

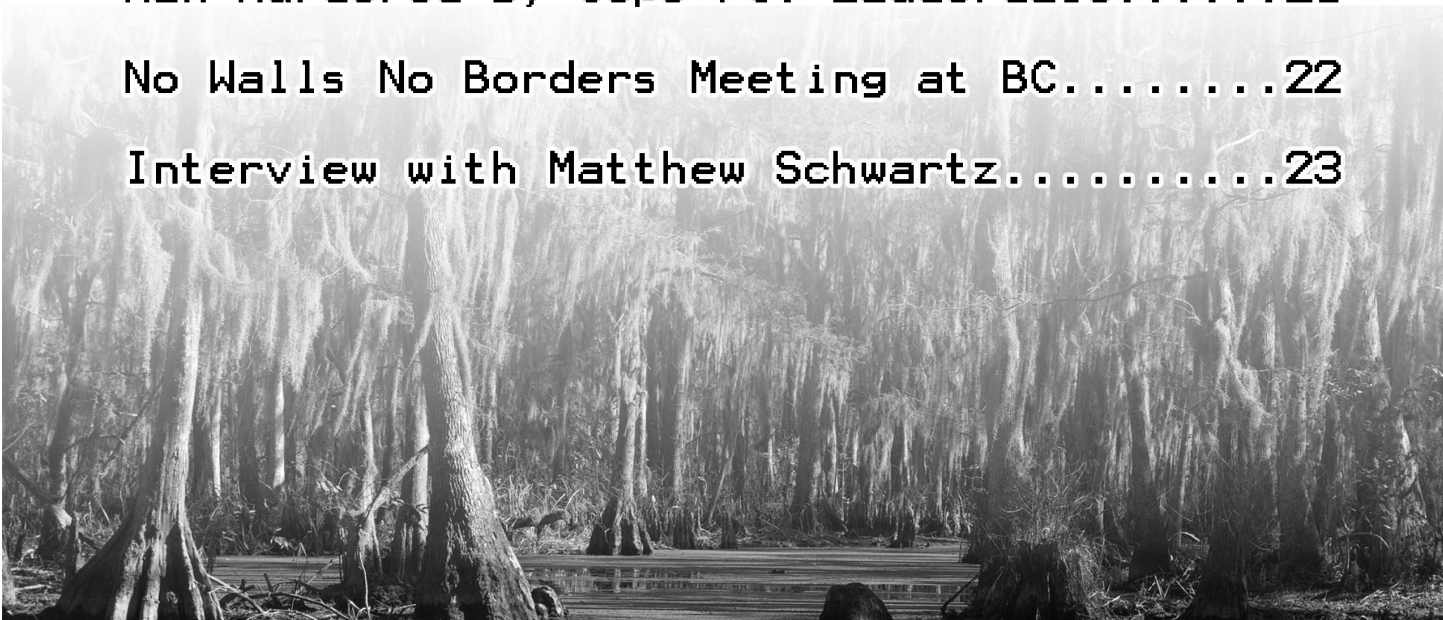
Sunshine
State
Anarchy!



Spring 2018

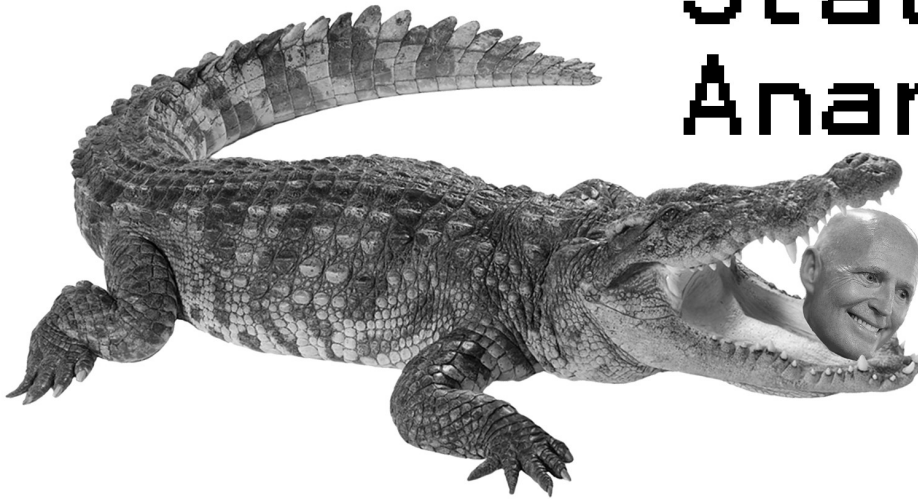
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Sunshine State Anarchy!

Issue #1



Hello Florida, and welcome to the first of hopefully many issues of Sunshine State Anarchy! Compared to places like Portland or New York, it can seem like Florida is a dead zone for anarchist and other leftist activity, but there's a lot of subversive activity happening beneath the surface that many are unaware of. The purpose of the publication is many fold. First, we want to have an open platform to discuss anarchist thought and theory, submitted by readers. Second, we want this platform to cover and discuss events happening in Florida. From protests going down at UF, to demonstrations in the Capitol, we want this to be an accurate aggregate of leftist action happening state-wide. Lastly, we want to cover events that have passed and provide interviews with participants and analysis. In the future, we hope to expand and create guides and smaller zines, instead of just a quarterly publication.

To do all of these things, we will need your help and support! Our intention is to be a publication supported and contributed to by our readers, instead of a permanent board of regular contributors. We want to cover a wide array of issues that Florida faces, including education, gun control, racism, indigenous issues, homophobia, environmental issues, gentrification, and much more. If you have an article, an upcoming event, comments or criticisms, analysis, reportbacks, or whatever, please submit them to sunshinestateanarchy@protonmail.com.

