

THE INDYPENDENT

#242: JANUARY 2019 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

TENANTS UNITE
P4

BRAZIL ON EDGE
P16

2018 BEST
ALBUMS
P18



RUSTY ZIMMERMAN

GEAR UP FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ & THE PLAN
TO CHANGE EVERYTHING
BY PETER RUGH, P12

A banner for a fund drive. It features a black and white photograph of a person in a dark jacket and patterned pants reading a newspaper. The background is a green and white striped pattern. The text is in bold, black, sans-serif font.

IT'S IN YOUR HANDS.

FOR MORE ON OUR 2019 WINTER FUND DRIVE, SEE PAGES 2, 23 & 24



THE INDYPENDENT



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EDITOR'S NOTE



For journalists, it's the worst of times. And it's the best of times.

Journalism as an industry has been in dire straits for years. That's hardly news.

And Donald Trump's war on the media and the truth is not as novel as it seems. Lyndon Johnson lied us into Vietnam. Richard Nixon placed journalists on his "enemies list." Ronald Reagan worked diligently to control every image that came out of his Hollywood presidency while George W. Bush proclaimed "Mission Accomplished" from an aircraft carrier just as the U.S. occupation of Iraq began to implode.

Still, we find ourselves in a uniquely toxic moment where not only are journalists and what they do under attack as never before, but so is our society's collective sense of reality and the idea of solid facts, our building blocks for understanding and interpreting the world and possibly changing it for the better.

It's also an amazing time to be doing journalism. The stakes have never seemed higher. The issues more urgent. The future direction of the country more up for grabs.

Will we fully embrace being a diverse rainbow nation where everyone's basic needs are met, including the need to be respected for who you are, where politics no longer caters to the whims of the 1 percent and immense challenges like reversing climate change are fully addressed? Or will a resentful minority successfully assert their vision of a white nationalist ethno-state with liberty and justice for the few?

More people have taken to the streets to protest in the past two years than at any time in American history, according to social movement historian L.A. Kauffman. Voter turnout in the recently completed midterms was the highest in more than half a century.

Here at The Indy we've risen to the occasion. We've been on the frontlines covering the stories that matter the most from the Women's March and #MeToo to the struggle to defend immigrant families and communities to the stunning rise of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whom we featured on our cover this past spring when no other publication in this city even bothered to take note of her insurgent campaign.

Our circulation has tripled to 45,000 in the past two years. You can find our bright red and white outdoor news boxes across the city. It's 2018 and we also have a snappy new website, are producing podcasts and short videos and now have a weekly Monday evening news show on WBAI-99.5 FM.

We love what we do. For more about our annual winter fund drive, see pages 23-24. With your support we look forward to doing more great work in 2019.

— John Tarleton

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THU DEC 20
5:30PM–7PM • FREE
FORUM: CIVIL RIGHTS
TOWN HALL

Join community members committed to protecting and expanding civil rights and ending the scourge of mass incarceration at this town hall hosted by VOCAL NY. **PACIFIC BRANCH LIBRARY** 25 4th Ave., Bklyn

THU DEC 20
7:30PM–11:30PM • \$3–\$10
CEREMONY: BURNING OF GRIEVANCES

Reduce your 2018 anxieties and bogeymen to a pile of smoldering ashes at this brass-band-tastic, mask-wearing, parasol-twirling burning of grievances. Gather at a secret location in DUMBO, board the NYC Ferry, march through Williamsburg, and ride an underground chariot through the bones of Brooklyn to an effigy burning near the Halsey L stop — all while accompanied by a bacchanalian brass band. Visit withfriends.co/shadow_traffic to learn more and RSVP. **DUMBO, Bklyn**

SUN DEC 23
4:30PM–6PM • \$15–\$50
THEATER: STORIES OF JACKSON HEIGHTS

A play focused on an undocumented, Bangladeshi family living in Jackson Heights. **QUEENS THEATRE** 14 United Nations Ave. S., Queens

FRI JAN 4
7:30PM–Midnight • \$10, in advance, \$12–\$15 at the door
MUSIC: PUNK ISLAND NEW YEAR'S SHOW
Start the new year right with SOUL GLO and All Torn Up at this benefit for Punk Island,

which stages a free, all-ages DIY music festival every summer.

SUNNYVALE
1031 Grand St., Bklyn

JAN 4–JAN 12
times vary • \$15–\$55
MUSIC: WINTER JAZZ FEST

A hotbed of cultural discovery, presenting new and exciting sounds and scenes throughout New York. The music marathon that takes place during the festival's Friday and Saturday nights gives audiences full access to all participating venues from early evening deep into the wee hours. This year's headliners include Gary Bartz, Pharoah Sanders, Fey Victor, Marc Ribot and The Bad Plus. Visit winterjazzfest.com for a full schedule and a list of participating venues.

SAT JAN 5
2PM–4PM • FREE
SCREENING: THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The Vito Marcantonio Forum will show "The Vietnam War," Chapter 4 of the Oliver Stone mini-series. Discussion to follow. **MULBERRY STREET LIBRARY** 10 Jersey St., Mnhtn

SAT JAN 5
8:30PM • \$25
DANCE: THE DANCE CARTEL — ONTHEFLOOR

Driven by pumping bass, glitter and dance theory in near-equal parts, the Dance Cartel's **ONTHEFLOOR** is a 90-minute, energy-busting experience that fuses high-octane choreography with a party vibe. **PUBLIC ARTS** 215 Chrystie St., Mnhtn

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JAN 10–JAN 15

Times vary • \$15–\$20

FILM: 1ST IRANIAN FILM FESTIVAL NEW YORK

A selection of acclaimed and award-winning films from one of the world's most vital and distinguished national cinemas. The festival aims to unite two strands of Iranian moviemaking – the classic art-house Iranian cinema beloved by cinephiles around the world, and new cutting-edge works that showcase the adventurousness and daring nature of younger Iranian directors. Visit irfilmfestny.com for a full program.

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., Mnhtn

SAT JAN 12

1PM–5PM • \$15–\$50

MUSIC: ROCK N' ROE

With the appointment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade* and access to sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion, are in jeopardy. Join Move Forward Staten Island for a community benefit concert to support both Move Forward Staten Island and Planned Parenthood. Featuring: Wahoo Skiffle Crazies, Hegazy and Dolltits.

THE FLAGSHIP BREWING COMPANY

40 Minthorne St., S.I.

SUN JAN 20

10AM–8PM • FREE

CONFERENCE: YIDDISH ANARCHISM: NEW SCHOLARSHIP ON A FORGOTTEN TRADITION

Despite the importance of Yiddish anarchism to the histories of both the U.S. left and the Jewish community, it has been largely forgotten. This conference, the first of its kind, brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars whose multilingual research examines the origin, evolution and contributions of Jewish anarchism in New York City and beyond.

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

15 W 16th St., Mnhtn

JAN 25–JAN 26

FRI 7PM, SAT 3PM • \$22–\$40

MUSIC: BLACK FLAGS OVER BROOKLYN

A two-day, anti-fascist extreme metal festival featuring a vendor market with band merch, radical publishers, activist organizations, local artisans and more.

BROOKLYN BAZAAR

150 Greenpoint Ave., Bklyn

BE BLOWN

AWAY: From Miles Davis to Art Blakey, sax-man Gary Bartz has jammed with the best. He's among the headliners at the Winter Jazz Fest this January.

FEEL THE RHYTHM:

Get **ONTHEFLOOR** with the Dance Cartel at Public Arts on Jan. 5.



12-7-18

NOW IS THE TIME, P4

Will the Democratic takeover of the state Senate lead to an overhaul of NY's rent laws in 2019? Or will big money have its way again?

BRIEFING ROOM, P7

Toxins, drones, landlords, killer cops — welcome to the jungle.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD, P8

The Indy bids adieu to a long-standing Boerum Hill haunt.

WAY OFF TRACK, P10

The 2nd Ave. subway extension isn't a train line, it's a money pit.

MAKING AMERICA GREEN AGAIN, P12

The fight for New Deal 2.0.

DAWN OF THE YELLOW VESTS, P15

Workaday activists are injecting a fresh sense of liberty, equality and fraternity into France.

BRAZIL GOES BERSERK, P16

Meet Trump's Latin American doppelganger and the resistance challenging his bullets, beef and Bibles agenda.

GLOBAL BRIEFING ROOM, P17

Bombs drop on Yemen, indigenous peoples race to save the Amazon, a voyager breaks through the heliosphere.

A SOUNDTRACK FOR A YEAR OF JOY & STRUGGLE, P18

Offerings from local working-class heroes and global superstars make our list of 2018's best albums.

A HISTORY OF ENERGY, P20

Can our civilization rapidly transition to a new system of energy? It's happened before.

INK-SLINGER NOIR, P21

A reporter finds himself chasing a story that could prove fatal in this new novel.

DEGENERATION X, P21

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore delivers a tale of sex, drugs and learning to love yourself.

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P22

Our advice columnist Rev. Billy has a holiday message for you.



2019, YEAR OF THE TENANT?

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

The movement to strengthen New York State's rent controls and tenant protections is going into 2019 with two advantages it didn't have before: A solid Democratic majority in the state Senate, and growing tenant organizing in several upstate cities.

After six of the eight renegade Democratic senators who'd allied with Republicans to sustain GOP control lost to more leftist primary challengers in September, Democrats won a 39-24 majority in the November elections. That gives them clear control of the Senate for the first time since 1966.

That means bills such as repealing the law taking vacant apartments out of rent stabilization if they rent for more than about \$2,733 a month, which regularly passed the Assembly over the past several years and never got out of committee in the Senate, now have a strong chance of success.

"Never say Albany can't screw something up," says Sen. Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan), who sponsored several of those bills, "but I'm far more optimistic than I've been in my adult life."

"It doesn't mean this is automatically going to happen," says Tenants PAC treasurer Michael McKee. "We're going to have to work to make it happen. But I think we can."

Meanwhile, housing activists in New York City and its inner suburbs have begun working with tenant groups in upstate cities including Albany, Rochester, Binghamton and Kingston. "In every place in upstate New York, rents are rising faster than incomes," says Ryan Acuff of the Citywide Tenants Union in Rochester. Tenants there also lack "basic, basic protections," he adds. It is legal, for example, for a new owner to buy a building in a gentrifying area and give everyone 30 days to get out.

The state's rent-stabilization laws, which protect about 1 million households in New York City and Westchester, Nassau and Rockland counties, expire in June. Renewing them is a perennial struggle: In 1997 and 2003, with Republicans holding the governorship and the state Senate, the laws were dramatically weakened. In 2011 and 2015, with center-right Democrat Andrew Cuomo as governor, token improvements were enacted.

