinian heritage and his socialist affiliation have become a rallying cry

MELINE GHARIBYAN
JUSTIN2017.COM

PETER RUGH

FROM BELOW AND TO THE LEFT: Khader El-Yateem says he was inspired by the Sanders campaign to take on the status quo.

OUTSIDER/INSIDER: Democratic Party machine favorite Justin Brannan shredding it with his old bandmates in Most Precious Blood (left) and smiling in a campaign promotional photo on a Brooklyn stoop.

SHAKING ON IT: El-Yateem says power won’t change him. “You don’t have to hold me accountable,” he tells voters. “I will hold you accountable.”

Continued on page 7

REVOLUTION IS ON THE BALLOT AGAIN

THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA PLANT THEIR FEET IN THE WORLD

BY DANIEL MORAFF

Of the 1,000 delegates, volunteers and staff at the recent national convention of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) — an organization of over 25,000 thousand dues-paying socialists — one would be hard-pressed to find 50 opposed to electoral politics. On display at the convention was a broad consensus that electoral politics had a key role to play in the U.S. socialist movement.

The question of whether or not to run candidates in Democratic primaries was hardly a question. A resolution to “Draft Bernie for a People’s Party” was overwhelmingly voted down. The national organization has endorsed six candidates currently running in 2017, three of whom are running as Democrats (including New York’s Khader El-Yateem), two of whom are running in nonpartisan races and one of whom is a Green (Jabari Brisport, also of New York). The list of DSA members in office is growing; most of them are Democrats. None of this is particularly controversial.

The explosive growth of DSA, which remains committed to supporting candidates running as Democrats, is an extraordinary and very hopeful development for the U.S. left.

• • •

ONCE UPON A TIME, revolutionaries were a fixture of American electoral politics. The 1860s and 1870s saw a wave of left-wing black abolitionists elected to federal, state and local offices. The Populists of the 1890s railed against industry and capital; they elected governors and senators. The Socialist Party followed suit in the 1900s and 1910s. A slate of candidates in California ran in the 1930s on a platform of converting private industry to worker cooperatives, instituting a massive income tax and transitioning California toward a socialist economy. They swept races across the state, utterly transforming California’s politics, and they did so through the Democratic primary. Huge victories around wages, labor protections and rent control can be traced directly to the victories of these movements and, critically, their electoral arms. Like the modern DSA, they were committed to organizing everywhere — in the workplace, in schools, where people live. Like the modern DSA, they unapologetically pursued electoral politics.

This tradition withered. Many of those participating in the uprisings of the ’60s and early ’70s declared themselves fervently opposed to electoral politics, and scorned those who sought to run in the Democratic Party. Some radicals forsook elections altogether, as did foundation-backed organizers inspired by Saul Alinsky. The hopes of those seeking to “realign” the Democratic Party were dashed, their coalition shattered by the AFL-CIO-backed Vietnam War.

Between then and the Sanders campaign, there were three significant electoral moments on a nationwide scale on the American left:

- *Ralph Nader’s run for president in 2000 ignited huge rallies and a grassroots groundswell. Sadly,*

by running as a Green Party candidate, he doomed his campaign from the beginning and finished with under 3 percent of the vote.

- *A broad coalition of unions formed the Labor Party in 1996, which promptly discovered that third-party runs are a dead end in the vast majority of American elections. Within 10 years, the party was gone.*
- *Jesse Jackson’s runs for president in 1984 and 1988 spawned large mobilizations and built promising multiracial coalitions across the country. Instead of producing any sort of democratic organization, it produced a publicity mill for Jackson, who promptly ran the coalition into the ground.*

This points to an obvious question: what if someone were to do what Jackson did, but do it better? What if they spawned not a personal machine, but instead incited massive growth of a bottom-up, democratic organization? What if this organization was openly socialist? What if this organization was part of a broad progressive coalition that sought to merge social movements with radical electoral politics? And what if the organization got over the left’s hang-ups about the Democratic ballot line? What would happen then?

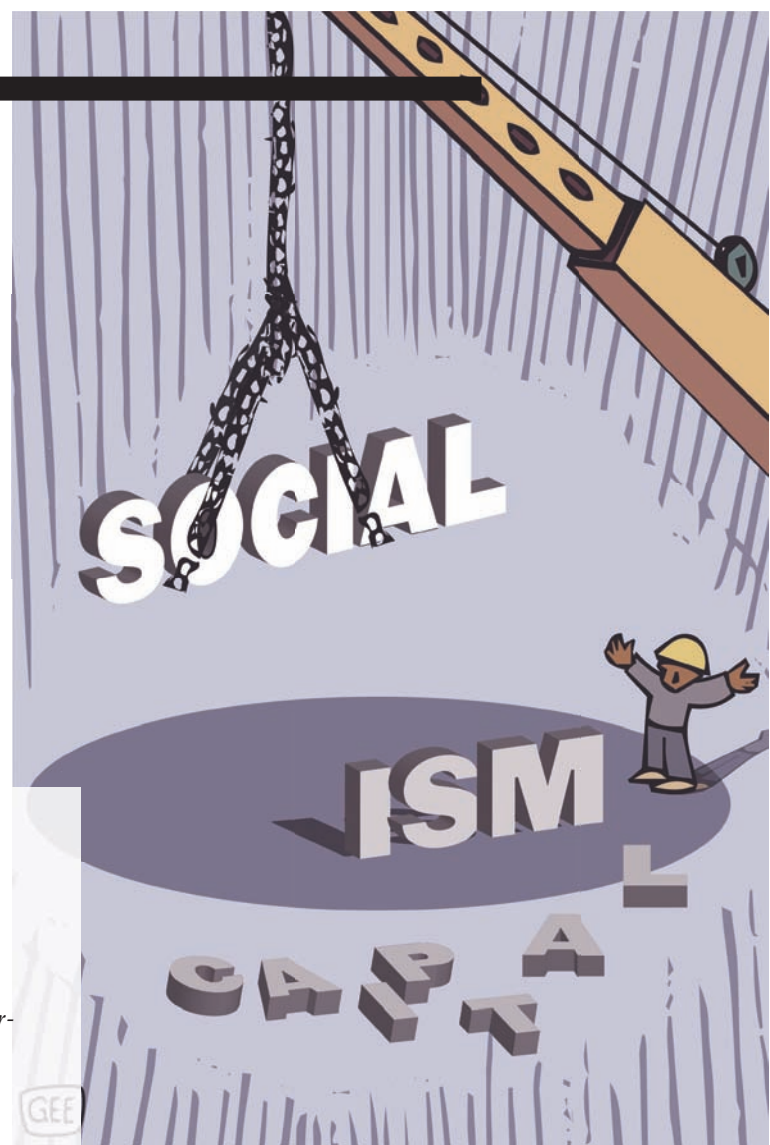
It is a critical question — and in the wake of the Sanders campaign, DSA is part of a broad coalition on the left that is going to answer it.

Many socialist organizations — Socialist Alternative, the International Socialist Organization, Solidarity — condemned Sanders’ decision to run as a Democrat. DSA, which has always advocated a strategic orientation toward the Democratic line, supported Sanders’ strategy from the beginning. In doing so, DSA recognized a fundamental truth in American politics: it is virtually impossible to win almost any major election on a third-party line. If we want to gain the support of a large number of working-class voters, we will find them in the Democratic primary.

The organization has been proven right. Its membership has tripled in the past year. Its longtime members, who toiled in relative obscurity for decades, have been vindicated. Elections are a useful tactic for the left. We can run candidates as socialists and win. We must be willing to use the Democratic primary if we want to get anywhere.

For too long, the pursuit of revolution and the pursuit of practical electoral politics have been separated. This has robbed progressive electoral politics of critical energy and leadership, and it has robbed the left of realistic paths to power. The Sanders campaign and the rise of DSA represent a small but critical step.

Daniel Moraff is a member of the National Electoral Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he is managing an (independent) judicial campaign.



GARY MARTIN

MAN VS. MACHINE

Continued from page 5

for Republican hopeful Bob Capano, a virulent Trump supporter and owner of a Gristedes supermarket on the Upper East Side. He has referred to the pastor as a “cleric” and “radical leftist.” Internet death threats directed at El-Yateem have followed. One person expressed a desire to crush El-Yateem’s skull.

“There are some things I can tolerate because I’m a big boy,” says El-Yateem, who is a father of four. “But when it comes down to people saying they want to put my head in a vice, that becomes a threat. I have my children at home. They have access to social media. They read things and they are living in fear. They are terrified, hearing that people want to kill me.”

Despite the threats against him and the challenges El-Yateem is facing taking on the city’s political machine, he is affable and self-effacing, criticizing his opponents’ politics without a grimace. Walking door-to-door along Bay Ridge Avenue and its surrounding streets, he bows to greet every dog that barks in his direction, especially the small yelpy ones. (El-Yateem, who is over six feet tall, is the proud owner of a Yorkie.) When the dogs’ humans meet him, their cynicism melts into optimism, and suspicion gives way to encouragement.

“What are you doing? Don’t you know this is Trump territory?” a white woman at one door greets him half-jokingly. The Trump-Pence ticket won 35 percent of the vote in Bay Ridge last November, and carried Dyker Heights. By the time she finished speaking with El-Yateem, however, the woman was asking where his campaign office was located so she and her family could come and volunteer.

At an Arab-run grocery store, the proprietor chastised El-Yateem for missing his daughter’s wedding. “My mother-in-law was in the hospital,” he pleaded. He was forgiven.

One middle-aged white guy sporting a gray moustache looked at El-Yateem’s flier cross-eyed from his doorstep. The candidate was drawing on a list of registered Democrats, but the man was clearly disgruntled with the state of city politics. “Nothing is getting done with one party running this town,” he said with a sigh.

After learning that El-Yateem was campaigning to take on the Democratic establishment, the man lightened up. “I’ll look this over,” he said, tapping the flier against his palm. It was by no means a vote clearly won, yet it showed El-Yateem’s potential support. After all, dissatisfaction with politics — particularly along economic lines — was a key reason

voters turned to both Trump and Sanders in the last election.