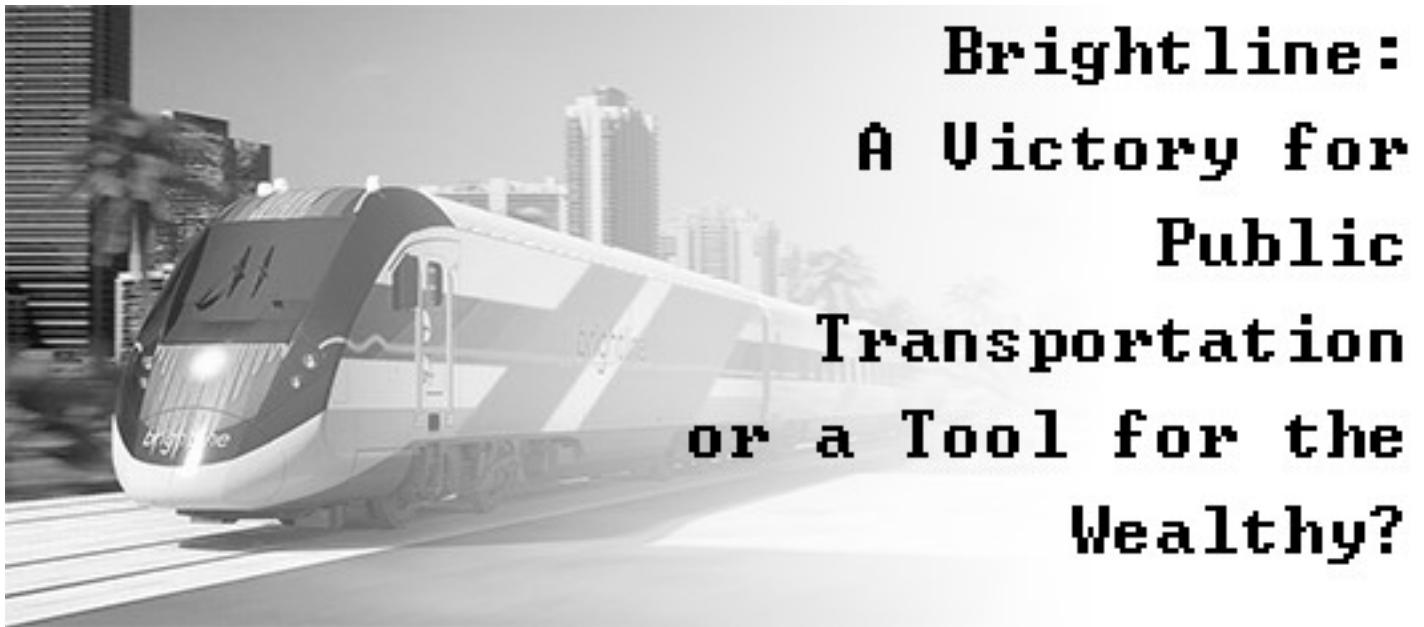
Worldwide Solidarity with Afrin!

Miami, FL



On March 24th, the call went out for international solidarity for the attacks by Turkey on the autonomous region of Rojava, in particular the ongoing attacks on Afrin canton. Here in Florida, a demonstration took place on Sunday the 25th in front of the Turkish consulate in Miami. The event wasn't too large, with only around 10 people attending, but over a hundred flyer were handed out, and plenty of cars saw the signs and honked in support. Though the quantity of protesters may have been small, the quality of the participants was incredible. We had two former fighters join us, including Hanna Bohman, a Canadian fighter with the YPJ, the women's protection units. Anarchists showed up as well, unfurling a powerful black banner proclaiming solidarity with Rojava. Not everyone at the action was left leaning, but we all managed to put our differences aside to protest genocide.

As the hot Miami sun continued to beat down on us, our faces turned red, and we decided to get some lunch and leave some signs as a gift for the Turkish government workers who would come back to work Monday morning. All our signs were duck taped to the building, and we all went out for Persian food. When we passed by the consulate building on our way back to our cars, we noticed that the security guard was doing his best to remove our posters. We gave him some friendly heckling, asking if he was going to hang them up inside or put them in the elevators. All in all, the action might not have rivaled the massive banner drops and protests held in other parts of the US and Europe, but it shows that despite lacking in numbers, we make up for it in our passion and willingness to drive incredibly long distances to show our support.



Brightline: A Victory for Public Transportation or a Tool for the Wealthy?

The new Brightline train has opened to marvelous fanfare throughout South Florida. Our state has often been lacking in convenient public transportation, and at first, it looked like Brightline was a good way to commute back and forth from Palm Beach to Fort Lauderdale. Unfortunately, the train has its fair share of problems, the most pressing being the price. At \$20 a round trip, the train is completely inaccessible to any low-income person looking for a faster way to get to and from work. The trains have been described as “nicer than a first class airline seat”¹, which raises the question, was this train for public transport or just a fancy new way for the wealthy to get to and from their leisure spots?

Instead of creating a privately owned, expensive, and limited train, officials could have been working to improve and expand our public transportation systems in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Of course, the train was mostly funded by a private corporation, All Aboard Florida, but received \$1.75 billion dollars in tax-exempt bonds, paid for by the state. One can only imagine how much a different \$1.75 billion dollars would have made for the poorly-funded buses and trains that so many people rely on to get to and from their jobs. Further concerns are raised about the environmental impact, as the train shares rail with freight cars that could be carrying hazardous materials, possibly spreading them to passengers on the Brightline. While it is nice to see our state take an interest in public transportation, but Brightline wasn't made for the public: it was made for the wealthy.