"Since 1994, we have lost nearly 300,000 units of affordable, rent-stabilized housing," says the Upstate-Downstate Housing Alliance coalition. "Five million renters in New York State have no protections whatsoever."

The coalition's legislative agenda includes long-time tenant demands such as repealing high-rent vacancy decontrol and the 20-percent bonus increase

allowed on vacant apartments, ending permanent rent increases for apartment renovations and requiring "preferential rent" discounts to last for the duration of the tenancy, so renters don't get whacked with massive increases when their leases expire. It also wants to ban rent increases for building-wide major capital improvements, on the grounds that such work is often a necessary part of building maintenance and the costs passed on to tenants are often fraudulently inflated.

It's also demanding statewide tenant protections: removing the geographic restrictions in the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) of 1974, so local governments outside New York City and its inner suburbs could enact rent-regulation laws, and barring evictions without a "good cause" such as not paying rent or creating a nuisance. It also wants to give tenants statewide the right to take their landlords to court to demand repairs or heat and hot water, now largely limited to New York City.

McKee believes Gov. Cuomo is the biggest obstacle to significantly strengthening rent regulations. The governor told the Metropolitan Council on Housing in writing in August that he would "advance a comprehensive plan — eliminating vacancy decontrol, limiting or eliminating vacancy bonuses, combating artificial rent inflation, making preferential rent the rent for the life of the tenancy." "It would be very hard for the governor not to sign these bills," Krueger says.

Therefore, McKee suspects, Cuomo will "say all the right things in public," but will placate his real-estate donors by working behind the scenes to weaken pro-tenant legislation, such as by pushing to raise the threshold for vacancy decontrol instead of repealing it outright — and then claim that as a great improvement, as he did in 2015. That would

IT'S TIME: State Senator-elect Julia Salazar (D-North Brooklyn) speaks at a City Hall rally in support of sweeping reforms to NY State's rent protection laws.

'IF WE DON'T DO THIS IN THE NEXT SIX AND A HALF MONTHS, WE MAY NEVER HAVE A SHOT.'

"We want one fair-housing law for the whole state," says Acuff.

Most residents of upstate cities such as Buffalo and Utica are renters, he says. In Rochester, they suffer from both gentrification and neglect. Some neighborhoods have problems with landlords abandoning or not maintaining their buildings, while others, particularly the downtown area inside the "inner loop" of Interstate 490, are facing rapid rent increases and "buyout-clearout" mass evictions.

One out of every 15 of the city's renters got evicted last year, the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* reported last May. In June, a luxury-housing developer ousted 70 people from the single-room-occupancy Cadillac Hotel, including some who had lived there for more than 20 years.

"It moves so quickly. They just start buying up whole neighborhoods," Acuff says. But residents of a 16-unit building in the gentrifying Meigs-Monroe area, he notes, staved off eviction by forming a tenant union: They won the right to either stay or return after renovations were finished.

State Sen. Neil Breslin (D-Albany) has agreed to sponsor a bill to expand the ETPA, says McKee.

still leave the system open to fraudulent deregulation, McKee says.

With fraud and vacancy decontrol eroding the number of rent-regulated apartments, McKee says, tenants have to treat strengthening the laws like a political emergency. "If we don't do this in the next six and a half months, we may never have a shot," he says. "Tenants have to get involved. They have to get on buses, they have to write letters, they have to visit their legislators and persuade them to make this a priority."

WINTER HEAT

What can you do when you wake up one morning and your apartment is so cold you can see your breath, and the water in your shower feels like glacial runoff?

New York City law requires that from Oct. 1 through May 31, apartments must be at least 62°F at all times, and at least 68° between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. if the outside temperature is below 55°.

Hot water must be at least 120° year-round.

To complain to the city, call 311 or file a report online at "NYC Heat or Hot Water Complaint." In

public housing, call (718) 707-7771.

If it's a chronic building-wide problem, tenants can also file an "HP action," a lawsuit in Housing Court to demand repairs. For more advice, call the Met Council on Housing hotline at (212) 979-0611. It's open 1:30 to 8 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, and 1:30 to 5 p.m. Fridays.

— S.W.



STEVEN WISHNIA

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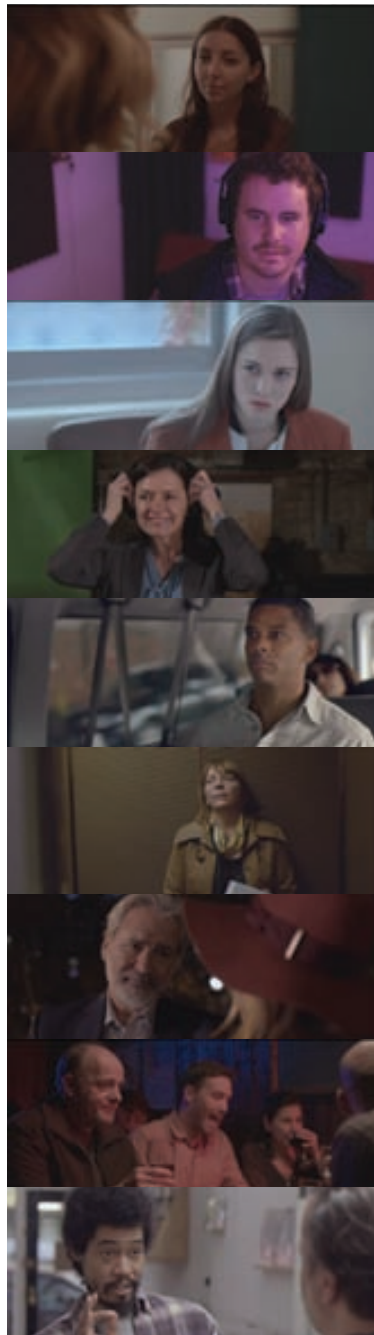
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BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

UNFRIENDLY SKIES

Up to 14 NYPD drones will soon be hovering over the city's skyline, the police department announced this December. The drones will not be weaponized, according to the NYPD, but instead will perform tasks like finding lost children and monitoring crowds. Nonetheless, the secrecy surrounding the development of the drone program, together with the department's history of unlawful surveillance directed at activists and communities of color has watchdogs barking. In a statement, the New York Civil Liberties Union warns that the program "opens the door to the [NYPD] building a permanent archive of drone footage of political activity and intimate private behavior visible only from the sky."

tend with. Following demolition work conducted by Jared Kushner's Westminster City Living company, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found lead levels nearly ten times federal Environmental Protection Agency standards in the building. "The halls and everything in my apartment [were] completely covered in dust," said David Dupuis, who has lived at 118 E. 4th Street for 35 years. "The burning sensation at the back of my throat lasted for days." The Lead Dust Free NYC Coalition and elected officials are calling on the city to ramp up enforcement of lead regulations, particularly in older buildings undergoing rent-hiking makeovers.

TAKE WARNING: Prophetically, mock NYPD drone ads reading, "Protection when you least expect it," began cropping up in NYC for a stretch in 2012.

KILLER COP MAY FINALLY LOSE BADGE

The police officer who was captured on video choking Eric Garner to death in 2014 may finally lose his job. For the past four and a half years Daniel Pantaleo has been on paid administrative leave while the NYPD has insisted that it was waiting for the Justice Department to first determine whether to bring federal civil rights charges against him. With none forthcoming and the statute of limitations expiring this summer, the NYPD began preliminary disciplinary proceedings against the white officer in December. His departmental trial is slated for May Garner, a black father of six, was mistakenly accused of selling loose cigarettes, sparking the fatal confrontation on the streets of Staten Island. "I can't breathe," Garner's last words, echoed on as a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Workers at Amazon's Staten Island "fulfillment center" plan to join the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Pointing out that the city and state are offering the company a \$3 billion incentive package to locate its corporate headquarters in Queens, they contend Amazon should use some of that money to raise wages and improve working conditions, and that it should collectively bargain with its employees. It is so hot during the 12-hour shifts Rashad Long is forced to work five or six days in a row that he says he sweats through his shirt. "We have asked the company to provide air conditioning," he said, "but the company told us that the robots inside cannot work in the cold weather."

The warehouse workers are joining forces with employees at the grocery chain Whole Foods, which Amazon recently acquired. They announced the union drive on the steps of City Hall on Dec. 12, ahead of a City Council meeting where lawmakers lambasted the backroom deal struck between Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Amazon to subsidize the trillion-dollar company's Long Island City HQ.

UNFORTUNATE SONS

Life ain't easy when the president's son-in-law is your landlord. At least if you live at 118 E. 4th Street in the Village. For years, residents have complained of mounting garbage, a lack of heat and frequent cooking gas outages. Now they have lead construction dust to con-

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

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HANK'S FOR ALL THE MEMORIES

BY PETER RUGH

Ernest Hemingway wrote of the importance of a “clean, well-lighted place.” I would counter that a dark den of questionable cleanliness is desirable on occasion too, a place to venture away from the glittery trappings of postmodern society and revel in bokeh-glazed gloom with a cold one in hand. The people at Hank’s Saloon pride themselves on running a clean shop, but a barroom doesn’t exist for over a hundred years without collecting a bit of dust in the odd corner. Anyway, you’ll find plenty of darkness in there and while it’s not for everyone, those of us seeking such refuge have for years received it on the corner of Atlantic and Third Avenues in Brooklyn.

On a recent weekday afternoon this included a young bride-to-be who was apprehensive about trying on wedding dresses with her mother later that evening. “I’m more a T-shirt and jeans girl,” she said. “And then there’s all that weird underwear that goes along with it.”

From behind a bar that has bore the strain of thousands of leathery elbows and absorbed gallons of spilled beer, Jeannie Talierco filled a tall dram with something clear and potent on the house. She offered her nuptially-nerve-rattled customer mints too so that her mother wouldn’t get on her case for having a nip of the hard stuff.

It’s small acts of kindness like this that have earned Jeannie a reputation far and wide. She’s not a heavy drinker herself and never takes a sip while on duty but might put a twenty on the bar for a hard-up regular. She’s been at the grand ol’ dive for around two decades and is its heart and soul. Teachers, playwrights, executives, folk singers, punks, mathematicians, juvenile prison mess hall attendants, Jimmy Kimmel — virtually all manner of society has at one time or another sought Jeannie’s council and her generous pour.

But Hank’s Saloon is soon to be no more.

The two-story, railroad-car-shaped building where Hank’s resides on the ground floor (nobody has occupied upstairs for decades) was built in the 1880s by two Irish brothers. It first opened as a bar in 1903 and was popular with Mohawk ironworkers who began settling in Boerum Hill in the 1920s to work on the Empire State building, forming a community known as Little Caughnawaga. The headquarters of Ironworkers Local 361 was just up the block in those days and union decals — together with stickers promoting the numerous punk, rockabilly and honky-tonk bands that have lent their raucous rhythms to Hank’s rickety stage through the years — still cling to the bar’s ancient mirrors and windows.