Progressive insurgents successfully shook up the City Council in 2009, when a slate of Working Families Party-backed candidates rode a wave of voter resentment over the council’s decision to enable Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s bid for a third term. Four entrenched incumbents were given the boot. Among the newcomers voted in were Jumaane Williams in Flatbush and Canarsie and Margaret Chin in Manhattan’s Chinatown. While Williams has remained a staunch progressive voice since taking office, Chin, a one-time Maoist who surfed in on the same Working Families slate, has come under fire from anti-gentrification activists for encouraging high-rise construction in her district.

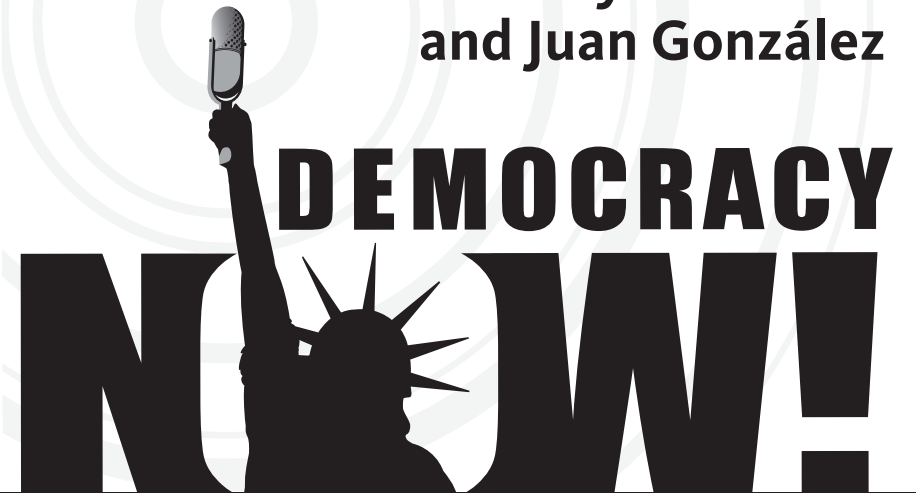
“I didn’t go to seminary school to be a politician,” El-Yateem says, insisting power won’t change him. “I’m not accountable to a political machine. I’m accountable only to the people who live here, to my family and to my neighbors. I’ve been telling members of the progressive movement, people that have been opposing Trump, ‘You don’t have to hold me accountable. I will hold you accountable, if you aren’t getting the job done.’”

But first, the movement will have to put El-Yateem in office and show that the enthusiasm that made Sanders a contender nationally is applicable on a local level.

The mini-purge of 2009 didn’t change the City Council much, but it did light a flame under complacent incumbents, who began to worry they might be vulnerable. If the coalition of Arab Americans, young socialists and disaffected members of the working class — many of whom, in Bay Ridge, are white — that El-Yateem is building propels him to office, it could push the council further leftward and set the stage for more socialist gains in 2021.

DSA is seeking to build power through “hard grassroots work,” Tascha Van Auken says: knocking on doors, making phone calls, building democratic organizing structures. It’s operating separately from El-Yateem’s official campaign, she adds, which will enable it to maintain its contacts after the primary, no matter what the outcome.

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ELECTRIC ARCHES



EVE L. EWING

TENANTS CATCH A BREAK

CITY COUNCIL PASSES BILLS AGAINST “CONSTRUCTION AS HARASSMENT”

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

The City Council on Aug. 9 overwhelmingly passed 11 bills of a 12-measure package intended to curb “construction as harassment,” the practice of landlords trying to drive tenants out by using demolition and renovation to create noxious conditions.

The bills “are going to keep both rent-stabilized and unregulated tenants in their homes” and show that the city is “not tolerating unsafe practices,” says Andrea Shapiro of the Metropolitan Council on Housing.

The 12 bills were first introduced nearly two years ago as part of a package promoted by Stand for Tenant Safety, a coalition of more than 20 housing, neighborhood and legal-services organizations. The council also passed five other bills intended to help tenants fight harassment, making it easier to prove harassment and preventing landlords from visiting or contacting tenants at odd hours without their consent.

“For too long, landlords have wielded construction like a weapon against tenants,” said Marika Dias, director of the Tenant Rights Coalition at Legal Services NYC. “By strengthening our tenant harassment laws and Department of Buildings protections for tenants, while also increasing penalties and enforcement against landlords who refuse to respect tenants’ rights, these laws give tenants multiple new ways to fight back.”

“Construction as harassment” involves the demolition and renovation of vacant apartments in a manner intended to “make life miserable for the tenants they’re trying to move out,” explains Kerri White, director of organizing and policy at the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board. It’s a “double bonus” for unscrupulous landlords, because they can add the cost of the renovations to the rent on vacant apartments, and if any tenants move out after their ceiling collapses or they spend a month without cooking gas, the owner can renovate their apartments and charge more.

The practice emerged after the state weakened the rent-stabilization laws in 1997 to let landlords deregulate rent-stabilized apartments if the rent is high enough. It has become widespread over the last decade. Steven Croman, who combined maximum-nuisance construction with trumped-up eviction lawsuits and aggressive demands that tenants leave, became the poster child for it before he pleaded guilty to fraud charges in June, but it has proven a highly profitable business model for East Village/Lower East Side building-flippers such as Ben Shaoul. It has also spread to gentrifying neighborhoods such as Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bushwick and Ridgewood.

The 11 bills passed take on various aspects of the problem. Two will increase fines for violating a stop-work order or doing construction work without a permit. Others will enable the city to put liens on buildings that owe significant amounts of fines and have the Department of Buildings withhold permits for major work from owners who owe more than \$25,000 in unpaid fines. One will require that the occupancy status of any building where a permit has been issued be posted on both the department’s website and on-site permits, to make it harder for landlords to get away with claiming that the building is unoccupied. Others beef up current rules for tenant-protection plans.

The measures are important, says White, because they enable the Department of Buildings to address problems it was not prepared to deal with in the past, to enforce regulations against a “pattern of behavior” instead of just individual violations like continuing construction after a stop-work order has been issued.

“This really comes from a lot of different angles,” says Emily Goldstein, senior organizer at the Association for Neighborhood Housing Development.

One key measure, says Jane Li, a staff attorney at the Urban Justice Center’s Community Development Project, is Intro 918-A, sponsored by Councilmember Margaret Chin (D-Manhattan), which passed 41-1. It will increase the amount of auditing the Department of Buildings has to do on applications for permits, instead of letting landlords hire their own professionals to certify their work. Specifically, the department will have to audit 25 percent of those applications in rent-regulated buildings, affordable-housing projects, or buildings that are being investigated for rent overcharges and go over the documents monthly.

That bill was a “big win,” Li says. The 25-percent figure was arrived at after much negotiation with the Buildings Department, which objected that it didn’t have enough resources to do audits that extensive.

The one bill out of the 12 that did not pass, however, is what Li calls “the crown jewel of our package.” Intro 934, sponsored by Councilmember Stephen Levin (D-Brooklyn), would create a “real-time enforcement unit” that would have to do inspections for complaints about work being done without a permit within two hours after it receives the complaint. It would also have to inspect buildings where a significant amount of construction is being done within five days after work starts, and do periodic unannounced inspections afterwards.

“By the time DOB shows up to check the work that’s going on illegally, often it’s already over,” Julie Bero, Levin’s legislative director, told *Tenant/Inquilino* at a City Hall rally in February. But the department, Li says, objected that it didn’t have the resources to handle that kind of demand. The bill is still being negotiated.

“Real time enforcement is key to getting the Department of Buildings to be able to send inspectors while the illegal construction is happening,” Met Council said in a message to members Aug. 14. “We need to continue advo-

THE PRACTICE EMERGED AFTER THE STATE WEAKENED RENT-STABILIZATION LAWS IN 1997 TO LET LANDLORDS DEREGULATE RENT-STABILIZED APARTMENTS IF THE RENT IS HIGH ENOUGH.

cating and organizing to insure real time enforcement is voted on by the end of the summer.”

Overall, Li says, the passage of these bills “speaks to how tenants across the city have mobilized” to demand a response to “an emerging trend in landlord harassment.”



FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS:

Tenants rally on the steps of City Hall to demand a new set of laws to rein in landlord abuses.



GINNINDYDUNN/ODOR

ELEPHANTS IN DONKEYS' CLOTHING

A new coalition of progressive activists is raising cash to unseat members of the so-called Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), a collection of eight New York State Senators elected as Democrats that caucus with the Republicans. No IDC NY is also circulating a pledge on its website, noidcny.org, where voters can commit to casting their ballots against IDC members in next year's Democratic primaries. Led by Sen. Jeff Klein of the Bronx, additional IDC members in New York City include Marisol Alcantara (Manhattan), Tony Avella (Queens), Jesse Hamilton (Brooklyn), Jose Peralta (Queens) and Diane Savino (Staten Island). IDC has held up numerous pieces of reform legislation in Albany — single-payer health care, tuition aid for undocumented immigrants and a statewide \$15 an hour minimum wage — despite the Democrats holding majorities in both the senate and the State Assembly.

COMMUTER CALAMITY

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and Gov. Andrew Cuomo are touting separate plans to fix the Metropolitan Transit Authority while commuters continue to bear the slings and arrows of a decaying subway system. To tax the rich or auction off branding rights, that is the question facing New Yorkers this month. Bill de Blasio proposed a variation of a plan devised by State Sen. Michael Gianaris (D-Queens) to tax the city's wealthiest in order to pay for subway improvements and subsidize rides for low-income commuters. Cuomo wants to recruit corporations to adopt ailing subway stations. He has also called for imposing tolls on drivers crossing the East River — essentially amounting to a flat tax

on vehicular travel between Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. A similar toll plan, proposed by Gov. David Paterson in 2008, was shot down in the State Assembly and it is unlikely that the millionaire's tax will make much headway either with Republicans, together with self-described "Independent Democrats," wielding power in Albany.

DOWN WITH DIXIE

Confederate monuments are teetering across the United States in the wake of deadly violence that erupted at a white nationalist gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia on Aug. 12. The Congressional Black Caucus has renewed calls for the removal of Confederate tributes from the halls of Congress, two Confederate monuments were taken down following a unanimous vote by the City Council in Baltimore and a plaque honoring Robert E. Lee in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn was taken down. In Durham, North Carolina, police arrested Takiyah Thompson, a North Carolina Central University student who led a crowd as they toppled a Confederate veterans' memorial. A line of sympathizers seeking to turn themselves in for participating in the statue's demise stretched out the door of the Durham sheriff's office and across the street on August 17. While Thompson faces charges of felony rioting members of a white mob filmed beating a black man unconscious with poles in Charlottesville have yet to be arrested or charged with a crime, as The Independent goes to print.