Footnotes:

1: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/transportation/fl-reg-brightline-service-begins-20180109-story.html>



Special Report: Parkland Students and the Gun Control Debate

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting wasn't the first mass shooting in Florida, nor the first school shooting in America, but despite this, the movement that has emerged from the shooting in Parkland has come to dominate the political landscape of our country and our state. It seems unbelievable that a group of high schoolers could come to affect public policy on such a level, and that's because it is disingenuous to say that it is the high schoolers leading the charge. The March for Our Lives organization is a sister organization of Everytown for Gun Control, an organization largely funded by Michael Bloomberg, and whose other donors remain anonymous. However, as Michael Bloomberg is a multi-billionaire CEO and former mayor of New York, it is a safe assumption to say that Everytown for Gun Safety, and by extension, March for Our Lives isn't as grassroots as it'd like to seem.

Everytown for Gun Control and March for Our Lives pushes for what they call "common sense gun reform". What they even mean by common sense is ambiguous, but when you look at their demands, it doesn't seem to be so "common sense". In the manifesto published in the Guardian, written by The Eagle Eye, the official student publication from Marjory Stoneman Douglas, they listed several demands that caused concern among those concerned with real change.

Their first demand, "Ban semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds", talks about how these weapons only belong in the hands of soldiers, and how the government should take these weapons away from citizens. The question we ask ourselves, is why should the government be allowed to use these weapons

on schoolchildren across the world, the manifesto instead sends the message that murder is fine, if it's the government that's doing the killing. That's a dangerous mentality to have, especially when the state has shown, time and time again, that it has no qualms using deadly force on its own citizens.

Their fourth demand, "change privacy laws to allow mental healthcare providers to communicate with law enforcement", sends a shiver down my spine. Already the mentally ill are more at risk of violence and imprisonment from the police and the state, and now we want to destroy patient confidentiality so that cops can read our medical records? Three years ago, a young black man, Cornelius Brown, was playing with a broom in his neighborhood, when Opa-locka police shot and killed him, just because he was muttering to himself and swinging around a broomstick. Cornelius was suffering from a mental health crisis, and instead of talking to him, the police yelled at him to stop, and then killed him when he walked away. According to Treatment Advocacy Center, a quarter of police shooting victims are mentally-ill, and the American Mental Health Counselors Association states that only three to five percent of all violent crimes in the United States are carried out by persons with mental illness. The mentally ill have often been the scapegoat when tragedies happen, but time and time again it is proven that they are even less likely than your average person to carry out violent acts, and more likely to be victims of state violence. Destroying confidentiality between therapists and the mentally ill will not stop crime, it will only further criminalize the mentally ill and put them at risk for police violence.

Their final demand, "increase funding for school security", specifically requests for state funding to further place police within our schools. According to the National Center for Women and Policing, police families are almost four times as likely to experience domestic violence than the general population, and in 2017 almost 1000 people were killed by the police. Is this what we want in our schools? Already, young children, especially black youth, are targeted by police in school, and are twice as likely to be arrested at school compared to their white classmates. Creating a school where children are constantly watched by armed police officers doesn't create a safe learning environment, in fact it creates quite the opposite. As the Washington Post succinctly puts it, "The criminal-justice system has all the subtlety and nuance of a hammer. If you put that system in charge of school kids' day-to-day safety, you shouldn't be surprised if it starts to treat the kids like nails."

While it is refreshing to see teenagers, especially ones from our state, lead the charge on policy change, we should remember that these kids aren't fighting back against racism, anti-semitism, and homophobia, which are the factors that drive mass shooting, but are instead turning towards the state to further criminalize the mentally ill, put more cops in schools, and disarm as many people as possible. Their goal of reforming the system is short-sighted, as it is the system of white-supremacy and misogyny that the state reinforces that has created the problems in the first place. These policy demands are merely furthering the reach of state suppression and can only create more violence within school and against the mentally ill. The only way we can stop the violence that pervades our society is by completely changing our society, not asking the same government that created our broken society to further control our lives.

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Amazon, the largest internet retailer in the world, is looking to expand, and Florida is on the menu. As far as capitalist monstrosities go, Amazon is the ire of many. They're known for paying their workers paltry amounts, working them literally to death, and not paying a single cent in taxes. They're the worst of the worst when it comes to corporations, and now they want to move into the sunshine state. Amazon is looking to build its second headquarters, called HQ2, and Miami is on their list. The Miami Dade Beacon Council, which is spearheading the effort to bring HQ2 down south, has signed non-disclosure agreements, to keep the rest of us in the dark.

Miami was put on the shortlist in January, but most consider it a long shot. That's because we haven't started throwing billions of dollars at Bezos to win his favor, but many say that our pleasant weather and lack of state and local income taxes could tip the balance towards Miami. One can only hope not! Having Amazon move into Miami would destroy the city's already astronomical real estate prices, and clog up traffic even more. Amazon has already started building a warehouse in Opa-Locka, with a hefty 5 million dollar contribution to cover infrastructure costs from the county. The county initially had requirements on hiring requirements for the property, but when Amazon came in, they happily slashed such requirements. Now, instead of having to hire 2,300 people and pay them \$37,000 a year, Amazon only has to hire 1,000 and pay just half of them \$27,000. Just to pay for the basics in Miami, you need to make \$38,000. So thank you Amazon, for providing work to keep 1,000 more people in poverty!



Teachers Teetering Towards Strike!