Today Hank’s is surrounded by glass-walled high-rises yet there are few Mohawk ironworkers left. Jeannie has Hank’s flame-emblazoned logo tattooed on her right forearm, but when she first started working at the bar it went by Doray Tavern, after its owners Dottie and Ray — “a sweet old couple” who spoiled her, as Jeannie fondly describes them. The neighborhood was in rough shape in those days and at night the doors were locked to keep trouble out. But once it was determined you weren’t going to start a fight or hold the joint up you were admitted.

“It was a real nice crowd, real cool,” Jeannie remembers. “A lot of oldtimers. A lot of ironworkers.”

Dottie passed away in her sleep one evening after a night of dancing and Ray took the road for heaven soon after. In 2005, the bar opened in its current incarnation, named for

the cowboy crooner of such numbers as “I’ll Never Get Out Of This World Alive.”

Through it all Jeannie has remained at her post.

Come January, however, she and her customers will have to make way for a six-story condominium building. There will be some kind of restaurant or cocktail lounge on the ground floor — likely too pricey and well-lit for many of the Hank’s regulars to feel at home in, but you can’t evict a memory and you can’t bulldoze a ghost.

“I always think there’s spooks in here,” Jeannie says. The ice machine will rumble, the front door will open seemingly on its own reconnaissance “or something will go a little freaky and everybody will say, ‘That’s Dottie and Ray. May they rest in peace.’”

Boerum Hill’s own Jonathan Lethem has noted the spirits too. He immortalizes the saloon in his short story the “Mad Brooklynite,” writing of it as a “bar like a black hole. Daylight bent and broken at its threshold, full of Mohawk ghosts.”

The ghosts will be absent when Hank’s reopens this February several blocks away near Borough Hall. The new venue will be three or four times larger than it is now, with barbeque on offer from Hill Country Food Park downstairs, and the sound system will be much improved.

“We will not be trying to recreate ‘Hank’s Saloon’ (since that is not possible), but hope to offer the same community and neighborhood atmosphere that we have now,” reads a little slip of paper handed to patrons asking after the dive’s fate.

Rumor has it that the bar’s rowdy Sunday afternoon “Honky-Tonk Brunch” that Jeannie spearheaded will be replaced by some sort of gentle jazz dining experience. And the crowd will be different too, fewer working stiffs and more suit-and-tie types and out-of-towners from nearby office buildings and Marriott hotel. Many of Hank’s bartenders, including Jeannie when I spoke to her, aren’t sure if they’ll be working at the new place either. The month gap between Hank’s closing and reopening is a long time to go between checks.

Either way, those looking to stop by and see Jeannie can always find her at the American Legion at 9th Street and Third Avenue where she’ll be serving up hearty libations and salty philosophy on Friday nights.

“I’ve been very fortunate,” Jeannie reflected. “The people I met here — I met a few assholes but basically everybody helps everybody. It’s a shame they’re going to tear this place down.”

We at *The Independent* think so too. This was our favorite watering hole after wrapping up a late night meeting or finishing an issue just as the sun licked the sky. The sound of glasses clinking, the ping of Hank’s duct-taped cash register, Jeannie singing along under her breath to a Motown classic on the stereo, her voice like a radio tuned just shy of the station it is looking for but not without a certain sweetness — the din of the dark little den will ring in this reporter’s mind long after it goes down and condos come up.

Over the years, people were married at Hank’s and people were stabbed, but mostly it was just a simple spot where friends met for a good time on a dime. There aren’t enough places like it left in this town.

Long live Brooklyn, down with yuppie scum!

And remember to tip your bartender.



ALL PHOTOS ERIN SHERIDAN

THE HARD STUFF:

Jeannie Talierco tending bar at Hank’s.

BURN TO BE WILD:

The bar’s iconic exterior has lured and repelled patrons for the past 13 years.

ALWAYS: It could be 1988, it could be 2018. Hank’s lady’s room is timeless.

HIGH TIMES AT A

LOW DIVE: One of Hank’s many regulars enjoys a good laugh.

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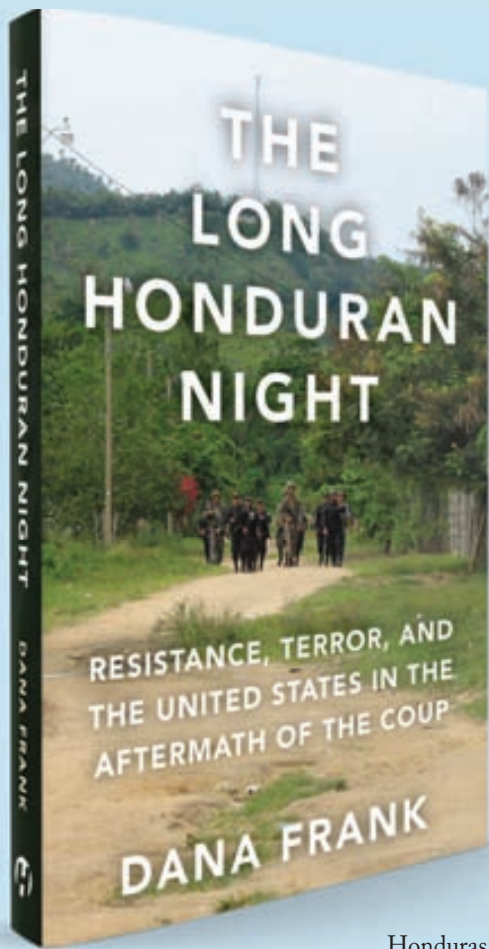


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The Long Honduran Night . . . tells not only the tragic story of another failed state and the forces that continue to work against establishing real democracies in Central America, but also inspires in its stories of everyday people—in Honduras and the United States—who work against difficult odds to create change, often by placing their lives at risk.”

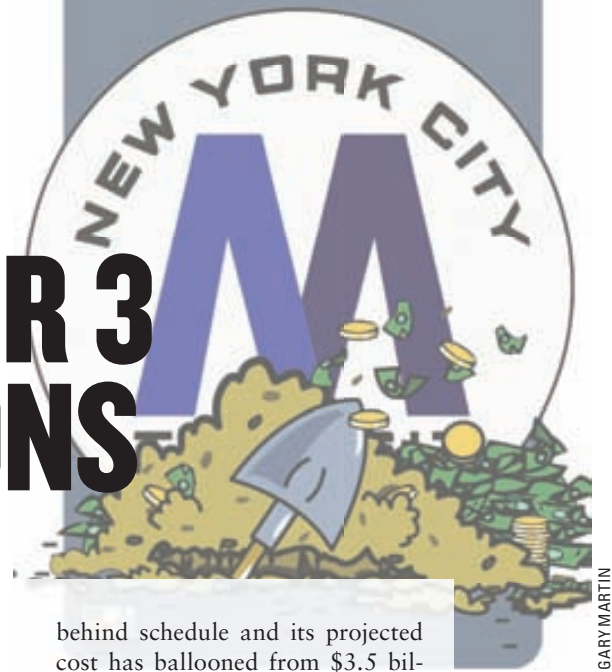
—María Martin,
independent journalist

This powerful narrative recounts the dramatic years in Honduras following the June 2009 military coup that deposed President Manuel Zelaya, told in part through first-person experiences. Although it is full of terrible things, this is not a horror story: the book directly counters mainstream media coverage that portrays Honduras as a pit of unrelenting awfulness, in which powerless people sob in the face of unexplained violence. Rather, it's about sobering challenges with roots in political processes, and the inspiring collective strength with which people face them.

 HaymarketBooks

MASS TRANSIT

\$6B FOR 3 STATIONS



GARY MARTIN

BY JOHN TARLETON

The MTA has a long-term plan to make life easier for New York City's beleaguered commuters — at least a few of them. It will cost billions of dollars and won't be ready for a decade or longer. Is it a new, modernized signal system to replace the antiquated one from the 1930s that keeps trains creeping through dimly lit tunnels like giant metallic caterpillars?

Not so fast.

The MTA is ready to move forward with its plan to extend the Q line by three stations from 96th Street to 125th Street after the Federal Transit Administration green-lighted the project on Nov. 19, making it eligible for as much as \$2 billion in federal assistance.

The new stations represent Phase 2 of the Second Avenue subway project. They will be located at 106th and 116th Streets in East Harlem before the train reaches 125th Street and veers over to connect with the 4-5-6 line at 125th and Lexington Avenue, as well as the nearby Metro North station.

Phase 1 extended the Q train by three stations from 63rd to 96th Street at a cost of \$4 billion, the most expensive subway dig in human history. Phase 2 is projected to cost upwards of \$6 billion with a projected completion date of between 2027 to 2029. The really long-term plan is to extend the subway line all the way down the East Side to the financial district in Lower Manhattan.

“It's all about real estate,” said Tom Angotti, professor emeritus of urban planning at Hunter College and co-author of *Zoned Out! Race, Displacement and City Planning in New York City*. “The hottest piece of real estate in Manhattan is the Upper East Side and then going up into East Harlem.”

The Second Avenue subway follows in the pricey footsteps of projects such as the \$2.7 billion extension of the 7 train by one station from Times Square to 33rd and 11th Avenue, site of the Hudson Yards luxury real estate development project. Then of course there's the East Side Access project, which will allow Long Island Rail Road commuters to connect with Grand Central Station and the Upper East Side. That project is years

behind schedule and its projected cost has ballooned from \$3.5 billion to more than \$11 billion.

“The subway system was originally built to move people into Midtown,” Angotti said. “Today the areas that need mass transit the most are outside Manhattan and they need to be connected to each other.”

According to Aaron Gordon, author of the *Signal Problems* newsletter, a key way to rein in subway construction costs would be to change regulations that require new subway stations to be much larger than is necessary.

“If you just go to a Second Avenue station, you can see how much space there is compared to other subway stations and that really makes things way more expensive than they necessarily have to be,” Gordon told *Indy Radio News*.

The dream of a Second Avenue subway dates back to the 1920s and was revived in the mid-2000s. Benjamin Kabak, author of the *Second Avenue Sagas* transit blog, warns that it will take upwards of 20 years to complete all of six new subway stations on this one line. “This is an unsustainable pace for a city trying to keep pace with international peers and in desperate need of massive expansion of its transit network,” he wrote on his blog.