THE WITNESS PROTECTION AGENCY?

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) hasn't been doing much environmental protecting lately but he has been protecting himself. Scott Pruitt has placed the entire floor where his office is located on perpetual lockdown and has insisted on a round-the-clock, armed security detail even while inside the EPA's Washington headquarters. With Pruitt at the helm, the agency has stopped collecting data on greenhouse gas emissions, rescinded clean water regulations and could have its budget slashed by nearly a third at Pruitt's recommendation.

YOU'RE HISTORY: Black Lives Matter activists in Durham, North Carolina celebrate the toppling of a Confederate statue.

DEPORTATIONS ON THE RISE

President Trump's pledge to crackdown on undocumented immigrants appears to be one of the few campaign promises he is making good on. Figures released by the Justice Department in August show 49,983 people received deportation orders between February and July of this year, a 28 percent increase compared with the same timeframe last year. Sixty-six thousand people were detained by immigration officers, an uptick of 40 percent. Approximately 8,000 people were ordered to leave the United States voluntarily. Immigration courts have an estimated backlog of 600,000 plaintiffs. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has warned cities that refuse to cooperate with its deportation drive that they will lose federal funding.

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HOW TO CONFRONT THE RIGHT ... AND WIN

IN DEFENSE OF SELF-DEFENSE

BY MIKE BEN ZEV

I was marching beneath a blue Virginia sky, alongside some 500 antifascists, when it hit me — all of us — all at once. One minute, we were united in song, clapping and chanting our way down Water Street following the eviction of the “alt-right” from the public space formerly known as Robert E. Lee Park. The next minute, we were scattered — some of us shattered — by the force unleashed by the gray Dodge Challenger driven by a white supremacist with a license to kill.

James Alex Fields had been spotted at Emancipation Park earlier in the day, mingling with members of Vanguard America, as young men like him milled about, toting guns, clubs, shields and a variety of flags: the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy, the black-and-blue of Blue Lives Matter, the “national flag of Kekistan” inspired by the battle standard of the Third Reich.

It would take the murder of a young white woman that day to drive the point home: American fascists aren't here for a walk in the park. They aren't out to engage in an exercise in free speech. Ultimately, they are out for power and they are out for territory. Terror can be a potent tactic when other tactics fail (as the Unite the Right rally had done so spectacularly that day).

That day, Fields, like so many of his comrades, was out for blood. Heather Heyer wasn't the movement's first martyr, and she is unlikely to be the last. Since 1990, more than 450 people have been murdered by white supremacists in the United States alone. Across Europe and the former Soviet Union, fascists routinely maim and murder racial, religious and sexual minorities, along with anyone who stands in their way.

When fascist forces are on the march, it is always a matter of life and death for those in the scope of their semiautomatons. In fact, white-nationalist ideology defends, and often demands, the extermination, enslavement and expulsion of entire populations. In this light, the “alt-right's” love affair with General Lee, like its love affair with Adolf Hitler, should come as no surprise.

The question is what, if anything, is to be done when would-be mass murderers are

given free rein to parade about the streets calling for blood. For decades, the liberals' answer has been a simple one: not much. Indeed, liberals and conservatives tend to agree that fascists are best ignored, not confronted. A strategy of confrontation, some argue, does more harm than good, giving the far right free publicity, repelling potential allies, and attracting new recruits.

The problem with the liberal line is twofold. First, it is based on a moral theory and not on the historical experience of fascist violence. At no time has a strategy of non-confrontation served as an effective check on the growth of far-right movements or street gangs. By contrast, antifascist movements with a more confrontational stance have some history of success, as in the cases of those who opposed the British National Party in the '80s, Aryan Nations in the '90s, or Greece's Golden Dawn Party in the 2010s.

Second, the argument against “antifa” rests on the notion that there is no clear and present danger to be confronted—that fascism can't happen here, or now—and that any disruptive action taken by antifascist militants is therefore an overreaction. But the threat is real, and the threat is growing. Since the 2016 election, the far right has been reenergized and emboldened by its friends in the White House—and by the weakness of the opposition. Hate crimes have reached record levels, and rallies like Charlottesville's have drawn record numbers.

The response from the left has failed to keep pace with this growing threat from the right. Deferring to Democrats and donors, left organizations have, with few exceptions, failed to step up to support antifascist organizing, leaving activists at greater risk of getting hurt, or worse. Left and liberal media have laid the blame for the violence at the feet of antifascists, equating the “alt-right” with the so-called “alt-left” (as Trump dubbed us in an August 15 press conference).

The reality behind the reality show is this: one side is openly advocating genocide. The other is trying to stop them. The Democrats won't stop them. The AFL-CIO won't stop them. The police assuredly won't stop them, just as they failed to stop James Alex Fields in Charlottesville or Jer-

WE HAVE TO CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR ALL WHO SUFFER

BY LINDA MARTÍN ALCOFF

The expected racist march was set to start. A large, multiracial crowd that included students, townspeople, curious young folks, and armed law enforcement had been steadily growing in size, waiting for events to unfold. Although it was a sunny, warm day, the atmosphere sent a signal of high alert. Nobody was quite sure what was going to happen. Crowds this large of blacks and whites together were not a common sight in this small Southern city, and the folks of color were not sure how the white people around them would react if things turned ugly.

Then suddenly, the march began, and just as suddenly, it ended. The antiracist crowd was too large, too vocal, and too angry. A black teenager hurled a brick, and it struck paydirt. The Ku Klux Klansmen were herded into police vans and scuttled off the street to safety. We'd won.

This was not Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, but Tallahassee, Florida in 1977. Forty years ago. Little, it seems, has changed. In Tallahassee, as in Charlottesville, the racist march was legal: It had a permit from the city, and the local American Civil Liberties Union defended its right to free speech. As in Charlottesville, the size of the opposition crowd led the police to force the marchers to forgo their planned parade route, for their own safety. But there were also some key differences.

In Charlottesville, the racists came out packing, with major weapons and shields. They felt no need to wear hoods to hide their identities: They could reasonably count on protection from the White House. Although the police cut short the Unite the Right March, they did not curtail the confrontation it set off, but let it play out, resulting in the killing of Heather Heyer when a neo-Nazi marcher crashed his car into a crowd of counterdemonstrators.

Today, the chant of “You will not replace us” signals that we are in a new his-

torical moment, providing new fears and motivations to legitimate lynch mobs.

The events of Aug. 11-12 in Charlottesville have thrust forward two major challenges for social-justice activists across the country, particularly for white antiracists.

First, how should we respond to the public expression of racist hatred? And second, how can we compete more effectively for the working-class whites that this new array of white supremacist groups is trying to recruit?

I helped to organize the counter-rally in Tallahassee, despite being admonished by liberal friends to let the Klan exercise its rights to free speech. A host of local ministers and town leaders also argued that people opposed to the Klan should just stay away, that our presence would only augment the publicity they sought, and could endanger lives.

But neither the Klan nor today's “alt-right” neo-Nazis are simply exercising free speech. Their events, websites and rallies are organizing drives designed to recruit followers, raise funds and excite their base. Their displays of armed power are designed to dominate the public sphere through threats and intimidation. Their memes and slogans aim to build a movement that will violently curtail the free speech of all those they hate. They are opposed not merely to our ideas, but to our very presence in “their” country.

We cannot cede the public square, even for a single day.

GETTING OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES

The second challenge is more difficult, for it calls on us to think beyond resistance and move outside of the comfortable circles of people with shared experiences and values. We have to understand that some of the best breeding grounds for right-wing extremism are beleaguered constituencies. Many are seeking solutions for their lack of economic and social success, and would have much to gain by allying themselves with working-class people of color to press demands for living-wage jobs, healthcare and free college

Continued on page 18



CAN'T BEAT HATE WITH HATE

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“Now I'm afraid,” she said. “I wasn't before. Too privileged to feel fear.” The protest at Trump Tower was loud, so we, leaned in to each other as if whispering secrets. Another war chant rose from the people at the barricades.

“After seeing the car hit the marchers. Kill that girl,” her eyes fixed on some distant scene before returning to me, “I'm a white, middle-aged woman with a union job and now I feel the danger Black Lives Matters faced.”

She looked at me, “It took so long.” Shame and fear and awareness wrestled in her face. Yes, she was shielded by privilege. Yes, it cracked. Yes, she felt death brush her and was scared. I was scared too. I had blocked traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge, holding up my sign to lurching cars. I sighed and opened my eyes again. “You're here now,” I said.

THE GREAT FEAR

We all saw it. On our screens, we saw the car plow into a march, activists thrown like rag dolls as it reversed, leaving broken bodies in its wake. Then the woman killed, Heather Heyer, smiling in a photo. Her murderer, James Fields, grim in a police mugshot. Fascists rallying to defend him outside a courthouse. Fascists carrying torches through a college. And then we closed the computer screens, terrified.

They are rising. Angry white men, marching under the black banner of fascism. Not in great numbers. Not with great political power, yet. They rise from the cracked American landscape like molten lava, hot hate speech, burning crosses, burning effigies, firing rounds of bullets at “running nigger targets.”

They rose with the President. When he campaigned, he spoke for them. When he held rallies, he stoked them like smoldering coal. When he won, he promised to make America great for them. And now, they step into the open, proudly, boasting of the coming race war. In the

news reports, I see their rows of helmets and “Heil” salutes and remember tracing my fingers along the panels at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust.

Walking by the laminated newspaper copies from the 1930s, I felt like they were mirrors of today. The same liberal panic. The same self-righteous victimhood of the Nazis. The same ugly hate wearing a mythology of racial superiority. Synagogues burned. Shattered glass, sparkling in the street.

I thought I left the museum, but months later everyday life has become an extension of its halls. Again the Nazi salutes. Again the shattered glass, now of holocaust memorials. Again the triumphant declaration of racism. I try telling myself, no, it's not the same. It's not. America 2017 is not Germany 1930's.