Teachers in our country don't have it easy. They don't get good pay, good benefits, or any respect, but teachers in Florida have it particularly bad. In the wake of the anti-Semitic hate crime in Parkland, the Florida legislature managed to steer millions of dollars into a "school safety" bill that directs money into student crime watch programs, further criminalizing students, especially black children, allows teachers to arm themselves, and creating a special police force to further repress schoolchildren. Despite the 400 million dollars going to more police, teachers have been ignored yet again. After the highly successful West Virginia Teacher's strike and the wave of strikes that have followed, Florida teachers are wondering if such a strike could work for them.

However, teachers in Florida have a lot of roadblocks preventing them from staging a successful strike. For one thing, a walk out strike for teachers is illegal in Florida, and the state teacher's union released the following statement: "Walking off the job or reporting to work late is not an appropriate action and it comes with harsh consequences. It is important for all FEA members to follow the law." This is because it is in the state's constitution, it is illegal for any public employees to strike or do anything that looks like a strike! The punishments for breaking such a law include termination, losing all certification, losing retirement benefits, and organizers could be fined up to \$20,000 per day. This law was established in response to the 1968 teacher's strike that happened in Florida, where after the strike, teachers exchanged their right to strike for their right to collective bargaining.

The strike of was the first state-wide teacher's strike in the country, where half of the teachers resigned (since they weren't allowed to strike), schools in counties were closed from anywhere from days to weeks. Students walked out with the teachers in solidarity, with one schoolgirl being quoted as saying "That's bullsh*t. We're getting the f*ck out of here.". If such a brave move happens again in our state, I can only hope that the students show their support once again, since it is the students who truly suffer when schools are underfunded.

However, unions seem to be staunchly anti-strike. The leader of the Florida Education Association, Joanne McCall, said "The only way we're going to make change is at the ballot box. It always feels good to make a rally...but at the end of the day, what does that gain you as you try to move a cause?" Unions have already been using legal means to try and secure more funding, but the state legislature only allotted 47 cents more per student, which leaves little for any raises. The governor's office states that they have allotted enough for the next fiscal year, and there will be no more money given. Many teachers look towards the upcoming Fall election to oust Rick Scott and solve their problems, but when teachers and other public employees are forbidden from taking direct action, how will anything change?

With the failure of passive, legal means to secure proper funding, it falls onto the teachers to stand up for themselves. Currently, educators have started a Facebook page, Florida Educators United, with over 2,000 members to organize outside of official union channels. Educators have lost faith in their unions, and never had faith in the state government to begin with. Members of the group express their disgust with union leadership, and the idea that the only method for change is the ballot box.



Florida Strike 1968

Arizona Rally 2018

We spoke with Nadia Zananiri, a teacher in Miami-Dade, and administrator of the Florida Educator's United page on Facebook and got to ask her a couple of questions.

SSA: What do you consider to be the biggest roadblocks to organizing a strike or other mass action here in Florida?

Nadia: The unions will tell you that our right to work laws are excessively harsh and we could all lose our teaching certification. The unions also seem to think that Florida teachers don't have it so bad. It is also after our legislative session has ended so striking right now would probably not be very effective.

SSA: How has union leadership reacted to the organizing?

Nadia: Not well. FEA President Joanne McCall Said Florida teachers have had raises and rallies are useless. Go out and vote. You will lose your license if you strike.

SSA: What are your demands from the state?

Nadia: Still working on that. Increase in education funding with categorical funding for teacher salaries, end to evaluations based on students test scores, reduction in testing and no new testing contracts, just use the SAT or ACT. And an end to VAM [Value Added Model]. End to best and brightest bonus based on teacher SAT scores. Bring back national board credential extra pay. Bring back district cost differential so high cost of living areas get funding. Minimum state teacher salary of \$50,000. Bring back tenure so teachers will feel comfortable speaking out on education issues.

SSA: Do you have any demonstrations or rallies planned that you want to share?

Nadia: We are planning action in Miami at the local level in May. Nothing specific to share. Encouraging people to get active locally as collective bargaining resumes.

Information regarding the May action will be posted on Facebook, so join the Florida Educators United group to keep updated.



Release the Refugees from Krome Detention Center!

Last December, 92 refugees fleeing the violence in Somalia were shackled, put in an airplane and flew towards Somalia. Above Senegal, the plane turned around and landed in Florida. The refugees were split up and placed in two detention centers: one in Moore Haven, the Glades Detention Center, and one in Miami, in Krome Detention Center. The abuse hasn't stopped now that these asylum seekers are behind bars, reports say that these people have been verbally abused with racial slurs, physically abused, and pepper sprayed. Despite the horror that these people are facing, they've banded together to file a lawsuit against ICE to stay here with their families.

On Saturday, April 7th, members of various immigrant advocacy groups, fellow black Muslims, and other allies came together outside the Krome Detention Center to talk about what was going on and rally together support. One detained refugee's family flew across the country to speak to the crowd, talking about their father, who was placed behind bars nearly a year ago. He committed no crime and was an upstanding father and member of their community. Now, for no reason other than the place of his birth, he is jailed, missing his children as they grow up without him. This rally wasn't the end of the actions to support these refugees, but merely the beginning. Currently, there is a petition that has gathered more than 10,000 signatures, calling for an end to the abuse.

Further actions will be organized to support these refugees. For more information visit the [Demonstration at Krome to Demand Release of Detained Somalis Facebook page](#).