The MTA should stop pouring money into new subway lines, Angotti told *The Indy*, get most cars off the road and invest instead in less glamorous (and less costly) dedicated bus lanes that deliver riders to existing subway stations. This would bring better transit service to all corners of the city. To accomplish this, he added, will require overcoming the objections of neighborhood car owners who don't want to lose parking spaces to bus lanes and the NYPD which doesn't want to be bothered with the mundane task of safeguarding dedicated bus lanes from other users who might clog it up.

“These are political barriers that the elected officials don't want to confront,” Angotti said.

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STARRING

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(Adapted from “Me and Lee,” by Judyth Vary Baker, Trine Day.)

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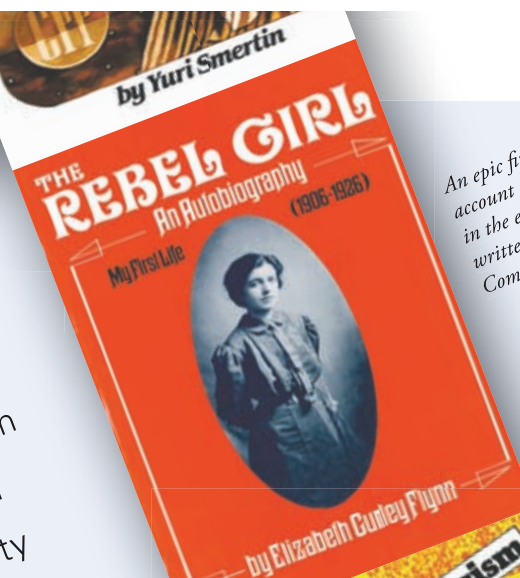
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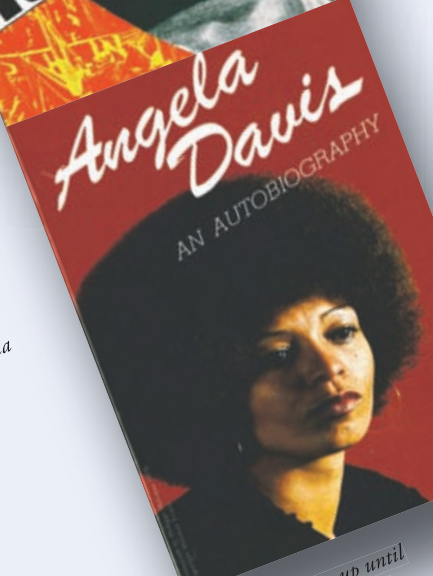
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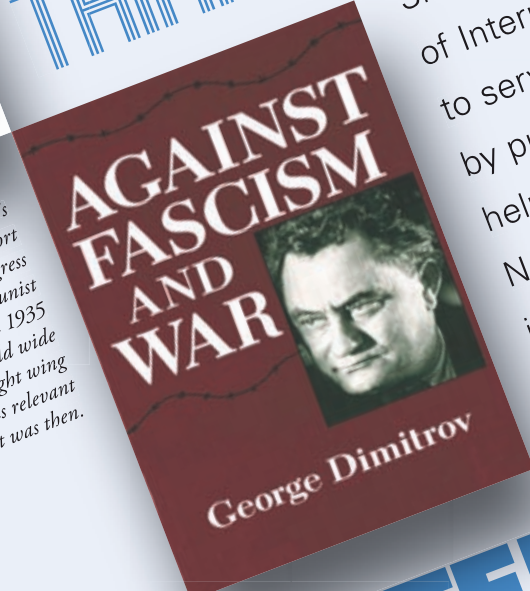


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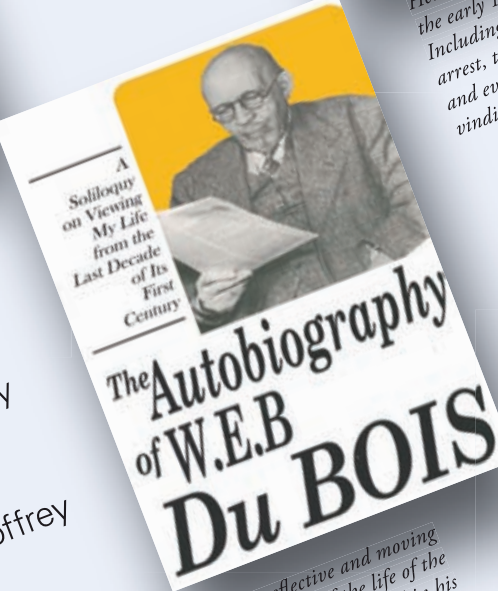


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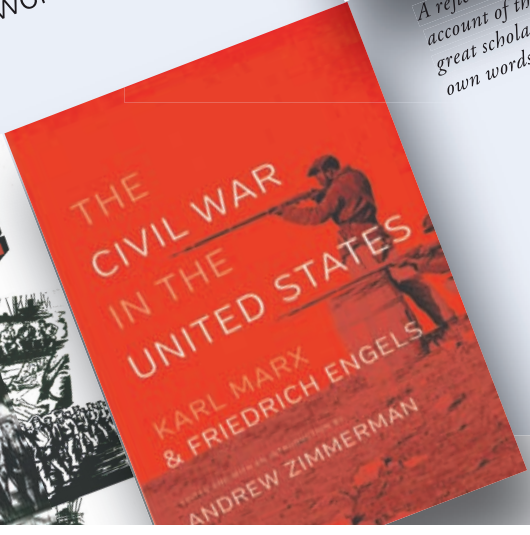
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A reflective and moving account of the life of the great scholar, told in his own words.

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SAVING THE PLANET & SO MUCH MORE

HOW THE GREEN NEW DEAL COULD TRANSFORM AMERICA

BY PETER RUGH

A thirty-foot sperm whale comes up for air. Before slipping back into the deep blue its eye gleams sight of something strange in the distance. To the whale, it looks like a flock of seagulls, each with three wings flapping. For some reason, they can't take off.

She doesn't pay them any mind. She's busy with a calf to feed, her third in the past decade. When she was a calf herself, the three-winged seagulls weren't there. But she is spotting more and more of them as she swims off the coast of Long Island these days.

She's noticed other changes as well. The water is cleaner, and there are more and more of her kind coming upon one another. And why not? There's plenty of squid and a lot fewer plastic bags to prey on these days.

Unbeknownst to her, the two aren't unrelated, the fertile ocean and the strange birds on shore — what the whale's distant evolutionary relatives in the human race refer to as wind turbines. If her eye could stray further, take on a loftier gaze, she would see that her distant cousins are busy at work, raising solar panels atop their buildings and homes, retrofitting them too, so that they will be cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. She'd witness streets virtually devoid of vehicles save for schools of buses, gobbling up passengers like cephalopods and subway cars gliding without a hitch, graceful as eels over bridges.

This is a world where human and animal and environment are approaching harmony. It is nowhere near the "Hallelujah" chorus of Handel's *Messiah*, but it has come a long way from the thrash-metal discord days of fracking, tar sands extraction, open-pit coal mining, uranium excavation, deepwater drilling, deforestation and the general masochistic flaming frenzy that characterized 20th and early 21st century ecology. In other words, it is a far cry from the world we currently inhabit. It's one that, if built, will be built by dreamers. It will require those in power now — who, for all their talk about the glory of capitalist innovation, can't see beyond tomorrow's Dow Jones index to save the planet — to listen to America's youth, its scientists, its rebels and to the rumblings of Gaia herself and make way for some true innovation.

If this green future comes to pass, those of us fortunate enough to inhabit it may look back on Nov. 13, 2018 as a turning point. That's the day 200 young climate change activists occupied the soon-to-be Speaker of the House's office in Capitol Hill, many carrying orange placards that asked, "What is your plan?" Fifty-one youth in total were arrested, charged with obstruction.

In addition to a fine, the charge carries with it a certain irony. While they were there to disrupt business as usual in Nancy Pelosi's lair, the underlying purpose of their visit was to make a deal, a Green New Deal, and spur the kind of investment in combating and adapting to climate change that Pelosi and other leaders of the country's two main political parties have obstructed over the past two decades. Coming as it did in the wake of a UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that warns humankind has just 12 years to drastically reduce its output of heat-trapping greenhouse gases or global warming will be irreversible, and given extra media attention thanks to the presence of camera-trailed Congresswoman-elect, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

(D-NY), the sit-in helped push the Green New Deal into the national conversation.

'WHAT SCIENCE AND JUSTICE DEMAND'

So, what is a Green New Deal and why are our nation's elites so reluctant to move on it?

A Green New Deal is a much-needed "overhaul of our economy that is in line with what science and justice demand," says Stephen O'Hanlon, a spokesperson for the youth-led Sunrise Movement, the organization that, along with Justice Democrats, orchestrated the sit-in at Pelosi's office.

What he and other Green New Deal proponents describe is essentially a public works program on the scale of or perhaps greater than New Deal 1.0 and the subsequent national economic mobilization that came with the United States' entrance into World War II. It is a proposed massive public investment that would heal the planet, address historical injustices — racial, economic, environmental — and strengthen the economy. It "would put equity at its center so that we can stop climate change, give our generation a livable planet, create millions of good-paying jobs and tackle poverty," says O'Hanlon.

A Green New Deal, says Elizabeth Yeampierre, executive director of the Brooklyn-based community organization UPROSE and national co-chair of the Climate Justice Alliance, must support "a just transition, the rights of workers, have the prior and informed consent of indigenous and frontline communities" and include the elimination of all greenhouse gases and co-pollutants that cause respiratory diseases like asthma.

The exact contours of New Deal 2.0 have yet to be detailed, and that's what the November sit-in was all about. The immediate demand was for Pelosi to establish a Select Committee For A Green New Deal that would be mandated to present a comprehensive plan by March 2020 — just in time to drive the issue to the top of the Democratic Party's agenda as it gears up for the elections later that year — when it will have the chance to gain control of both Congress and the White House. Advocates for a Select Committee say no Congressman who has received campaign contributions from fossil fuel industries should be allowed to join it.

In a statement, Pelosi said she was "inspired" by the demonstrators and urged the Capitol Police to be gentle with them. Prior to the sit-in, however, headline Dems showed scant political will to address global warming. Pelosi has burnished her image as an environmentalist in the past, but as her home state of California burned to a crisp this summer, she did her best to avoid mention of climate change while stumping around the country for fellow Dems.

Even after the publication of the U.N. report, Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) said he foresaw merely working on "ancillary pieces" of climate legislation for the time being. He's the highest ranking Democrat on the Environment and Commerce Committee's environment subcommittee. Meanwhile, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.)

called for abandoning climate all together and focusing instead on "practical" and "opportunistic" goals. In other words, it just isn't politically practical to save the human race from its own demise.