It doesn't have to be. I flinch when I walk near a television screen and see another Nazi, yelling. Or the President, washing the blood off their hands with his rhetoric of false equivalency. I flinch and fear tightens my chest, turns my eyes into tight screws and I begin to hate. I watch them march and fantasize buying a gun to go meet them and sweep it back and forth, firing as they fall.

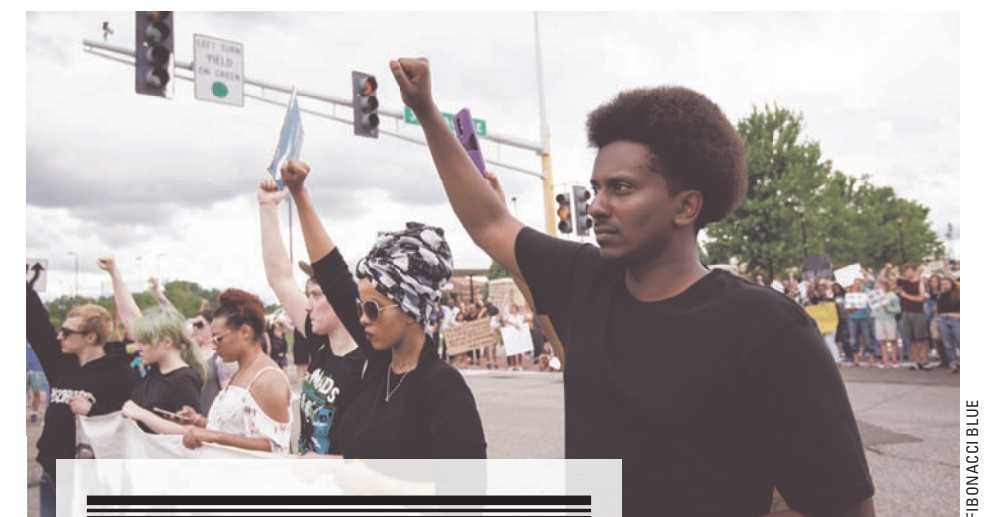
And I realize that's the trap they are setting. Hate for hate until we all descend into hell together.

SOMETHING NEW

“Glock 19, nine millimeter,” he says and pulls out another gun from a leg holster. I watch the white nationalist damn near re-enact a scene from the Matrix, where guns are in each nook and cranny of his body. The pile on his bed like an armory.

I pause the video and lean back, knowing he'd love to aim those weapons at me. Especially, me. A college professor. A “cultural Marxist,” corrupting the minds of white youth. When I listen to him talk about Black savages and his friends, earlier, rail against scheming Jews, it is clear that they need caricatures to fight because the fight gives meaning to their lives. They are arming themselves against an enemy that doesn't exist. Me. You.

Continued on page 18



BOOTS ON THE GROUND: Counter-protesters challenge white nationalists who gathered at a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville's Emancipation Park on Aug. 12.

ALT-STORM TROOPERS: Members of the “alt-right” and more traditional racist groups arrived in Charlottesville ready for a fight. Many were better armed than the police who often failed to intervene in the violence that erupted.

AMPLIFIED: Americans came together across the country this month to condemn the hate on display in Charlottesville and to condemn President Trump for sowing racial and ethnic divisions.

WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT

DIY LIFEGUARD CREW TAKES TO THE HIGH SEAS TO AID REFUGEES

BY ELIA GRAN

BARCELONA — Images abound of migrants from the Middle East and Africa piled atop each other in small boats adrift on the Mediterranean Sea. By the time the refugees step aboard these flimsy boats they have already been traveling for months or even years from places like Senegal, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Syria, Afghanistan, even Bangladesh. They have crossed multiple borders with the objective of making it to Europe, leaving behind the horrors of war, torture or poverty.

“The only way to get away is through the sea,” Óscar Camps, founder Proactiva Open Arms, told *The Independent*.

The Spanish NGO was founded in September 2015, as the European refugee crisis began to mount. The group specializes in rescuing people who need help in the Mediterranean sea, as well as raising awareness of the injustices migrants encounter along their route, which often go untold in the media.

“When we rescue people at sea, there may be 110 men and nine women, but these numbers aren’t the same ones at the beginning of their trip,” Camps says. “Many women don’t make it to the end. The most vulnerable people in this whole story are children and women. Women have a certain value on the market. They become sexual slaves in brothels.”

Unlike the larger NGOs Proactiva collaborates with — Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), Doctors Without Borders, SOS Mediterranée — Proactiva’s founders are lifeguards, saving lives at sea is what they specialize in and know how to do best.

MOVED TO ACT

The group’s origins began with the image of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian boy who washed up dead on the shore near Bodrum, Turkey. Journalist Nilüfer Demir’s September 2015 photograph of the three-year-old lying face down on the sand went viral and moved people, Camps among them, who until then had not realized how deadly the refugee crisis had become.

Initially focusing on the Aegean route from Turkey to Greece, Camps and a friend pooled their savings, approximately \$18,000, and traveled with a team of fellow lifeguards to the island of Lesbos offering their help. Thousands of refugees fleeing the Syrian and Afghan wars were seeking to reach Europe. Before the trip, Camps and his team had worked as lifeguards on the beaches just outside of Barcelona, a day job Camps has kept even while running Proactiva. They made the switch from saving tourists to saving refugees off the Greek shore.

Camps was astonished at the scant help being offered by the United Nations and the European Union, and how little information people in Western Europe were receiving about the refugees. “I thought that the UN and the EU were important and serious organizations,” he said. “Turns out that the EU is a piece of crap with a flag made up of 12 stars and that the U.N. is conditioned by 150 countries that simply veto each other. We realized that all these organizations that we trusted have been useless. When a humanitarian crisis like this happens, they ask for money and won’t go to the affected territories until they get it,” he said.

After an agreement between the European Union and Turkey in 2016 in which Turkey was paid to take back the refugees from Greece, Camps started to

shift his attention to the humanitarian crisis occurring closer to Spain, off the shores of Italy. Proactiva raised funds for a boat to help the organization reach refugees’ dinghies before they sank between Libya and southern Europe. Aware that many of the NGOs that were already at sea only had funds to maintain their missions during the summer, the Proactiva also rented a Dutch fishing vessel for the winter. The number of refugees traveling during the colder months decreases but there are still many people who risk their lives on the frigid waters for a more affordable price from smugglers. Recently, a Spanish businessman gave Proactiva a tubboat that can handle both winter and summer weather and can carry more passengers.

IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES

Saving migrants at sea has proved to be a bit more complicated than on the beaches of Spain due to the sheer number of people who need help.

“Initially, we always tried to get to the children because they were the first ones to drown,” Camps said. “Later, after seeing the images of that day broadcast on TV, the children that we had rescued were standing alone crying because nobody had rescued their parents. These were children left in a new continent, with a religion that wasn’t theirs, where people spoke a language that they didn’t know. They became vulnerable to whatever situation might come. That’s when we realized that we were doing it all wrong. After that experience we decided to rescue whole family units. That at the same time means we let whole groups of families die. We will have to live with those decisions for the rest of our lives. You don’t remember everyone you save but you remember those you saw die.”

In the last year and a half, over 200 volunteers have passed through the NGO, and there is a current waiting list of over 3,000 people who want to join — all of them are doctors, nurses, lifeguards, boat captains, boat mechanics or cooks. Volunteers drop everything they are doing in their day-to-day lives to join the rescue missions, which last 15 days at a time at sea. Each volunteer is provided access to psychological assistance. Camps explained the psychological toll the rescue work can take: “When you’ve been able to save 400 people and take them out of the sea you feel so proud and unstoppable but initially you don’t know if you are going to be able to save everybody or if you are going to have to drag 37 corpses out of the water.”

Proactiva has now been operating for almost two years thanks largely to public donations. Members of the NGO recently came to New York City to receive an award from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archive and the Puffin Foundation for human rights activism. The \$100,000 prize, along with all donations to the group, go towards gas for their boats and water, milk, blankets and clothes for refugees rescued. Camps says thousands of people have been saved this year alone thanks to the group.

Raising awareness of the refugees plight is the other side of Proactiva’s mission. During trips at sea, Proactiva brings journalists along to document the plight of

refugees on the open water. Reporter Andrew Katz, traveling with photojournalist Santi Palacios, recently wrote for *Time Magazine* about what he witnessed on the Mediterranean with Proactiva: “One hundred and eighty-one people were crammed into a rubber dingy meant to hold significantly fewer souls off the coast of western Libya on July 24. By the time the Spanish rescuers arrived the next day to the severely deflated vessel, 13 people, including two pregnant women, were dead.”

One of the women was the mother of three children who were also in the vessel. She died from inhaling the fumes coming from the engine.

Proactiva and other NGOs seeking to rescue the migrants aren’t the only boats searching for refugees in the Mediterranean. Right-wing organizations like Defend Europe accuse humanitarian organizations of collaborating with smugglers to send refugees to Europe. Defend Europe has launched a boat of its own, the *C-Star*, seeking to repel the refugees. Ironically, at least 20 members of the boat’s crew were deported when the ship docked in Turkish Cyprus in July, after authorities discovered they were Sri Lankan migrants. In August, protests prevented the boat from docking in Tunisia.