Eulogy for the Last of the Miami Pine Rocklands

It seems as if South Florida won't get a break from the never-ending stream of development eating away at what little remains of our wild habitat. In March, Judge Ungaro allowed Ram Realty to continue bulldozing endangered pine rockland habitat to clear space for a WalMart and some apartments. Last year, activists managed to file an emergency lawsuit to stop the construction, which Ungaro approved. Now, construction has resumed on the 137 acres next to the Miami Zoo, and if the forest floor has been plowed, restoration is impossible, as the unique ocean floor would be destroyed. The pine rocklands contain and support many endangered plants and animals, including Florida Atala butterfly, gopher tortoises, bonneted bats, tiger beetles, and even the Florida panther.

Less than two percent of pine rockland habitat remains, and that number sinks lower every year. Despite the habitat being endangered, the federal government allowed Ram Realty to create their own, non-peer-reviewed, methodology to determine how much damage the project would do. The lawsuit to stop the construction, filed by the Wildlands Association, the Tropical Audubon Society, and the Miami Pine Rockland Coalition, is still open, but despite that, the judge removed the temporary restraining order, allowing the construction to continue. The surveys the company did were woefully inaccurate and sloppy, with no survey being done for tiger beetles, and only one part of the forest being checked for bonneted bats. The emergency lawsuit and temporary restraining order were the last line of defense for this endangered habitat, with it gone and the construction set to start at any moment, it is up to us to stop further damage from being done. For more information, visit the South Florida Wildlands Association Facebook page.



Predatory Payday Loans Get a Boost from Democrats and Republicans

It's common knowledge that Republicans and Democrats are essentially the same, but to many liberals, the thought that Democrats are just as bad as the "big bad GOP" is unfathomable. That explains why so many were shocked when Republicans and Democrats both voted overwhelmingly in favor of a bill that would allow payday loan companies, such as AmScot, to offer bigger loans with higher fees. Despite research from the Center for Responsible Lending, payday loan stores have double the concentration in minority neighborhoods, and in 2015 such stores collected over 300 million dollars from preying on the poor. These payday loans are small amounts of money with high interest rates that are expected to be paid back by the next paycheck. While that extra bit of money can be a lifesaver for many families living paycheck to paycheck, the high interest rates keep them locked in a cycle of debt.

In Florida, the cap for such payday loans was \$500 with \$55 collected for fees, now the cap has been raised to \$1000, with fees being increased to \$214. That's a raise from 11% in fees to 21% in fees! The bill was sponsored by Republicans, but co-sponsored by Democrats, and the votes in favor were 106 to 9, with the majority of African-American Democrats voting for it. This can be explained by the aggressive lobbying that AmScot employed to sway congressmen to their side, including recruiting priests and civil rights leader to advocate for them. They gave their lobbyists free rides to Tallahassee in their private jets and donated to their churches and community organizations. Some churches spoke out against the bill, and so did the NAACP, but the bill has been passed. It is only through mutual aid and community support that we can eliminate the need for these predatory lenders. If the people turning towards payday loans had a community safety net, then they wouldn't have to get locked into the never-ending cycle of debt that AmScot sells.



Interviews with Teachers at the Miami Teacher Pay Rally

On April 19th, on the North side of Tropical Park in Miami, over 40 teachers wore red and held signs protesting the lack of a living wage. We spoke to a couple of teachers on the ground about their experiences and what they want people to know.

Teacher 1: “Some of the teachers in Key West, which is really expensive, well where do they live? Well they live in trailers on Grassy Key, or they actually live all the way up in Homestead, and they literally drive down every morning and all the way back every day. And that’s going on now. We have a lot of teachers in Miami that live either in Broward county or in Homestead because they can’t afford anything here.”

Teacher 2: “For years, if you look up Florida statistics, students have made gains in math reading and science, however teacher salaries have stagnated, they’ve stripped us of our salary steps and many teachers, with advanced degrees, are taking on second jobs to make ends meet and it’s about time that something happened, and teachers get the respect that they need. We’re done with the praise. Everyone’s always praising us, the governor, our superintendent, but we don’t get a raise! I don’t believe much in the union, I think they bend to political pressure and they’re not really doing much for teachers. They should’ve been on this bandwagon a long time ago, with Oklahoma and the other states that have gone out there and made a difference.”

Cary Cabrera: “The teachers that went on strike in those years [referring to the 1968 Florida teacher’s strike], it’s not that they quit, they walked out of their classrooms and left everything behind to give a better future for future teachers, and that’s what in essence, back then, if you look at the times, what they accomplished. Florida is one of the few states that has embedded in their constitution contractual bargaining rights, and in order for that to be overturned, you need a 60% vote [of voters, not legislators] so it’s a very difficult threshold for anyone to take it away. So, what the legislature has done is they’ve created laws to weaken teachers and public schools in our state and we need to realize that.”

More rallies are planned in the future, so check the Florida Educators United Facebook page for updates. In addition, there will be a gathering at the May 16th School Board meeting, so check the United Teachers of Dade Facebook Page.





Building More Than Just A Garden -By JB

The Florida sun warms my neck as I step out into the parking lot of an abandoned Dairy Queen. We pass through a hole in the fence and my boots crunch over donated mulch, my hands picking through bushes once filled with life. The shade of broken banana trees cool the bees that indifferently fly in our faces. There are a few hives here, rescued by Comb Cutters from homeowners that opted to rehome rather than exterminate their unwanted guests. We pick a few berries. The Moringa trees boast beautiful leaves, seemingly unaffected by the storm. In 2017 Irma visited the area and we walk amongst the resilient leafy residents. A slanted mango tree, defiant in its posture, reaches out to offer us its' fruit. Only the tallest can reach the top of the tree for the ripe few and he passes them around between us. We explore this oasis and walk between the plant beds tended by rough sleepers and the survivors of abuse and addiction. This garden holds space for the lost and forgotten communities. All are welcome.