Following the Sunrise sit-in, Connolly signed on as one of 31 (and counting) Green New Deal endorsers in the House. In the meanwhile, adding extra urgency to developing a plan for a concerted national response to climate change, the Republicans will be drilling Mother Earth nine ways to Sunday. The apple of their icy eyes is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, thought to contain the largest untapped oil reserves in North America. In 2017, Congress approved drilling in the 30,000-square-mile nature preserve through a measure attached to its tax giveaway to the rich and 45-ton trucks could soon be rolling onto the tundra in the coming months looking for crude to tap.

Beyond the GOP being a wholly-owned subsidiary of the oil industry, the facts of climate change fly in the face of what the Republican Party stands for. Acknowledging climate change means conceding that the benefits of profits for some — in this case fossil fuel executives — don't necessarily squirt down to the rest of us. That regulation is necessary. That govern-

THE GREEN NEW DEAL CHALLENGES THE DEMOCRATS' PENCHANT FOR BUSINESS FRIENDLY CLIMATE SOLUTIONS.

ment has a role to play in the economy. That markets can't always meet demand where it is needed, in this instance the demand for items like electric cars rather than gas-guzzling vehicles consuming 9 million barrels of oil a day in the United States. And, for the party's evangelical wing, a particularly hard fact to swallow: that the planet isn't 6,000 years old and fixed in eternal permanence. Party leaders have proven willing to destroy Earth as we know it rather than budge an inch for reality. Adam Smith's invisible hand is playing Nero's fiddle and a touch more than Rome is on fire.

"Part of the problem is our ruling class is so rotten that they can't even get their heads around the climate problem," says economic theorist Doug Henwood. "You know, they have these fantasies like Peter Thiel running off to New Zealand, their bunkers and all that shit. They can't escape it. But they just can't think [about] anything beyond the immediate short term. They should be. They should be mobilizing to do something about it."

THE DEMOCRATS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Most Democrats have taken a somewhat softer line on climate change than the GOP hardliners. They acknowledge global warming is real, yet have failed to take meaningful steps to address the apocalyptic scale of the problem.

The kind of massive state intervention in the econo-

my that addressing climate change requires our elected officials to institute fell out of favor with the party of Franklin Roosevelt long before the Republicans rose to power. The Dems have always played seesaw between the interests of their corporate campaign donors and those of the party's middle- and working-class base, but since the end of the Cold War and the demise of Soviet communism as a threat American global hegemony, they have more and more aligned themselves with the jealous interests of their elite backers.

Party leaders have embraced a business-friendly, neoliberal approach to climate change, just as they have just about everything else. It's a logic that says you can't offer Americans health coverage without giving away billions to insurers through a heavily-subsidized "marketplace." You can't provide relief to homeowners holding underwater mortgages without first bailing out the big banks. No social progress is possible without being mediated through the market, without someone on Wall Street making a buck.

The last time the Dems controlled the House with Pelosi at the helm, they passed cap-and-trade legislation, which would have set a threshold on the amount of greenhouse gas that could be emitted nationally and established an energy market wherein players could trade pollution permits. The measure never went up for a vote in the Senate but nonetheless is indicative of the party's general approach to climate change. It's all gung-ho to help the planet but has to ensure that there is money in it for it for bankers and corporations first.

The trouble with market-driven approaches to social change, and with climate change in particular, is that markets, while constantly fluctuating themselves, don't take to change all that well at all. They are sensitive beasts, prone to myopia.

The closest thing to a large-scale state investment in climate adaptation and prevention the Democrats have mustered came in the form of President Obama's 2009 post-bailout stimulus package. Billions in tax credits and subsidized loans were provided to green entrepreneurs. The stimulus helped the renewable energy industry scale up and become price competitive with fossil fuels. From 2009 to 2017, the cost of solar in North America fell from over \$350 to \$50 per megawatt hour, according to the Lazard investment bank while the cost of coal hovered around \$100 per megawatt hour. But the next investment in a green economy will have to be in the trillions, not billions, and speed is of the essence.

The select committee Ocasio-Cortez wants Pelosi to establish would (deep breath) "develop a detailed national, industrial, economic mobilization plan... for the transition of the United States economy to become carbon neutral and to significantly draw down and capture greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and oceans and to promote economic and environmental justice and equality." This tall order would crawl up the Congressional dumbwaiter and be ready for passage come January 2021.

What it would look like is tricky to say but the folks over at Data for Progress (DFP) have produced an ambitious outline that focuses on meeting emissions reduction targets based on the Paris climate agreement. The non-binding accord (that President Trump none-

theless withdrew from in 2017) aims at limiting Earth's temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius — already a dangerously high fever for the planet. In order to avoid crossing over the climate threshold, the United States must, among other steps:

- Produce zero net emissions from buildings by 2030, zilch from energy and transportation by 2050.
- Reforest 40 million acres of public and private land by 2030.
- Expand, through sustainable farming, agricultural land use by 70 percent by 2050.
- Produce near zero manufacturing and packaging waste by 2040.

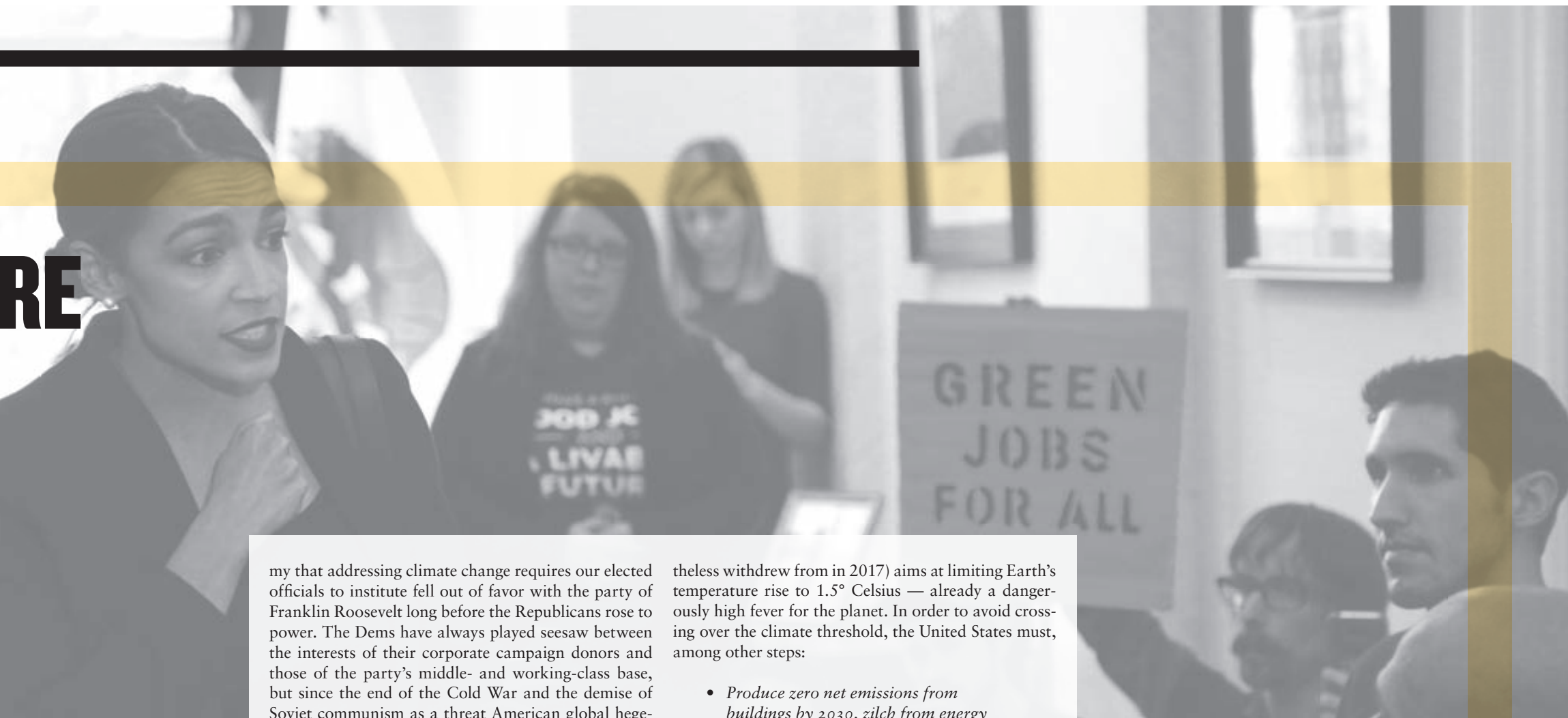
Shifting to a sustainable, zero emissions economy would generate 10 million new green collar jobs within the first 10 years of its implementation, according to DFP. Among the provisions envisioned would be a federal jobs guarantee that would ensure that anyone who wanted a \$15 per hour or more Green New Deal job would receive one. This would create a public option for jobs and provide an alternative to millions of workers currently stuck in low-wage or otherwise miserable jobs. Unsurprisingly, this measure polls well in both red and blue states.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE?

On a recent morning on the rooftop of 128 W. 138th Street, the folks over at WE ACT For Environmental Justice offered reporters a chance to see what a Green New Deal might look like. They've partnered with New York City, the state, nonprofit environmental educators with Solar One and energy panel installers at Grid City Electric to install photovoltaic solar cells on nine cooperatively-owned and two market-rate buildings in Harlem. Four of the installations have been completed. So far much of the work has been performed by laborers trained and hired from the neighborhood. In addition to saving the coops \$1.7 million, the solar panels will keep 4,117 tons of greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere over their 25-year life span.

"Even before we get to a Green New Deal, the mayor under his OneNYC plan has called for renewable power on top of all public buildings," said Cecil Corbin-Mark, WE ACT's deputy director, when asked by *The Independent* how a project like this might be expanded. "We are calling on the mayor to say, 'Let's make this project move. Let's make sure that the schools, the fire houses, the police [precincts], the post offices in this community have the opportunity to put solar on top of their roofs.' That's one way to immediately scale it up without dealing with the morass that is Washington, D.C."

Continued on next page



COURTESY OF THE SUNRISE MOVEMENT



SAMUEL MCWILLEN

CATALYZING ACTION: Incoming freshman Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joins the cool kids with the Sunrise Movement in the principal's office on her first day of class.

SUNBATHING: Cecil Corbin-Mark of WE ACT shows off solar panels the organization helped install at a cooperative apartment building in Harlem.

GREEN NEW DEAL

Continued from previous page

Adding extra impetus to the solarization drive is legislation that would double the city's building emissions reduction goal to 40 percent by 2030 with a long-term goal of 80 percent by 2050. The measure could soon arrive on Bill de Blasio's desk. City Councilmember Costa Constantinides (D-Astoria), who introduced the bill, and its supporters have described it as a "Green New Deal" for New York City and hope it will set a template for other major cities to follow.