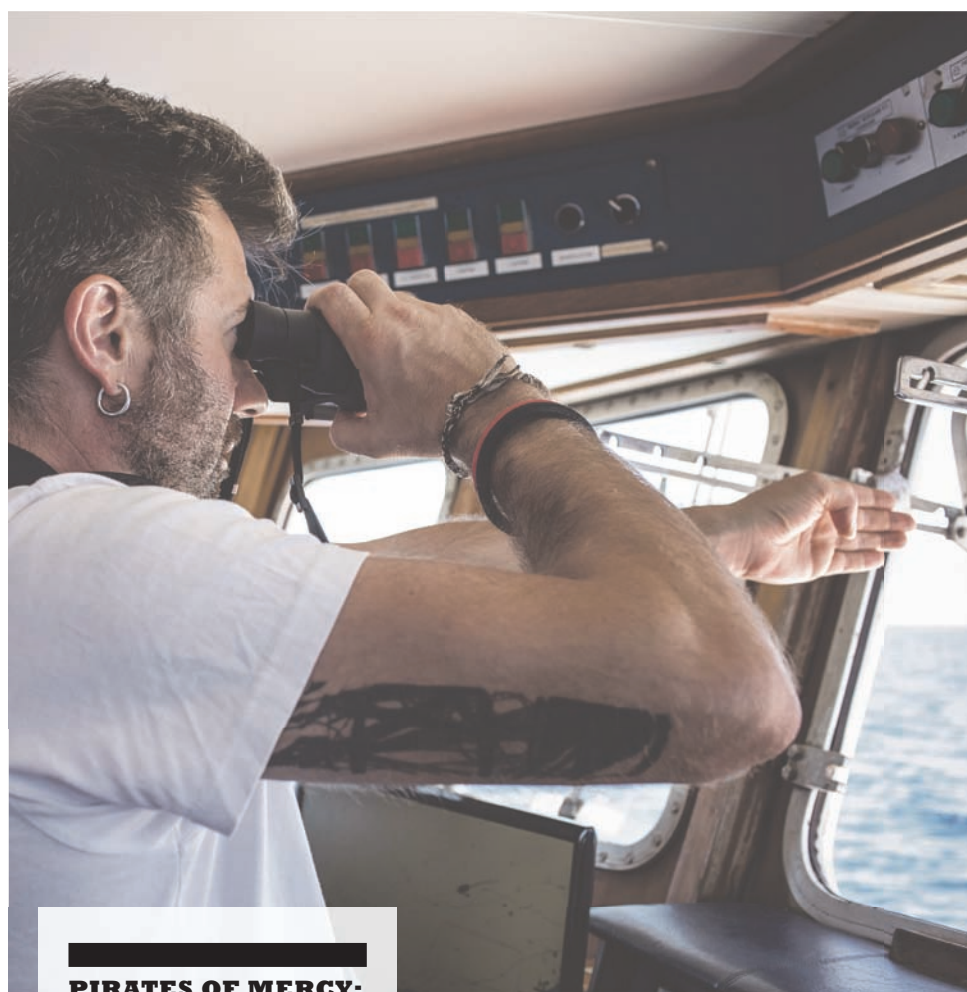
ONGOING CRISIS

There is no easy solution to the refugee crisis facing Europe and the world. Missing Migrants Project reports that 5,143 people died crossing the Mediterranean last year, victims of conflicts and human trafficking with few other options for survival. Camps

‘WHEN YOU’VE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE 400 PEOPLE AND TAKE THEM OUT OF THE SEA YOU FEEL SO PROUD AND UNSTOPPABLE’

hopes that the number of fatalities will decrease this year, not simply because of his work but because international institutions will step in to help stop the conflicts and prioritize the lives of civilians before they are forced to flee their homes.

Camps says he started Proactiva in order to end it, meaning he wishes the work his organization performs were not necessary. Still he is a “completely” changed man since he helped found the group. “It’s like when you turn a sock inside out, it’s a completely different sock,” said Camps. “I am much more tolerant and much more of an activist ... Your ideas and principles are the things you have to defend and the things you have to preserve.”



PIRATES OF MERCY:
Óscar Camp (top center) and
his Proactiva crew patrolling
the Mediterranean Sea this
summer.

ALL PHOTOS EDU BAYER

NEW YORK MAY BE VANISHING, BUT JEREMIAH MOSS HAS APPEARED

Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul

By JEREMIAH MOSS
DEY STREET BOOKS, 2017

By Steven Wishnia

Jeremiah Moss's *Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul* is a scream against the city's "hypergentrification," a 420-page screed of lucid analysis and crystalline prose.

Moss, the pseudonymous publisher of the *Vanishing New York* blog, moved to the East Village as an aspiring poet in the early 1990s. He's enraged that he caught just the last gasps of the city he dreamed of before its soul was murdered. Twentieth-century New York, he says, was "noisy and dirty, a cacophony of cultures and classes, juiced by the energies of liberated people," a home for "immigrants, laborers, bohemians, and queers," its tone set by "working-class wise guys and neurotic intellectuals" who spoke an argumentative and funny "language of toughness mixed with warmth." Twenty-first-century New York has replaced that with "the icy aura of contempt," morphing into a sterile, overpriced morass of glass-box offices and luxury high-rises, frat-boy bars and suburban chain stores.

He's doubly enraged because this was not the result of natural processes, not even the inexorable hand of the market. It was a deliberate assassination, he contends, a campaign of economic, ethnic and cultural bleaching, driven by the corrupt ideology that the purpose of the city is to serve the rich.

What real New Yorker hasn't kvetched about this? There are thousands of individual examples, from Williamsburg to Willets Point, from Surf Avenue to 125th Street, but Moss collects them all in one place, with shocking statistics on how fast and extreme the changes have been. After Mayor Michael Bloomberg rezoned West Chelsea to allow high-rise development, the opening of the High Line's second section in 2009 "heralded a mass extinction event, like the impact of the K-T asteroid that wiped out the dinosaurs." Within one month, four of Tenth Avenue's gas stations and auto-repair shops would be gone. Bloomberg gave the nearby Hudson Yards luxury development between \$500 million and \$1 billion in tax breaks. Within five years after Williamsburg was rezoned in 2005, more than 170 buildings had been demolished, replaced by a wall of tax-sub-

sidized luxury apartments. Thousands of small businesses now close every year, unable to pay triple, quadruple or even octuple rent increases — or because landlords and banks prefer chains for their brands' perceived value, and even charge them lower rents. (Moss endorses bringing back rent regulation for commercial spaces, as well as the milder Small Business Jobs Survival Act that has been bottled up in the City Council for years.)

His analysis has some shortcomings. He doesn't mention the state's 1997 gutting of rent stabilization, which gave landlords a legal method to charge astronomical rents and thus a massive incentive to drive out tenants, and doesn't dwell much on how wholesale harassment then became a business model for investors in "undervalued" buildings. He makes the accurate observation that the 9/11 attacks were a critical turning point, but can't quite put his finger on why that happened, positing a vague 'Americanization' of the city on top of the election of billionaire Bloomberg and his "luxury city" vision.

But he makes numerous perceptive observations. Real-estate developers market neighborhoods' authentic culture "in order to sell it to an invading culture that would then destroy it." (Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner advertises a Lower East Side building he harassed the old tenants out of as the place where Allen Ginsberg wrote "his famous poem 'Elegy'" — which must be the Google Translate version of "Kaddish.") Where it once took a decade or more for hypergentrification to hit a neighborhood after young artists and queers started moving in, "today it happens overnight." He lists myriad examples of the new colonialists' arrogant "sense of Manifest Destiny": white people moving to Harlem and calling in noise complaints on the African drummers in the park, a yuppie on the Lower East Side repulsed by the smell of pickles from Katz's Deli and Mayor Bloomberg telling the auto-repair shops of Willets Point that "this land is too valuable for you."

Moss and those of us who complain about all this are often denounced as cranks wallowing in nostalgia, left-wing reactionaries resisting any kind of change. But the real issue is what kind of change. Yes, I miss the Brighton Beach Avenue of my childhood, of bakeries with fresh rye bread with caraway seeds, massive kasha knishes from Mrs. Stahl's. But now you can get Russian black bread and Georgian baguettes baked in a circular oven, and street peddlers vend handmade potato, pea and cabbage knishes for \$1.50. That's different from the Coney Island bodega where I used to get a bottle of seltzer to drink on the beach being forced out and replaced by a theme-park restaurant that charges \$4 for a bottle of water.

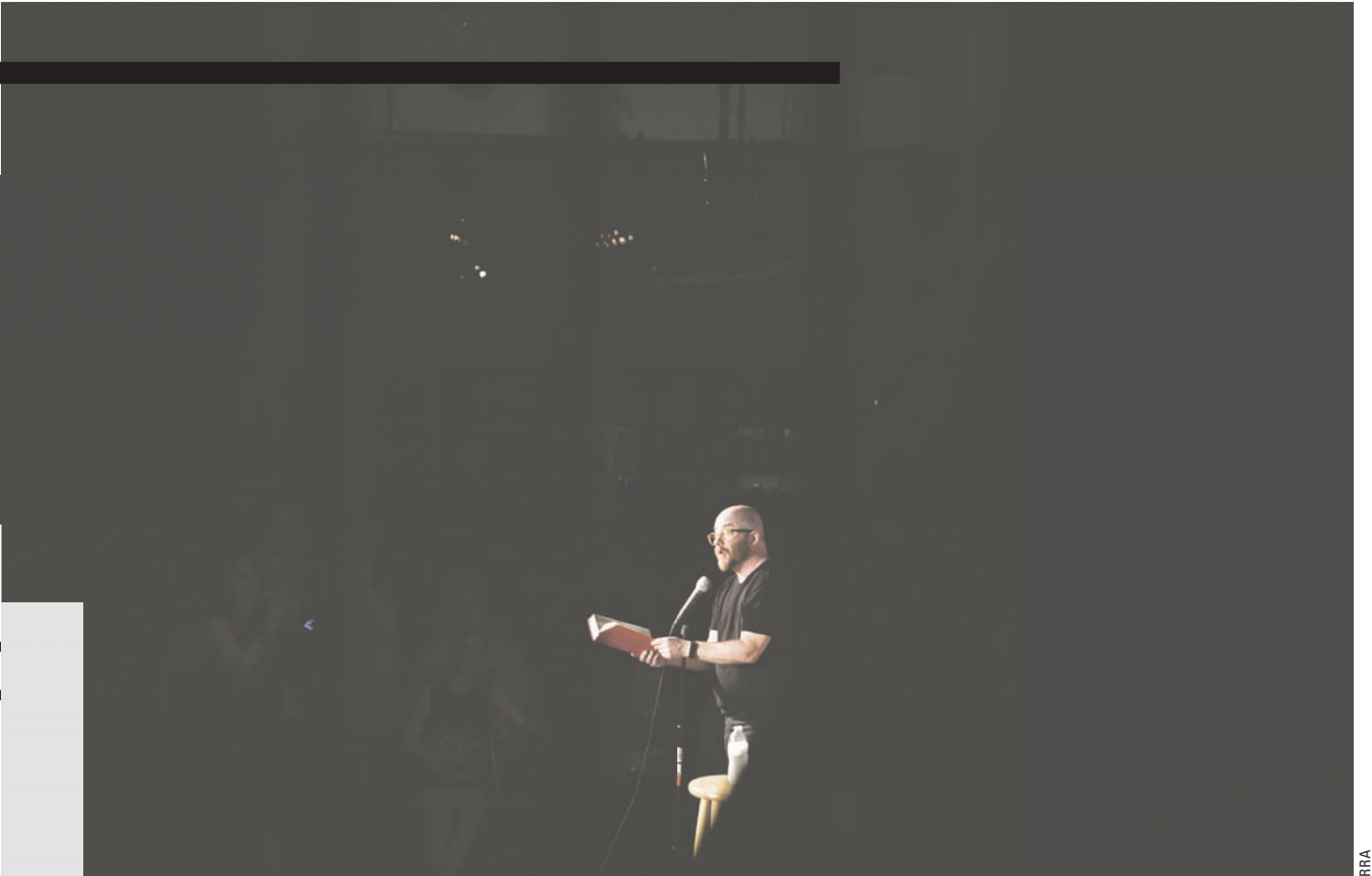
The enraging thing about the changes in New York over the last 10 or 25 years is that they have gone in only one direction—relentlessly upscale. If they were simply that the "working-class wise guys" now speak in Spanglish or Jamaican