Around South Florida people are rising to challenge the monocropping dystopia forced upon us by big business and politics, against both our best interests and will. In Opa Locka and Liberty City organizers and activists from Health in the Hood and Dream Defenders come together to confront the challenges of urban gardening. On one of the plots there is no running water, and yet mangoes seem to fall from the sky. The neighborhood eagerly waits for the weeks when they are the ripest. Another garden, Cerasee Farms, provides a vision for the future. The garden described above and the model that we may all aim to emulate is being practiced by Urban GreenWorks, an organization that “provides environmental projects and food security programming to under-served urban communities throughout South Florida,”(Urban GreenWorks website). They are doing incredible work and have partnered with organizations across South Florida to develop sustainable urban farms.

We are working to directly challenge the unsustainable current methods of food production and provide basic food needs to our communities. The methods that we develop will be shared and easily replicated. It is our duty to spread actionable knowledge. The inherent dangers of our current food production systems are almost entirely ignored by the capitalist mainstream, and the long term effects, as measurable and evident as they seem to be, are perverted and decontextualized for capital. Our shortsightedness is killing the planet.

It is important to understand that our actions are making this planet uninhabitable. It will take millions of years for life to recover from the damage we have done in decades. The most positive projections paint the end of the century like Dante's Inferno. Hundreds of millions of displaced refugees, entire countries and continents burning while the billionaires take to the stars (fuck you elon), and the masses left starving and dehydrated, dying in the crumbling streets and the dust bowls of the future. Millions of screams crescendo and fade like waves in deafening silence and bloody hands reach out through the darkness begging for life. The way that we are living today is making our future impossible.


We all need to dramatically change the way we live. It will be easy for you, the reader to join me in the swamps and against the barricades, but our fight is to liberate all sentient life including all of the natural world. We will need to go out into the field to gather and learn the knowledge that has been denied to so many for generations and make it accessible. We need to listen to the indigenous protectors of the land and follow their lead in allowing the world to heal. We need to live by example and bring others into the fight. We need to relearn how to live in harmony with the world and each other by drawing from history and experience. The struggle of our lives is the struggle for our lives. Our enemy is entrenched and has us all in crosshairs, separated by borders and alienated by fear. Our enemies are ideas with real people and resources to defend them, BUT when held up to any reality these ideas smoke and evaporate. WE are left to interpret what remains. Intersectionality unites the oppressed. Art and expression are common tongues. We need CREATIVITY and EMPATHY to win. We need EACH OTHER to win. We must win.

Building dual power means decentralizing and decommodifying food production and redistributing food to at risk and marginalized communities. It means securing the means of food production in solidarity with all communities. I write this as a call to action to all Socialists, Marxists, Anarchists, and non-sectarian freedom fighters operating in the so-called United States to network with communities to produce and distribute food, information, security, and protection to all comrades. Solidarity to all global liberation struggles. May we be humble and brave, in our acceptance of nuance and non binary solutions, and in our unrelenting demands of freedom.

A comrade of mine in editing this reminded me that defining the problem can be overwhelming if we don't also put forth solutions. My hope in writing this is not to overwhelm but to inspire. There are real people all around the world and in the imperial core directly standing up against our forced future. We will build a new world. I love you all.

Thank you for caring enough about our future to read this publication. Many thanks to my comrades in editing this and the publishers for getting it to you. If you want to support any of these organizations, including this publication, you can connect with them locally and donate directly. We've been thinking about setting up a gofundme for garden supplies and rain barrel supplies so we can worry less about water. Keep an eye out for the Miami Garden Supply sponsored by Dream Defenders. We'll keep you updated on the progress of our projects in Opa Locka and Liberty City.





Another Black Man Killed by the Cops in Fort Lauderdale

Often when black men are murdered by the police, the press will fall over themselves to justify the killing, from using unflattering photos to claiming the person was “no saint”. In the case of Dytadious Mobley, they may be right, Dytadious was no saint, he was a murderer who killed his girlfriend’s mother in front of her grandchildren. However, this is irrelevant. None of this justifies having five officers fire bullets at a man in what can only be described as an extrajudicial execution by firing squad in broad daylight on a busy street. Officers claim the victim shot at the police and so the officers returned fire, five cops discharging their weapons at one man in a car. Bullets hit two cars and several store windows, and it remains to be seen whether they came from the police or the victim.

Now, his girlfriend must mourn both the death of her mother and the death of her children’s father. She told reporters, "For me, it's a double tragedy. I just went through this in January and, now again, I have to bury my baby daddy and take my kids to see their daddy for the last time in a casket. Like, it's crazy. It's no closure, no peace, no justice -- not for me, it's not." When we speak out against police violence, we must speak out against all police violence, not just in defense of the “innocent”, but even of those that society would consider “guilty”. Nobody deserves to be shot on the street, and we must stand with every victim, whether they were a saint or not.



On Wednesday, April 18th the South Florida branch of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) held a public meeting at the Broward College Central Campus on the topic No Walls, No Border: the Fight for Immigrant Rights in the Trump Era with Juan Miranda, an immigrant rights activist and member of the Greensboro, N.C. branch of the ISO speaking.

Juan began by reviewing the Trump administration's record of attacks on immigrants, including the Muslim Ban and the ending of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) as well as Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians and Salvadorans. He emphasized that among all the inconsistencies of policy, the one constant has been a series of racist attacks on immigrant of color and that this is not a reversal, but rather an escalation of Obama administration actions.