A TOUGH HABIT TO BREAK

Globally, while renewable energy usage is on the rise, so too is natural gas and oil. In recent years, greenhouse outputs have either held steady or increased. According to a report released in December by the Global Carbon Project, 37.1 billion tons of heat-trapping gas will be released into the Earth's atmosphere in 2018, the highest total ever. In the United States, emissions rose by 2.5 percent. China and India saw their emissions soar by 5 and 6 percent respectively. Essentially, humans are consuming more energy, the bulk of it coming from planet-warming sources with a slim remainder of wind and sun filling in the gaps.

Responding to the climate crisis requires putting fossil fuel companies out of business through taxes and regulations. A carbon tax, would have "to start high and keep getting higher," says Henwood, though "it's hard to imagine Congress" as is "passing something like that." But a Green New Deal could absorb that displaced fossil-fuel workforce. Imagine a United States which, instead of selling weapons to countries like Saudi Arabia, exported wind turbines to the Indian subcontinent, solar panels to China. A nation that, rather than squandering \$1.5 trillion on Trump's tax cuts, \$26 billion in yearly fossil fuel subsidies and trillions more on endless wars, invested in tackling a very immediate problem threatening our species and millions of others with extinction — and generated millions of jobs while doing it.

As Christian Parenti, author of *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*, observes, "the ruling class doesn't come to its senses unless forced to."

Before the institution of the original New Deal at the height of the Great Depression, the United States was experiencing 25 percent unemployment along with widespread hunger and misery across the land. As American factories and farms lay idle, the Soviet Union was experiencing full employment and expanding its influence on a global front. The prospect of global communism wasn't just something your crazy Birchite uncle rants about but a concern that kept Congressmen and industrialists awake at night. Roosevelt needed to respond to the crisis or he risked having a revolution on his hands.

The situation is much different today. Wages are stagnant but the unemployment rate is less than 4 percent. And while that figure doesn't include people who have given up looking for work (the rate of labor force participation is at its lowest in decades), it is a far cry from one in four adults being out a job.

Wind, solar and other companies in the green sector would benefit in a big way from a Green New Deal but most leading Fortune 500 companies have a non-stake in it. They rake in a substantial part of their revenues from their international operations. Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, General Motors, ExxonMobil, Coca-Cola, Starbucks — the United States may be home but it's just one more square on the economic checkerboard. Their executives' main concern is low corporate, capital gains and individual tax rates and hence disinvestment in the public sphere. There are also major portions of corporate

America simply engaged in straight-up asset stripping — deindustrialization, public sector privatizations, debt portfolios.

Yet, with rising sea levels, extreme storms, droughts and raging fires expected to knock billions out of the U.S. economy in the decades to come, Parenti sees conditions conspiring that could compel the ruling class to act.

As a jumping-off point, "There's a weird thing about the state and weather, disaster more specifically," he says. "The U.S. government has since its very beginning intervened and tried to make people whole after natural disasters. As climate change continues to accelerate, the price tag for that continues to soar. The question of who pays and whether we can afford this giant military" could reach a boiling point.

This often-glossed-over history of the state stepping in doesn't just apply to floods and fires, even in our neoliberal epoch. The government was, after all, forced to rescue the economy during the 2008 financial crash. That bailout might have looked different were it dispensed today. Given the popularity of politicians such as Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, there would be a real opportunity to call for wealth redistribution, Parenti argues.

Regardless, natural disasters have something to teach us.

"Storms are physically damaging and disruptive but they are also ideologically damaging and disruptive," says Parenti. "The rhetoric of selfishness and market hubris, all that goes out the window. In a moment of crisis, giving people free stuff is laudable. Self-sacrifice is laudable. Solidarity is expected and laudable. If at a moment of crisis those values come to the fore, how long should they come to the fore and why only at a moment of crisis?"

As *The Independent* was going to press, the Sunrise Movement conducted another sit-in on Capitol Hill on Monday, Dec. 10. This time 143 demonstrators were arrested in a protest that included more than 1,000, mostly-young people calling on Pelosi, soon-to-be Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Rep. Jim McGovern to support the Green New Deal committee before Congress breaks for winter.

"I want to make sure that it happens," McGovern, the incoming Chair of the influential House Rules Committee,

THE YOUTH ACTIVISTS WANT CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO RECOGNIZE SCIENCE.

told the protesters. "But we have to work out the details. We shouldn't get hung up on every little detail."

In a tweet, Hoyer, who has received more than \$250,000 from the fossil-fuel industry, said he was "happy to hear" from the Sunrise Movement and that he appreciates their "passion."

The youth activists don't want Congressional leaders to recognize their passion, they want them to recognize science. A full blown climate crisis is barreling at us like a wrecking ball off its chain. We can spot it coming from a mile away. But physics and chemistry operate at one pace, politics at another. The question of whether we achieve a Green New Deal, or make any effective effort to dodge global warming's impact at all, could depend on the size and strength of a latter-day environmental movement rising up from below.

Dean Patterson and John Tarleton contributed to this report.



WON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER: A Sunrise Movement member roams the halls of Congress looking to win support for the Green New Deal.

COURTESY OF THE SUNRISE MOVEMENT

ROADBLOCK REBELS

A POPULIST INSURGENCY PRESENTS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER IN FRANCE.

BY RICHARD GREEMAN

MONTPELLIER, FRANCE — After a month of daily roadblocks and disruptions in every corner of France, and after four successive, violently repressed mass demonstrations in Paris and the provinces, the spontaneous, self-organized movement known as the Yellow Vests continues to seriously challenge the political and economic order in France.

Not only has the rebellion persisted despite unprecedented police brutality, misrepresentation in the mainstream media and the rejection of the leadership of the labor unions, it has grown in popularity. Public support hovers at around 80 percent, according to recent polls. The movement has also expanded its goals — from an initial rejection of a tax increase on fuel to the outright dismantlement of the neoliberal order in France and a near-unanimous call for President Emmanuel Macron's resignation.

As *The Independent* goes to press, French students have joined the rebellion, protesting Macron's introduction of an anti-democratic college admissions process. Students walked out of 170 high schools in answer to a "Black Tuesday" appeal for demonstrations by their union. Meanwhile, the Yellow Vest revolt has spread to Belgium, Holland, Hungary and even Iraq, recalling the 2011 Arab Spring and Occupy movements.

MACRON SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE

On Monday, Dec. 10, after a month of silence in the face of mass rallies fuelled by anger at his perceived arrogant, condescending personality, Macron finally went on television with a pre-recorded speech that combined threats with concessions.

The Jupiterian president began by laying blame for the violence that has shaken France entirely on the protesters. The state would offer "no indulgence" if the Yellow Vests persisted, he said. To movement activists, who blame Macron for the systematic police mayhem deliberately unleashed on their peaceful rallies, this was gasoline on fire.

But after the stick came the carrot. Macron went on to admit that the protesters may have a point. "We may have forgotten the single mother struggling to make ends meet," he said, proposing "a national conversation" about the social-economic crisis that he pledged to coordinate with local mayors.

He also offered a few economic concessions: rescinding new taxes on social security income for some retirees with very low incomes, the elimination of taxes on paid overtime, a raise of \$115 in the monthly minimum salary for some workers and a call for businesses to voluntarily give a year-end bonus to their employees.

The president's attempt to placate them was widely

rejected as "too little, too late" by the Yellow Vests, who continue to call for Macron's resignation and for a bottom-up reorganization of French democracy.

A FALSE DICHOTOMY

The uprising was originally provoked a month ago by Macron's raising of the sales tax on gas and diesel fuel. Blue- and white-collar workers, farmers and small businesspeople in small towns who depend on cars to survive were outraged. Macron justified this bitter pill as necessary for reducing France's carbon emissions. Ironically, France subsidizes the fossil-fuel industry, which enjoys a very low tax rate on its huge profits, to the tune of \$7.9 billion a year. Meanwhile, Macron's government has encouraged car use by cutting public transportation and delocalizing post offices and government service centers.

The "carbon tax" seemed calculated to divide working people worried about the end of the month from environmentalists worried about the end of the world. On Saturday, Dec. 8, however, Yellow Vest demonstrations across the country converged with a long-anticipated "March for the Planet."

In the city of Uzès, one Yellow-Vest woman's homemade sign said it all: "End of the world/end of the month/same people responsible/same struggle."

In Paris, where thousands of self-organized Yellow Vest protesters attempted to gather to express their grievances on the Champs-Élysées for a fourth successive Saturday, they were systematically filtered by police at Paris railroad stations and vehicular approaches to the capital. Hundreds were arrested for possessing ski goggles, face-masks, helmets and other protections, as well as such "weapons" as a hammer (found in the trunk of a provincial carpenter's car) and bocci balls.

Those who managed to make it to the site of the demonstration were chased down by federal riot police who attacked them with tear-gas, flash-bombs and water-cannons. By the end of the day, cars were burning near the Arc of Triumph and all of Paris was in chaos.

This militarized state over-reaction to a mass political demonstration breaks with a long tradition of tolerance for muscled rallies held by rowdy farmers and militant labor unions — a tolerance Macron has blamed for the failure of previous governments to pass needed pro-business counter-reforms. Meanwhile, throughout the provinces and in the small cities like Uzès hundreds of thousands of environmentalists and Yellow Vests were out demonstrating or blocking highway entrances, intersections and shopping centers.

WHY FRANCE'S 'SILENT MAJORITY' IS MAD AS HELL

Like all the spontaneous mass uprisings that dot French history going back to feudal times, the Yellow Vest revolt was initially provoked by taxes. Spurning all established political parties and unions, the Yellow Vests organized on social media and acted locally. The broadcast media, although highly critical, spread the news nationally. The movement gathered steam across France, blocking intersections, filtering motorists, allowing free passage at highway toll booths and becoming larger and increasingly militant each successive Saturday.

Why Saturdays?

"I can't go on strike," explained one Yellow Vest participant. "I'm raising three kids alone. My job, that's all I have left. Coming on Saturdays is the only way for me to show my anger."

Women workers — receptionists, hostesses, nurses-aides, teachers — are present in unusually large numbers in the Yellow Vest crowds, and they are angry about a lot more than the tax on diesel. Like Trump, Macron has showered corporations and millionaires with huge tax cuts, creating a hole in the budget that he has compensated for with cuts to public services — hospitals, schools, transit, police — and through tax increases for ordinary people, up to 40 percent of their income. A large portion of the population is struggling to get by and going into debt.

In response to an appeal for calm from Macron, the leaders of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and nearly all other labor federations signed a déclaration of solidarity — not with the injured and arrested demonstrators, but with the Macron government as the representative of the "peaceful" republican order. They accepted Macron's invitation to "resume the social dialogue" — that is, to sit at the table with him and negotiate more "give backs" of workers' rights.