patois instead of old-school Brooklynese, and the "neurotic intellectuals" are black, Puerto Rican or Chinese instead of Jewish, it would still be the city we loved. My encapsulation of this would be the used bookstore on West 18th Street, an intellectual oasis for the low-budget literate, that got replaced by a body-waxing salon. Moss's is Café Edison on 47th Street in Times Square, a classic Eastern European Jewish coffeeshop, that got pushed out for a chain called Friedman's Lunch — named after Milton Friedman, the intellectual godfather of modern free-market fundamentalism.

"Remember? New York of agitators and non-conformists, of creation and disruption, of people who were aware and worked to wake the rest of America with writing, art, politics, and social justice," Moss writes near the end. "That is the city for which I am nostalgic, and outraged, and cranky as hell. Aren't you?"

If you care about the soul of New York City, you must read this book.

THE CONSERVATIONIST: Jeremiah Moss speaks to a packed room at Housing Works Bookstore in Lower Manhattan.



XAVIER GUERRA

AL GORE'S CONVENIENT INFOMERCIAL

An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power
DIRECTED BY BONNI COHEN AND JON SHENK
99 MINUTES, PG

By Mark Read

There are few subjects more reliably depressing than the problem of impending climate chaos. In some ways, the Trump administration's daily dumpster fire is a welcome distraction from the increasingly dire harbingers of the hell that awaits us if we do not drastically and immediately alter our current trajectory. Climate change can be hard to look at without sinking into despair.

It is worth going to see Al Gore's documentary *Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power*, however, for the same reason that it was valuable to see its prequel, *An Inconvenient Truth*, over a decade ago: Through these films we can come to understand the shortcomings of how the liberal establishment proposes to tackle this, the mother of all capitalism's crises.

Gore remains the perfect spokesperson for the liberal approach to addressing climate change. He doesn't come off as a bad guy — he's an affable, decent fellow, with a hue of misfortune hovering about him — but he consistently reveals the essential limits of what the ruling class can imagine. His tragic aura makes him the perfect pitchman for lost causes.

Gore's faith in our political and economic system has remained undaunted, despite the debacle of the 2000 election, when the former vice president ceded the presidency to George W. Bush after the Supreme Court halted a recount of votes in Florida just when it appeared that Gore might take the lead. His concession speech, wherein he took a stand for the "orderly transition of power," is a terrific reminder of how dangerous a reflexive and myopic faith in "the system" can be. The same goes for his inability to imagine any truly radical response to the imminent climate catastrophe. He simply cannot see that the market-absolute logic that governs our current institutions constrains our ability to address the crisis.

Gore's imaginative/political limitations were on full display in the 2006 film. After painstakingly laying out the irrefutable case that climate change is real and will have devastating consequences, the way out he suggested was "buy a better light bulb at Walmart." Yes, ladies and gentlemen, there is hope, and it's as convenient as making better consumer choices! Gore did a masterful job of explaining the problem, but his lack of vision,

his lack of any deep critical thinking or analysis of power, was nakedly exposed.

More than a decade has passed since then. The apparent premise of this new film, subtitled "Truth to Power," is that Gore will now get "political" and level with the audience. So, where does he land? Has he changed his tune?

He does suggest a collective response in addition to an individual one, but none of his ideas fundamentally challenge the status quo. He advocates for two primary courses of action. On an individual level, he has evolved from "buy a better light bulb" to "buy yourself a solar panel" — specifically from Elon Musk's SolarCity, a company that Gore's investment firm, Generation Investment Management, has a stake in. He also persuasively advocates for working with local governments to "green the grid."

I don't mean to make light of this strategy. Encouraging municipalities to get their energy from renewable sources and invest in renewable energy infrastructure is one of the most important things that we can do, but it remains well within the lines that have already been drawn by our current institutions. Anyone honestly assessing the scale of the climate problem will admit that this won't be enough. Still, credit Gore with providing at least the inkling of an idea for how we can begin to work collectively to address this crisis. That in itself is of value.

The real limitations to what Gore and his ilk are capable of imagining is revealed during the film's coverage of the Paris climate accords of 2015. That it depicts Gore as the behind-the-scenes savior of the negotiations is annoying, but it's understandable, as the filmmakers are creating a hero arc for their subject. The means by which he supposedly saved the negotiations, however, is revealing, as is the uncritical praise for the accords themselves, which most climate activists will tell you are woefully inadequate.

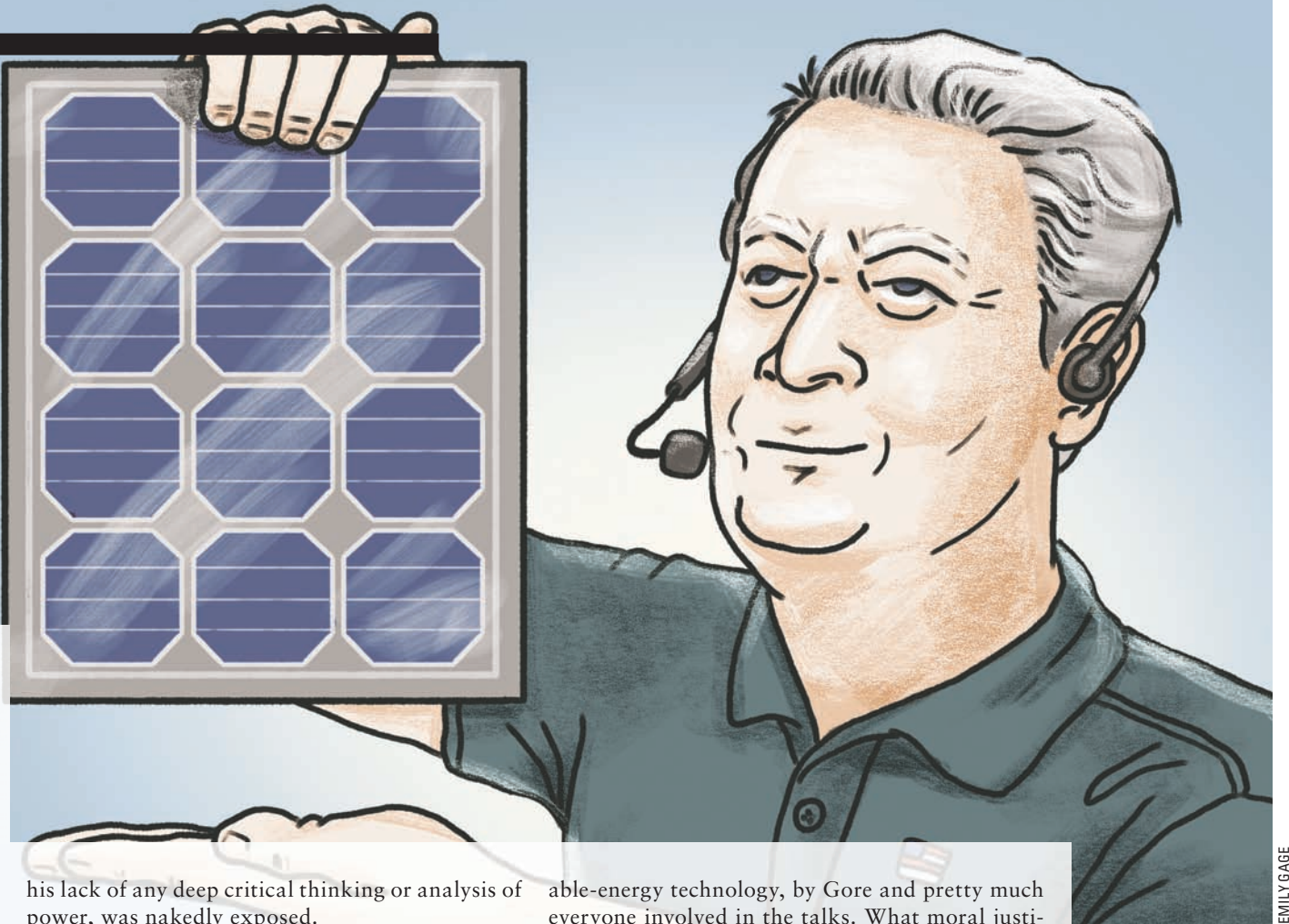
As the filmmakers tell it, Gore was working tirelessly to get the Indian government to sign off on the accords. He was racking his brain, trying everything he could, when he was struck by a big idea: Persuade SolarCity to share its patent for a super-efficient solar cell with India. He got on the phone with his pals, convinced them to be the "corporate heroes of the Paris agreement," and voila! India was on board. Everybody wins!

The problems with this happy ending are many. First, there reportedly has not yet been any technology transfer. This certainly undermines the claim that SolarCity's patent-sharing saved the climate talks. The bigger problem, however, is the unquestioning fealty to the premise of private intellectual property, specifically for such sustain-

able-energy technology, by Gore and pretty much everyone involved in the talks. What moral justification is there for a private corporation to withhold potentially Earth-saving technology from humanity, particularly when that technology rests squarely on prior advances developed with public dollars? Why should it be up to SolarCity whether the Paris accords succeed or fail?

If we are to survive as a species, the legal, economic and cultural structures that privilege private ownership of intellectual property over the interests of the many must be challenged and fought at every turn. This must become a cornerstone of our fight for a more just and sustainable future. If we do not pull this system out by its roots, it is going to kill us and our children.