This was placed in the context of modern US immigration policy, a policy that serves the contradictory needs of capitalism to establish and control national boundaries while at the same time ensuring a supply of immigrant workers that can be exploited to the highest possible degree.

Juan then made the socialist case against immigration controls, emphasizing that they are against the material interests of all workers. He called for an all out struggle to defend all programs such as DACA that protect immigrants from deportation while arguing that this is not enough, that these programs leave out the vast majority of the eleven million undocumented workers. The revolutionary socialist argument is for the end to all distinctions between "good" and "bad" immigrants, for the abolition of all borders.

In the discussion that followed, participants spoke of their own experiences as immigrants and immigrant rights activists. The targeting of LGBT immigrants, and the threat to their lives that the current wave of repression represents was emphasized.



Interview with Matthew Schwartz on the Destruction of the Miami Pine Rocklands

The following is an interview that was done by phone on April 13th with Matthew Schwartz of the South Florida Wildlands Association, a small organization that does habitat protection in the greater Everglades area.

SSA: “Do you know whether the ground has been plowed and or not whether it can be restored?”

Schwartz: “From what I’ve seen, no. This is just my observations from looking at [the site] from the various streets that are adjacent to the area, it seems like they’ve cut down the trees and now I know they’re clearing those trees that were cut down. They’re in the process of doing that now, but they haven’t been actually excavating.”

SSA: “So there still is a possibility, if they were to say, ‘no, you can’t develop here’, and the land were to go to the state or the county, it could be restored, theoretically?”

Schwartz: “Yeah, in that very long shot possibility that it becomes public land or that the developer starts to put a conservation easement on it so that it could be restored to pine rockland, and that’s a real long shot, yeah, I believe from what experts have said about that property that it could be restored. The property next door, where the Miami Wilds Project might be going, that’s the Coast Guard property that’s east of this property, that was cleared a long time ago, and the Fish and Wildlife Service has said that property could also be brought back. So, they cleared it some time ago already, so grass and vegetation is already starting to come back, bringing back the pine rocklands and bringing back Miami-Dade slash pine and the

saw palmetto that were there a long time ago, that would be a much more rigorous undertaking.

SSA: “Regarding the case, I believe you and three others filed a lawsuit, can you give me any details on that?”

Schwartz: “Well, it’s in front of the judge. The judge is going to make a decision. I mean, the judge has already lifted the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) that was on the developer that halted construction after we requested that construction be halted, but she lifted that. I forget the timeline, but the developer has not moved in to start construction yet. Apparently, he’s waiting for the case to be wrapped up by the court. But, by lifting the TRO she was signaling that she felt what was done was legal. It’s not a question, so none of this what we’re talking about has anything to do with right or wrong, whether it was ecologically preferred or not. Courts decide whether something is legal or not, and she has determined that what she saw from up to that point looked like everything that was done was legal. That he bought the property legally, that the Fish and Wildlife Service made the determination that he could go ahead with it. But we’re still hoping that when all the material from the case is reviewed by the judge, that she’ll see that the Fish and Wildlife Service did not do a very good job in issuing the permit. Remember, the Fish and Wildlife Service is the defendant here. We’re not suing RAM, we’re not suing the realtor. We’re suing the Fish and Wildlife Service for their issuance of a habitat conservation plan for the project.”

SSA: “So, UM (University of Miami) did once own the land, correct?”

Schwartz: UM owned the land, and before UM the Department of Defense owned the land.

SSA: “Okay, have they made any statements regarding the construction of the land?”

Oh, I’ve seen statements that they’ve felt that what was done was legal. When they first made the sale, they were kinda crowing about what a good deal it was, because here they had some land that they weren’t doing anything with and by selling it off, they were able to bring in some money. So, they’re initial response to this whole project was “Great, we had some land we weren’t doing anything with and now it’s been sold and we have money to do other things with.” So that’s the only statements I’ve seen from them. They’re asserting that it was legal and they’re

asserting that they made a good business deal, but they're not apologizing for the destruction of pine rockland. They're not gonna do that, they're just sort of ignoring the fact that this property is as ecologically valuable as it is. They're just sort of putting that off and not addressing that issue. Because what could they do? I mean, they've done it, they know what happened, they realized that this was a very rare, valuable piece of land, a habitat for many types of endangered species, and they made a deal. So, you know, they shouldn't have done it! They should've done the right thing and made a relationship. The county had approached them some years ago, Miami-Dade county has a program called the Environmentally Endangered Lands program, that's called EEL, and EEL had approached them and said, "Hey, why don't you let us maintain, manage, restore these lands as pine rocklands?", just as they have in other pine rocklands next to this one.

So, let me give you a picture of what's happened there, because it's not just this property. So, the entire is much bigger, the property originally, well it goes from basically the railroad tracks on the west side over to the east side of the Coast Guard station. From the north it goes from Southwest 152nd street to Eureka Drive, and within that gigantic rectangle there's all kinds of properties. There's the Coast Guard station, there's an Army Base, there's a Department of Defense prison, there's the UM property, there's RAM's property, there's Zoo Miami, there's Larry and Penny Thompson Park, so there's a whole mosaic of properties with different ownership, and all of it is the Richmond pine rocklands, and all of it was owned by the Department of Defense. It was the Richmond Naval Air Base during World War II, they actually launched blimps from that base to protect the Atlantic Ocean and the shipping along Florida from German U-Boats. That's why that was not developed, because if you look around it on the map, you'll see everything else around there is developed. It's paved over, with subdivisions and shopping malls, and everything, just the normal Miami-Dade development and that particular block of land didn't get developed because it was Department of Defense. And then they gave it out to different entities, the county got some, the Coast Guard got some, UM got some, and that's why Zoo Miami is there. That's why the Larry and Penny Thompson Park is there. But the county has done really good on the parts of the Richmond pine rocklands that they own, and they've really done a beautiful job of restoration. If you ever go down there, you'll see, if you go to Larry and Penny Thompson Park, and it's beautiful pine rocklands. That's the southern end of the Richmond pine rocklands, and you'll see just beautiful pinelands, you'll see the