The next day, contradicting themselves, CGT Secretary General Philippe Martinez and other union leaders called for a national labor demonstration on Friday, Dec. 14. They plan to raise the same basic economic demands as the Yellow Vests but one day before the movement's next scheduled protest.

Regardless, the stage is set for the next act of the popular uprising in France in the weeks ahead. Stay tuned.

Richard Greeman has been a socialist and international activist in the United States and France since the 1950s. He is best known as the translator (from French to English) of the revolutionary novels of Victor Serge. Elyane Méry contributed to this report.



DANIEL FISHER

THE TRUMP OF THE TROPICS

CONCERNS GROW IN BRAZIL FOLLOWING FAR RIGHT ELECTION WIN

BY MICHAEL FOX

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil is collectively holding its breath for Jan. 1.

That is the day, far-right president-elect Jair Bolsonaro will take office. He won on Oct. 28 with more than 55 percent of the vote.

Bolsonaro is no ordinary politician. He is a former military captain and three-decade-long congressman who has been fined for sexist, racist and homophobic remarks. He has praised torture, Brazil's former military dictators, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Donald Trump. He has promised violence against his foes, be they criminals, the corrupt, or his political adversaries.

During a campaign rally in the state of Acre, he pretended a tripod was a machine gun and told cheering crowds that they were going to "execute" Workers Party supporters there.

"We're going to run these crooks out of Acre," he said.

His election threatens to push the country toward authoritarianism not seen since the country's last military dictatorship ended in 1985.

Bolsonaro has vowed to fight crime with an iron fist and do away with left-wing activism. His future finance minister plans to push privatizations and free market reforms, which has international investors salivating.

Teachers and students are concerned their right to study freely will be curtailed. Bolsonaro has called for the teachings of Paulo Freire — the late Brazilian educator who wrote *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* — to be banned. He has backed the controversial "School Without Parties" program that, if approved, would limit debate and opinions in the classroom and prohibit discussion of gender and sexual diversity.

Leftists, social movements, feminists and members of the LGBT community are afraid for their safety and even their lives. In the month leading up to the October 28 election, four deaths and more than 120 cases of political attacks and threats were reported, mostly perpetrated by Bolsonaro supporters.

How could the fifth most populous country in the world intentionally vote itself back into the dark ages?

The answer is multifaceted.

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BOLSONARO'S RADICAL AND VIOLENT DISCOURSE found widespread support.

"The guy is awesome. Totally awesome. And he says it like it is. He's not fake at all," said Leinilson Carvalho, an Uber driver in Brazil, in the opening days of the electoral campaign. "This is a lawless country. We need Bolsonaro to come in and put these bums in line that have been stealing from us."

In the wake of Brazil's worst economic recession and largest corruption scandal ever, Bolsonaro rode a wave of anti-Workers Party sentiment.

From 2002 through 2016, the Workers Party won four consecutive presidential elections, with a focus on increasing rights for traditionally marginalized communities and tackling Brazil's massive inequality.

The program was highly successful. Millions were lifted out of poverty with education and social programs. When former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva left office in 2010, he had an approval rating approaching 90 percent.

But in 2014, the price of commodities tanked, sending the Brazilian economy into a tailspin. Revelations broke of a massive corruption scheme involving Brazil's state oil company Petrobras. The investigations have taken down dozens of top politicians from across the political spectrum. The Workers Party received the brunt of the blame in Brazil's media, which is dominated by right-wing oligarchs. This in turn was

to make the case against all Workers Party policies and any "leftist" ideas.

Bolsonaro claimed to be the antidote and warned that a return of the Workers Party would be a vote for corruption, something he has promised to clean up across the country.

His candidacy resonated with many among the middle class and the elites who never embraced the Workers Party policies of wealth redistribution and always felt resentment that their privileges were being stripped away.

Also at work was a culture war over the very values that should guide the country. It's been fought in evangelical churches across the country. Evangelicals now make up a quarter of the country. They overwhelmingly backed Bolsonaro, lifting the fight against abortion, feminism and LGBT rights to the fore.

The country was also split along race and geographic lines. The South, with large white populations descended from German and Italian immigrants, voted strongly in favor of Bolsonaro, while the poorer majority-Black Northeast states — which overwhelmingly benefited from the Workers Party poverty alleviation programs — voted for Workers Party candidate Fernando Haddad.

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MANIPULATED AND DISTORTED INFORMATION also played a powerful role.

In a press conference in São Paulo, days before the first-round vote, Haddad denounced an onslaught of misinformation and slanderous attacks against himself and his campaign being pushed on social media and, in particular, over the messaging application WhatsApp — a major means of communication for a majority of Brazilians.

In mid-October, the Folha de São Paulo newspaper revealed that businessmen were paying millions of dollars for pro-Bolsonaro fake news messages to be sent illegally to people across Brazil over WhatsApp. The country's top electoral court admitted that it was not prepared to regulate information in this new age of social media and distorted news.

If the fake news onslaught sounds familiar, that's because it is. As in the United States, influential members of Brazil's far-right have been pushing their world view and opinions over social media, and in particular, YouTube.

Chief among them is journalist turned astrologer turned homegrown far-right philosopher Olavo de Carvalho. Since 2005 he has trained thousands of young Brazilians through his online "philosophy" courses.

His theories are conspiratorial and revisionist. He believes there is a global left-wing plot to take over the world and that Hitler and the Nazis were leftists. Bolsonaro is a major fan. According to news reports, the president-elect even asked Carvalho to head the Ministry of Education, although he declined.

These ideas have created an alternate reality, challenging facts and long-held truth. They also convinced millions of Brazilians that the Workers Party was truly at the root of all of Brazil's woes.

Bolsonaro's election did not occur in a vacuum. Brazil's far-right was inspired by the election of Donald Trump and extremists elsewhere. In August, Bolsonaro's son, Eduardo — himself a

HALF OF BRAZILIANS SAY DICTATORSHIP COULD RETURN.

highly popular congressional representative — met with Trump's former campaign strategist Steve Bannon. Eduardo wrote that Bannon had agreed to offer advice to Bolsonaro's team.

Crisis in Brazil's political system also paved the road for Bolsonaro.

In 2016, Brazil's Congress, which itself was swimming in



RODRIGUES POZZEBOM/AGÊNCIA BRASIL

WOMEN-LED RESISTANCE:

Brazilian women have been at the forefront of opposition to far right President-Elect Jair Bolsonaro.

THE STRONGMAN:

Jair Bolsenaro, a former army captain-turned-congressman known for his racist, sexist and homophobic views will become Brazil's new president on Jan. 1.



ROMERITO PONTES

corruption, impeached Workers Party President Dilma Rousseff in a move that was widely considered a congressional coup. The incoming government of Michel Temer — Rousseff's conservative vice president — formed a coalition with the traditional right-wing PSDB party and unleashed a wave of unpopular neoliberal reforms, budget cuts and privatizations. Temer spent much of 2018 with an approval rating around 4 percent, after he and top cabinet members were embroiled in numerous corruption scandals.

In the months leading to the election, former president Lula was seen as the way out. He led all of the polls despite a controversial corruption conviction that sent him to jail in April to serve a 12-year prison sentence.

There is not enough room here to describe the details: the political bias by the prosecutor-judge overseeing Lula's case, Sergio Moro; the lack of any concrete evidence in his written decision to convict Lula, and the media circus that spun an image of the former president as the kingpin of corruption in Brazil. But Lula remains in jail — considered by many to be one of the world's top political prisoners — while Moro has accepted a post as the Minister of Justice in Bolsonaro's incoming government.

Lula supporters and some international analysts called his conviction the second phase of the 2016 coup, and a tool to block Lula and the Workers Party from returning to power.

This, it did, on August 31, when Brazil's Supreme Electoral Court ruled that Lula would be barred from running. The new Workers Party candidate, Haddad, picked up the majority of Lula's supporters, but others jumped on the Bolsonaro bandwagon, in the same way that some supporters of Bernie Sanders backed Trump over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 elections: They were willing to support a charismatic leader who they believed could put the country on track, but not a mainstream party they did not necessarily trust.

The scene was set.

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IN HIS BOOK, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, historian Robert O. Paxton describes the elements often present with the rise of a fascist movement: political crisis or corruption scandals; blame of Communists or the left; the rise of an authoritarian, yet charismatic outsider

with a violent discourse against certain groups, who promises to unite and fix the country; the creation of an alternative worldview that questions long-standing beliefs and facts.

It is a perfect description of Brazil at this moment and what may be in store for the country.

"Bolsonaro campaigned like a fascist," Federico Finchelstein, a history professor at New York's New School for Social Research, told *The Independent*. "The big question, that we will learn sooner than later, is whether he will rule like one, or like an authoritarian populist ... Will he be a Pinochet or a Trump?"

According to a Datafolha poll in mid-October, half the country believes there is a chance of returning to a dictatorship. The country has a long history of undemocratic rule and military regimes. The most recent ran from 1964 through 1985, under which hundreds were disappeared and killed, and tens of thousands more were tortured or sent into exile. Bolsonaro served under the dictatorship. His vice president-elect, Hamilton Mourão, is a retired army general.

Regardless of what it may do, the Bolsonaro regime will have a green light to take action in the form of tacit support from the United States.

Exactly one month after Bolsonaro's victory, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton visited the president-elect at his home in Rio de Janeiro, where they discussed diplomatic sanctions against Venezuela and Cuba and moving the Brazilian Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. He invited Bolsonaro to meet Trump.

"We look forward to a dynamic partnership w/ Brazil," Bolton tweeted.

There is no doubt that this is what they will have.

There will be resistance. In the lead-up to the vote millions of women rallied under the hashtag #EleNão (NotHim). Social movements marched. Students protested. They have promised to be in the streets. But there are major concerns about how the government will respond. The ghosts of the past have yet to be reckoned with. The future is unknown.

Michael Fox is a Brazil-based freelance multimedia journalist. He is the former Editor of the NACLA Report on the Americas. He tweets at @mfox_us.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS



MINISTERIO AMBIENTE ECUADOR

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

PROTECTING THE PLANET'S LUNGS

An alliance of Latin American indigenous groups wants to create a cross-border "Sacred Corridor of Life" in the Amazon rainforest that would mitigate climate change by protecting trees that absorb carbon. The area the size of Mexico would also preserve the habitat of more than half of the world's plant and animal species. This comes as Amazon deforestation has reached its highest level in a decade, and far-right Brazilian president-elect Jair Bolsonaro has vowed to ease fines on agribusiness and mining companies that damage the forest. About a million indigenous people live in the Amazon rainforest. "This space is the world's last great sanctuary for biodiversity," said Tuntiak Katan, vice president of the alliance. "It is there because we are there. Other places have been destroyed."