I look forward to a sequel to this film, wherein a group of Gore's former students finally pry from the dying, greedy hands of Big Wind and Big Solar what was never theirs to begin with, and fan out across the world like modern-day Johnny Appleseeds to ensure planetary survival by redistributing the power of knowledge for everyone to use. That will be a film worth watching. It's up to us to write it.



EMILY GAGE

UNLOCKING OUR OWN

Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America

By JAMES FORMAN JR.

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2017

By Matthew Wasserman

Over the past few years, many people who decry mass incarceration have coalesced on certain tenets of collective wisdom. First, as the title of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* suggests, that mass incarceration is a form of racial domination that shares essential elements with the regime of Jim Crow. Second, that the massive increase in incarceration since 1970 — from about 300,000 people behind bars to 2.3 million people imprisoned today — is essentially the product of a backlash to the gains of the civil rights movement. And, finally, that this massive increase has largely been fueled by the drug war. You hear these beliefs repeated in President Obama's speeches, in articles in liberal magazines and at bars in Brooklyn.

It's a nice pat narrative. It provides us with convenient villains, a tidy moral, and an easy answer for what should be done—let those nonviolent drug offenders go free!

There's just one problem. It's wrong. Not totally wrong, of course, but certainly incomplete, and in some ways misleading. The criminal justice system undoubtedly reflects and reinforces racial domination, cementing an equation of blackness with criminality; the racial disparities in who goes to prison for drug charges are real and appalling, despite surveys consistently finding that at least as high a percentage of whites use and sell drugs; the "war on crime" and "war on drugs" were ways for reactionary politicians like Nixon and Reagan to foment and channel a white backlash without ever explicitly talking about race; and so on. But, although people convicted of drug offenses make up about half the federal prison population, they make up only about one in five people imprisoned in this country. The racial domination thesis offers no answers for why we lock up white people at a far higher rate than Europe or Canada — albeit at a far lower rate than black or Latino people. Violent crime rates really did rise dramatically in the '60s. And, finally, the white backlash thesis fails to explain why black leaders were among the staunchest advocates of the punitive criminal policies, including mandatory minimums for drug cases, that brought us to the present impasse.

Yale Law School professor James Forman Jr. focuses on the last part in *Locking Up Our Own*. Interweaving analysis and autobiography into a tightly argued and compellingly readable package, he details how black police, black politicians and black

PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

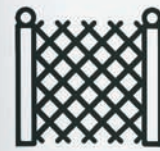
What you'll need:



x 780,000,000



x 88,000,000



x 30,000,000



x 42,000,000



x 1,500,000



x 1

03

04

voters played a crucial role in ratcheting up penalties and building the current carceral state. Focusing on Washington, D.C., he tells stories from the courtroom trenches of how black judges would lecture black defendants about how they were desecrating the legacy of Martin Luther King before handing out harsh sentences. Forman is ideally suited to tell this tale: son of civil rights activists; former public defender; founder of a D.C. charter school that works with justice-involved youth. No one should doubt his commitment to combating mass incarceration. But we need to understand the nature of the beast if we want to fight it.

The story he tells is nuanced. He takes pain to note how black leaders also wanted programs that would address the root causes of crime such as education and social services — support that was not forthcoming from the federal government. And he is sensitive to class distinctions in attitudes and experiences within the black community. But just as mass incarceration cannot be ascribed to white backlash politics when it comes to D.C., it cannot be described as just the politics of the black bourgeoisie either. It was a response to a real sense of fear and insecurity: D.C., like New York and many other cities, had a crime wave that did not peak until the early '90s and, just like now, poor black people were both more likely to be criminal defendants and more likely to be the victims of crime. It seems obvious today that mass incarceration is a racial justice issue, but many people steeped in the civil rights movement saw the problem as more the lack of attention to black victims.

As Forman would likely be the first to admit, there are real limits to his methods. D.C., with its majority-black government, is not a good proxy for the country as a whole. And the reasons why a particular set of policies were adopted are not necessarily the reasons why they remain in place. Nevertheless, *Locking Up Our Own* is a major contribution to the literature on mass incarceration.

As Forman argues, the real problem of mass incarceration is what we do with people who commit violent crimes. Certainly, the almost half a million people in cages in this country because of drug charges should be let out immediately. Everyone in jail on petty-ante bail pending trial should be let go, too — Rikers is filled with poor people who are there because they can't scrape together \$500 or \$1,000 to buy their freedom. But there are also almost 1 million people behind bars for violent offenses—and figuring out what we do with these people poses a knottier problem.

There are no easy answers. But this does not mean there are no ways forward. In the epilogue, Forman discusses the case of a teenager, Dante, he represented. Dante robbed a working-class black man at knifepoint as part of a gang initiation. There was no

question of his guilt; in fact, he confessed as soon as he was caught. But Forman did not let that stop him: he tracked down records of Dante's horrific childhood and, with help from his mom, found a youth program that would accept his client, who was skilled at working with his hands. This much is already far more than what the lawyers for most poor people accused of crimes would do — and, realistically, can do, given crushing caseloads. Forman, however, did not stop there. He spoke to the victim, telling him Dante's story and his remorse. With the victim urging mercy at sentencing, the judge agreed not to imprison Dante. Decades later, Forman ran into Dante in the streets of D.C.; he has never been re-arrested, works in construction and has a family. It seems doubtful that the story would end this way if Dante had been shipped off to a juvenile jail, let alone adult prison.

This story is exceptional but it need not be. If we are truly committed to ending mass incarceration, we have to be willing to take chances on rehabilitation, even when people cause real harm. This will require a radical revamping of our sense of justice. No longer can the length of the prison sentence be the only way we measure the seriousness of the crime. No longer can we banish people to prisons upstate, far from major population centers, and forget about them. And no longer can we concentrate those who commit acts of violence in cages to fight among themselves.

The current carceral state was not built in a day. It was the product of numerous actions, by various policymakers, most of whom did not fully anticipate the consequences of their choices. And, as Forman suggests, dismantling it will likely have to take place in the same incremental manner.

SHEER PUNK LOVE

Need to Feel Your Love

BY SHEER MAG
WILSUNS RECORDING COMPANY,
2017

By Brady O'Callahan

The band Sheer Mag introduces their album with the lines, “Beyond the noxious haze of our national nightmare — as structures of social justice and global progress topple in our midst — there lies a faint but undeniable glow in the distance. What is it?”

The first thing you see when you pick up the record is a plane braving dark and stormy skies, headed for a soft glow in the distance. It’s a sentiment we’re likely all familiar with these days: Now is pretty awful, but better times are ahead of us, we hope.

The stage has been set for an unsatisfied young punk band to rail against the machine. Enter Sheer Mag, a Philadelphia quintet who’ve put out three well-received EPs in the last three years. With *Need to Feel Your Love*, their first proper full-length record, they state unequivocally that if we’re ever going to overcome this mess, we need to lean hard into love, rally to the defense of the abused and neglected and maybe even throw a few bricks through a few windows.

The album begins with a stirring rallying cry in “Meet Me in the Street.” The song immediately kicks with as much fervor and rock ramp-up as AC/DC or Thin Lizzy, with a beat that could just as easily inspire a march as your standard concert head-bob. Singer Tina Halladay wails over a steady drumbeat and soaring guitars, grabs you by the throat and keeps you there so you hear her loud and clear. She wants you to know she’s sick of the militarization of the police, she will fight for our right to protest and a day will come when the powers that be will respect that right or move out of the way, “Seven blocks north of the avenue, we’re throwing rocks at

the boys in blue,” she shouts. “Silver-spoon suckers headed for a fall, and justice for all.” It is surging. It is urgent.

“Expect the Bayonet” reinforces the album’s defiant message: The abused will not sit idly by forever. While Republicans figure out how to further stuff their pockets and squash voting rights, Democrats have lost touch with the working class. Last I heard, they were contemplating taking artistic liberties with the Papa John’s Pizza slogan and printing stickers with the phrase “Have you seen the other guys?” America deserves a party that works for the people and doesn’t frame itself as the only option that isn’t horrific. But how do we get there? Halladay answers: “We got the power to take back our nights, give up our silence and give up our time alone. We’re not on our own. ... If you don’t give us the ballot, expect the bayonet.”

Trying to light the fire of unrest throughout the album, Sheer Mag often draws inspiration from history. “Suffer Me” recounts the bravery of the participants in the Stonewall riots that resulted in “one less boot pressing down on one less throat.” The album closes with a tribute to Sophie Scholl, a White Rose activist executed for distributing anti-Nazi literature at the University of Munich. It’s clear that Sheer Mag took to heart her last words: “What does my death matter, if through us, thousands of people are awakened and stirred to action?”

Single acts can snowball into monumental change.

In our day-to-day lives, though, Sheer Mag affirm the need for human connection, community and love above all. The songs “Need to Feel Your Love,” “Just Can’t Get Enough” and “Pure Desire” — a track where Halladay pines, “I need you more every day” — stress the importance of this connection, especially in such turbulent times.

“Rank and File” highlights the power of friends to carry some of the emotional burden: “If you’ve fallen lonely on your cause, I got the rank

and the file here to even the odds.” In an era of cynicism and ugliness, perhaps the most punk rock thing you can embrace is sincerity and human connection.

Right now is awful, but Sheer Mag seems confident that better days are ahead of us. Thanks to them, for the first time in a while, so do I.

HEAR HER ROAR: Sheer Mag’s Tina Halladay on stage with the band last year.



BRENDAN O'CONNOR

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AUG 28 • 7-9:30PM
TALK: Ellie Roscher's *Play Like a Girl* tells the inspirational story of the Kibera Girls Soccer Academy, a free school and soccer program for girls in the Kibera settlement/slum of Nairobi, Kenya. The school's director and an alumna will be on hand to share personal memories.

SEP 8 • 7-9:30PM
BOOK LAUNCH: In *Guerrillas of Desire*, Kevin Van Meter documents the long history of everyday resistance.

SEP 21 • 7-9:30PM
FOOD: No two curries are the same. Using familial recipes, Naben Ruthnum cracks open anew the staid narrative of an authentically Indian diasporic experience with *Curry: Eating, Reading, and Race*.