Richmond pine rocklands, and you'll see just beautiful pinelands, you'll see the limestone sticking up from the ground, and the saw palmetto and birds and butterflies and all kinds of critters in there, and there's bike trails and walking trails, and that's what we hoped the northern part, which UM owned, was gonna become one day. It didn't happen, because UM got rid of it and we didn't know about it until they wrote about it in the Miami Herald! And then I went back and I saw the South Florida Business Journal article where they were saying "Yay! We sold the land, we got a bunch of money!", which really pissed me off, actually."

SSA: "You are taking legal action, but have you considered taking any direction action, physically stopping the construction from happening?"

Schwartz: "Well, a couple years ago I organized a rally for the rocklands at the site. We met at Zoo Miami and marched out onto Southwest 152nd Street. I can only speak for myself, I can't speak for any other groups, I am not considering any kind of direct action. I'm not considering direct action, there's a lot of reasons for that, but that's not in the cards for my organization."

SSA: "Where can people go to get involved or get updates on what's happening?"

Schwartz: "Well, I post regularly on the South Florida Wildlands [Facebook] page, and the other groups also have websites and things they do. The wildlands page, it's a popular page, people go there, and I can tell you that some of the posts that I've done there on the rocklands have been some of the posts that have generated the most interest. It's very frustrating, because I know people want to do something, and trying to come up with something that would make a difference, we tried, I mean I tried to have meetings with UM to convince them to give this up, I tried to convince RAM to give this up. It was a business deal and they signed a contract and I tried very hard in my conversations with them to get them to realize what they were doing and back out. I tried to get the Fish and Wildlife service, long before they signed the agreement, I had many meetings with them, pleading with them to put the brakes on this project and say, "Look, the habitat that these endangered species need is too small already and now you're cutting it up even more, you shouldn't be writing a permit for this." So, I spent a lot of energy with both RAM, UM, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service trying to get one or all of them to pull the plug on this, and I made good arguments. They didn't listen."

SSA: “What other information would you like people to know about?”

Schwartz: “Well I think what people need to do, mostly, cause these are decisions, the permitting decisions are made ultimately by elected officials, in this case Miami-Dade county had to give the okay for this, and I would say that people need to get involved in these kinds of issues all the time, and when they have an opportunity during election years to meet and talk with politicians, they need to ask questions about this. I mean the politicians are really out of the loop on this completely. They love to talk about the special prosecutor and foreign policy and education and taxes and healthcare, but the environment is almost never discussed. I mean, watch the nightly news! I mean, now and then, if we did a protest in front of the site, it would be covered. And maybe that’s a good reason to do protests is to get coverage for issues and bring it to people’s attention, but people really need to stay on top of these issues and even just ask questions, when they have a chance to talk to politicians, say “Hey, Florida’s habitat is shrinking by the day for wildlife everywhere.” This is not isolated, this is kind of getting a lot of attention, but I work in projects throughout South Florida, this is happening everywhere. And now people love to talk about climate change.

Years ago, when people used to talk about the environment, it was air pollution and litter and water pollution. People used to be all about litter. I remember the first time I told someone that I was working with environmental issues, “So you don’t like people littering?” and we don’t talk that much about people littering anymore. Now we talk about climate change more than anything else. When it comes to the environment, environment and climate change are the two things that go hand in hand. But I will tell you that Florida’s wildlife will be lucky to reach the point where climate change impact is really going to be affecting them. They’re not gonna live that long, they’re not gonna make it to climate change. They’re dying just from mostly losing habitat, secondly, it’s degradation of habitat from pollution and run off. I mean, think about this site: I think they’re developing 80 acres approximately and protecting 50 acres on the site and 50 acres off the site. But those 50 acres that they’re gonna protect are gonna be surrounded by parking lots, lighting, a Wal-Mart, runoff when it rains. Everything is going to be impacting the preserved areas. People have this idea that, “Oh, we’re going to develop these hundred acres, but we’re gonna protect these hundred acres.” But that hundred acres that they’re protecting is no longer as valuable as it was, cause now it’s got this major

subdivision next to it. People need to know, that from my point of view, development in undeveloped habitat in Florida should be stopped, period. It should absolutely be stopped if we want to have wildlife in Florida, if we want to have fish, if we want to have coastal ecosystems too, because everything we do here runs off into the coastal ecosystems. Everything. Every time you touch your brake you're peeling off a little bit of metal off that brake shoe, and that metal is falling onto the roadway, and that metal on the roadway is washed down through the storm drains when it rains. So everything, everything from buildings to lawns gets washed out onto the coast. If people wanna get involved, they need to directly go to politicians and make habitat protection an issue. Ask them about this [the rocklands], ask them about panthers, ask them about manatees, and ask them about every single wildlife species and let them know that these issues are important, because that's not happening. When people are polled on environmental issues, or not environmental issues, they ask voters every time there's a presidential election, "What's important to you?", almost nobody mentions the environment. Or if they do, they mention climate change. But they really need to think about what kind of state, what kind of area they want to live in."