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SELF-DEFENSE

Continued from Page 10

emy Christian in Portland, Oregon. In fact, recent reporting has revealed that police departments are welcoming outright neo-Nazis into their ranks. One imagines they feel quite at home.

The only force capable of checking the spread of fascism is civil society itself, self-organized for self-defense. Self-defense, to an antifascist, encompasses much more than a street fight. While antifa actions are typically associated with physical confrontation, it is but one tactic among many

in the antifascist toolkit. It is also a tactic that carries heightened risks, especially for those who are already at heightened risk whenever they walk down the street.

Many antifascists prefer to do other work, engaging, for instance, in workplace organizing, in coalition building, in boycotts and strikes and even, from time to time, in political campaigns to defeat white supremacy wherever it rears its head at the local level. These tactics are less newsworthy than a battle royale. They are, however, more accessible to antifascism's popular base.

Nonetheless, it was they who, when the Challenger plowed into the crowd, ran toward the crash and rushed to the assistance of the shellshocked and the wounded. In a very real

sense, this is what we do: we are first responders, called to the scene of a series of horrific crimes. Some of these crimes, such as slavery, were committed in the distant past. Others have yet to happen and can still be prevented. The only way forward, then, is to make fascism history again.

Before it's too late.

Mike Ben Zev is a pseudonym used by the author out of privacy concerns.

SENSE OF BELONGING

Continued from Page 10

education for their children.

But we also need to understand that they are also seeking a sense of belonging, a connection to something bigger than themselves and relief from the alienation and isolation that the mass societies of contemporary capitalism create. Identities are often avenues for community. The ability to build a diverse social infrastructure that will redress alienation is a difficult task, not one that we should smugly believe has already been accomplished.

"The first issue is how their current thought process is being reinforced, Mathew Fransen-Marsh, a young working-class friend from rural Pennsylvania, writes. "They're being told by the 'alt-right' that the left is trying to take everything from them, exclude them from things and make them second-class citizens. They reinforce these mantras by pointing out exclusionary

terms and legislation, making it seem like they're being ostracized as the enemy. They literally convinced people that people saying 'black lives matter' were trying to state that only black lives matter. They use the typical emotional weaknesses of the average person to make them hateful and angry toward a group looking for equality. They use this to chip away, piece by piece, until they can pull these people in and convince them that they are their only allies. You see it every day.

"I know, because I used to fall victim to the common tactics they use, and only education helped me to realize the backward 'logic' I was being fed. I've been working on my family with such things because they used to hold such views, but it's likely I'll never get any of them to truly change their views, much less strangers."

Mathew's pessimism is belied by his own story of personal change. His "education" came in part from participating in a labor struggle in the hospital where he worked in the dietary department. A sense of belonging is just the sort of feeling that a union

campaign can engender. People can learn to build trust and fellowship despite having different backgrounds and experiences. They learn to let each other speak and to listen more carefully to what everyone in the group says. Union success requires cooperation, and the daily practices that cooperation requires engender a bond.

SPECIAL CHALLENGES

Movements against identity-based forms of injustice — such as racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and so on — face special difficulties in creating unity and trust among activists, simply because not everyone involved is targeted or affected in the same way.

The police are likely to respond more harshly toward nonwhites than toward whites, and the differences in our experiences produce some significant differences in our knowledge base. That cannot be swept under the rug in the name of an abstract unity, a shared commitment to justice

or inclusion. Thus, in movements against identity-based forms of injustice, it can be hard to create the kind of social bonds that are strong enough to withstand the opposition's subtle ideological maneuvers, as well as its physical threats. But we have to find ways to create a sense of belonging for all of those who suffer, for all of those willing to take a stand, for as many as we can.

The white-nationalist groups are offering a club where whites can belong, but only like-minded whites. Whites who disagree will be bullied, punched, kicked and killed. We need to make sure such whites know another world is possible, a world that will include them.

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

HATE

Continued from Page 11

The Race Warrior role play only works in a mythology based on a lie, the lie that our lives are determined by our bodies, that buried deep in our DNA is the natural rank of humanity that nothing can change. Blacks will be Black. Asians, Asian. Whites, white. To see yourself as guardian of civilization, manning the wall against the barbarians is to admit you've lost connection to the world.

In the real world, all around is evidence of the dynamic change driving history. I've seen my students come out of the closet shyly and by next semester proudly kiss their same-sex lover in the hall. I've seen friends take off their hijab. I've seen families take in an addicted son and help him become sober. I've seen interracial couples raise their child to speak three languages and watch him grow big enough to live above borders.

Every day, I walk out into New York City, where count-

less immigrants came and were Americanized in its relentless vortex. Here, masks are peeled off. Languages mix. Music is reinvented. Politics churn. Here we are forced to acknowledge a humanist truth that is in stark contrast to racist mythology, which is that constant change throws us out of ourselves. If we are to live in the real world, we have to remake ourselves with others and in doing that rediscover how open we are to the new.

DREAM WORKS

Another protest is called for tomorrow. And another after that. It's good. It's our responsibility. We of the left are the only ones who can create new answers. Every other political movement is stalled or going backwards. Liberals are defending a collapsed center. The right tries to remake a past that can't return.

When I get the call to march, I know we'll have the momentum. The Nazis are blinded by their mythology and

can't see how repellant murder is to the majority, regardless of it being framed as racial self-defense. Even so, we'll be attacked again. Even if we stay on guard, some of us will get killed.

In our next march, I'll look around and know we're not alone. We carry the history of everyone killed by hate. We try to redeem their loss with new freedom for the living and the unborn. And as we write new signs and yell new chants, moving through the streets with us will be Heather Heyer, holding hands with Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner. Next to them, men and women wearing yellow stars. Nearby, slaves wearing shackles. In our march are the living and the dead, one carrying the other forward, saying, yes, of course we are afraid. But that doesn't matter anymore. Because we're all here now.

REVEREND BILLY'S REVELATIONS



JOHN GUILTY

TRUMP DEPRESSION HOTLINE

Dear Reverend Billy,

A lot of folks are saying KKK and Nazis should never have been allowed to march in Charlottesville, that local officials should have declared it hate speech and a threat to public safety. But don't you think that many thousands of us confronting the haters shows the world something? Isn't the First Amendment working in this case? Surely, it encourages passionate activism.

— Ben, Bed Stuy

DEAR BEN,

A big bunch of cowards from Trump on down to local politicians and cops in Cville let torch-burning Klansmen and neo-Nazis parade before the world. It was psychological cruelty to people for whom lynchings are fresh in mind. I'm thinking of African-American children most especially.

If we could surround the KKK with thousands of peaceful people, that seems ideal. But let's be realistic, there are some of us who will be suckered into matching the self-righteous violence of the hard right we face.

We should go in the other direction. Much of the 36 percent of the country that still supports Trump are probably more complex than they seem. Nelson Mandela put it very much to the point: "People must learn to hate, and if they learn to hate, they can be taught to love."

We need to engage them. We need to learn to talk and listen with everyone we can, and find a way to reverse our fear of The Other — those with different religions and skin colors and cultures, but also all the living beings of the Earth.

The climate crisis tells us that we can't waste time with unproductive anger. Not now. We need to self-cultivate a radical forgiveness that encourages the same in others. Learning to talk across class and race and gender, standing at a front door with something better than a Democratic candidate to offer. Let's talk about saving each other. Let's talk survival. This is what the Earth is asking us to do with her fire and floods.

Earthalujah!

• • •

Dear Reverend Billy,

I'm sick of this goddamn country. By hook or by crook, I'm getting out. I'm tired of its racism, its wealth inequality, its crazy President. A citizenry that elects a man like that deserves to sink

into the ocean. You're a well-traveled man. Where I should move?

— Samantha, Greenpoint

DEAR SAMANTHA,

I'm writing from Belfast, Northern Ireland. The choir and I were invited by local activists who asked for our help bridging the religious divide and addressing the political violence there. Meanwhile, they teach us. We take in each others' struggles. One thing we've learned — we can't escape Trump by "pulling a geographic."

You can try to find yourself a private Norway, but the political class across the world is concocting different combinations of surveillance, guns, debt, marketing, celebrity culture, toxins, hunger and fear. "Apocalypse management" is the new leadership. Around the world people have the sensation that they are falling into chaos.

Go out into the place where you live. Sit on your front stoop and really take a look at your neighborhood. That struggle to save the corner bodega from another Starbucks is the key to freedom. Free your local park of pollutants, get to know a conservative neighbor, find your radical patience, plant a rooftop garden. Dig in!

Earthalujah!

REVEREND BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A POST-RELIGIOUS PREACHER OF THE STREETS AND BANK LOBBIES. HE'S BEEN IN NEW YORK FOREVER WITH THE ACTIVIST PERFORMANCE GROUP THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING. GOT A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY? JUST EMAIL REVBILLY@INDYPENDENT.ORG AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.

UGLY HEAD OF EXTREMISM FROM USA TO EUROPE TO INDIA: WHAT EXTREMISM: RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC? ALL OF THE ABOVE? HOW CAN WE FIGHT BACK?



WITH
DR. PARTHA BANERJEE
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST,
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ORGANIZER,
LABOR EDUCATOR

Partha Banerjee is a first-generation Bengali immigrant from India. He is a labor educator, human rights activist, and writer.

He has personal experience with the fundamental militarist doctrines of right-wing parties in India, which he has rejected, without disavowing his deep roots in ecumenical and secular Hinduism.

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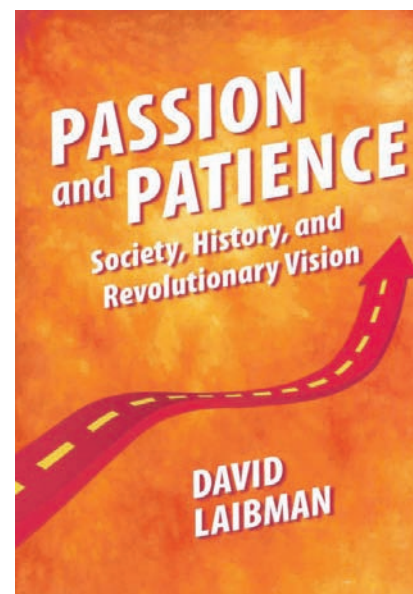
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