SCIENTISTS: GLOBAL WARMING CAUSED EARTH'S LARGEST EXTINCTION

A new study published in the journal *Science* suggests rapid global warming that may parallel climate change today is what caused the earth's largest extinction some 252 million years ago. The period known as the "Great Dying" coincided with a massive volcanic eruption in modern-day Siberia that belched carbon dioxide and caused global temperatures to rise by more than 18°F. As the ocean warmed, models show it retained less oxygen and more than 95 percent of marine life suffocated to death. Just 30 percent of species on land survived.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS DEEPENS IN YEMEN AMID PEACE TALKS

The U.S. Senate voted Dec. 13 to end U.S. military assistance for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen. The vote set the stage for both house of Congress to end American participation in the war when they reconvene in January. November was the deadliest month in two years in Yemen, with nearly 3,000 people dead. Fighting escalated even as peace talks underway in Sweden mark the first time rebel Houthis and

the Saudi-backed government have held direct negotiations. The conflict began in 2015 and has led to the world's largest humanitarian crisis. An alarming 70 percent of Yemen's 28 million people are hungry according to the United Nations. In December, the UN said 250,000 Yemenis face "starvation, death and destitution."

INDIGENOUS ACTION:

Representatives from an alliance of Amazonian peoples that is seeking to have a "Sacred Corridor of Life" established from the Andes to the Atlantic gathered at a summit in Ecuador this October.

MEXICO'S NEW PREZ OFF AND RUNNING

Mexico's new president Andrés Manuel López Obrador campaigned as a champion of the downtrodden and moved quickly after his Dec. 1 inauguration to begin enacting his promises. Lopez Obrador put his predecessor's \$218 million luxury jet up for sale and now flies coach on commercial airlines. He also refused to move into the palatial presidential quarters that housed previous Mexican heads of state, instead turning the complex into a public museum. On a more substantive note, he also announced that he intended to reverse neoliberal education reforms opposed by teachers unions and to create a "truth commission" to investigate the 2014 disappearance of 43 leftist college students in Ayotzinopa, Mexico, that has previously been linked to government security forces working in cahoots with local drug cartels.

JOURNEY TO THE STARS

And finally in galactic news, the Voyager 2 spacecraft has become the second human-made machine to cross into interstellar space. Launched by NASA in 1977 to study the solar system's giant outer planets, the plutonium-powered spacecraft broke through the heliosphere that extends 11 billion miles from the sun on November 5. Voyager 2 will journey through the cosmos forever. It continues sending scientific data back to Earth, though all of its instruments will eventually shut down. Its twin Voyager 1 exited the heliosphere in 2012.

BEST ALBUMS OF 2018

BY CHARINA NADURA, BRADY O'CALLAHAN, MICHAEL COBB & INDEPENDENT STAFF

NONAME // *Room 25*

Noname followed up on the promise of her breakthrough mixtape *Telefone* with a release that solidifies her place as one of the most promising rappers on the scene. Noname's style feels intimate, as if all of *Room 25* plays out with just you, her, and her handful of collaborators in close proximity. I'll tell you, it's tough to listen to on the streets of New York, just because you're afraid you'll miss something. It's best to just sit down with it and give it your full attention. Noname feels like Chance the Rapper's most sincere moments played out in perpetuity over jazzy breakdowns and soulful choruses. "Montego Bae" is modern day bossa nova, as if Kendrick Lamar and Astrud Gilberto birthed a sound. *Room 25* is different from everything else out there, and so is Noname. Both are worth your undivided attention.

M.A.K.U. SOUNDSYSTEM // *5 Fuegos*

This band takes its name from the Makú, an indigenous people from Colombia. The word translates to "low caste" but their mixture of traditional Colombian music, cumbia, reggae and Afrobeat will get you up out of your seat and grooving like no other record this year.

ASHLEY MCBRYDE // *Girl Going Nowhere*

Everyone loves a story about a small town talent getting a big break, and that's just the narrative Ashley McBryde's impressive debut LP *Girl Going Nowhere* presents. The album kicks off with the titular track in which McBryde recounts the naysayers: "You're not the first, you won't be the last. And you can tell us all about it when you come crawling back." She always felt strongly enough about it to keep pursuing music, though, and thank goodness. McBryde hails from Arkansas and has a talent for smalltown storytelling, whether it be scandalous love affairs, drinking away life's troubles or keeping a piece of family history with you. The standout track "Livin' Next to Leroy" tells of a neighbor and friend's overdose, an all too relatable story in working-class communities these days. All this is wrapped up in rollicking rock and country sounds. *Girl Going Nowhere* presents everything that the best narrative music can offer. "Not bad for a girl going nowhere."

FATOUMATA DIAWARA // *Fenfo (Something to Say)*

Fatoumata Diawara's deep, raspy voice is ever so soothing here on her second studio album, her first since 2011. Sung in her mother tongue of Bambara, this record is a journey to Fatoumata's native Mali and into her richly textured innerworld. She takes listeners to beautiful landscapes laced with pain and despair.

TELEMAN // *Family of Aliens*

For those seeking a radical paradigm shift, Teleman's *Family of Aliens* is a reminder that we live in the 21st century, where algorithms often make fateful decisions and we may not be alone in the universe. While clearly taking cues from electronica pioneers Kraftwerk, Teleman's tune "Submarine Life" maintains an organic quality through the use of digital and analog instruments. Vocoder-laced lyrics rest upon real bass, drums, synthesizer and acoustic guitar. The composition dissolves into moments of angular madness landing back on solid beats.

With *Family of Aliens* we don't always have to fear the future. Sometimes sentient beings wield synthesizers and guitars instead of rayguns.

DELVON LAMARR ORGAN TRIO // *Close But No Cigar*

The Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio brings the funk the way Booker T. Jones might have had Jimi Hendrix been sitting in. In fact, guitarist Jimmy James takes his stage name from Seattle's other psychedelic son. James divebombs, trills and wails with luscious licks that would've made Hendrix proud. All this action happens over soulful Hammond organ grooves and a solid R&B backbeat. *Close But No Cigar* is at once classic and contemporary. It features 10 tracks of instrumental covers and originals. Though they wear their influences on their sleeves, the Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio is happening today and on tour worldwide.

J.D. WILKES // *Fire Dream*

J.D. Wilkes is known as the wild frontman for the Legendary Shack Shakers. His slightly more subdued solo release *Fire Dream* draws from Appalachian springs and gypsy wells. Here Wilkes mashes roots to conjure sonic magic. "There's bluegrass, jazz, old-time fiddle, jug band music and even swamp rock," says Wilkes.

Fire Dream has a live, raw vibe. Coming through a compressed ribbon mic, Wilkes' overdriven vocals give the sensation of being right in the room with an insane Klezmer orchestra led by Tom Waits' hillbilly stepchild. Wilkes is also a layman scholar of southern lore, an author and an illustrator. His deep knowledge of Americana and world music permeates this release. *Fire Dream's* eclecticism defies easy description and keeps the listener guessing.

ARTURO O'FARRILL & THE AFRO-LATIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA // *Fandango at the Wall: A Soundtrack for Mexico, the United States and Beyond*

There has been some amazing music over the years on the theme of immigration, but this album ranks among the best. In June, transnational musicians like French-Chilean rapper Ana Tijoux and Son Jarocho singer Zenin Zeferino gathered with Arturo O'Farrill and his Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra for a concert at the Tijuana-San Diego border. The product is *Fandango at the Wall*. It's almost like a fiesta of some sort. "Amor sin Fronteras" (Love without Borders) is especially timely considering how mothers and children were recently teared-gassed by U.S. border patrol

not far from where this record was made. The album carries the stories and struggles many immigrants share in this country.

JOAN BAEZ // *Whistle Down the Wind*

Joan Baez made a triumph (and perhaps final) return to the public eye with this album, adding to her long list of politically charged yet subtle music. Baez does not hold back; no names need to be mentioned but if you have been paying attention you will know what she is talking about. This is a great album for everyday for inspiration. It's tough out there, but Baez reminds us that we are not alone in our anger and our hope for a better future.

MARY-ELAINE JENKINS // *Hold Still*

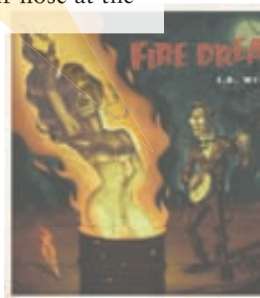
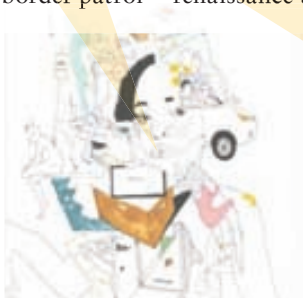
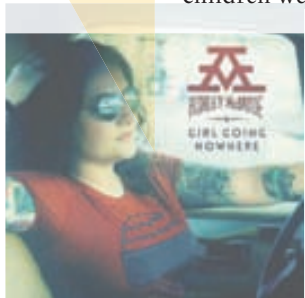
Brooklyn based singer-songwriter Mary-Elaine Jenkins originally hails from South Carolina. Her smoky southern drawl belies her youth. Timeless tales of love and passion make up her great first release *Hold Still*. Backed by some of Brooklyn's best musicians, Jenkins is an accomplished country-blues picker. With tasteful guitar, deep upright bass and rousing handclaps, "The Americans" is an infectious gospel number that downshifts tempo halfway through. It's easy to imagine as part of the soundtrack to a southern gothic series like HBO's *True Blood*.

LENA RAINE // *Celeste (Original Soundtrack)*

Music has been pivotal to the success and artistry of video games since the beginning. It's a wonder that the music is so rarely critically considered. Let Lena Raine change that. In its own right, the *Celeste* soundtrack is some of the most gripping, beautiful and evocative electronic music to be released in the past few years. In the context of the game, it is apparent just how remarkable and deliberate the music truly is. By employing delicate piano, pulsing synths and sweeping drones, Lena Raine creates soundscapes that run from triumphant to foreboding to mournful. Every single composition is majestic and each sets the stage so well for the game's emotional storyline that you barely need the game to follow. Lena Raine has created something truly sensational.

KACEY MUSGRAVES // *Golden Hour*

Kacey Musgraves was already a star in the country world, but she broke through to the rest of the world with *Golden Hour*. Her career thus far has been playful bucks to the country music system, and *Golden Hour* pushes boldly farther than she's ever gone. It's a genre blending/bending pop wonder. Musgraves is a master of writing sugary sweet songs that are just a little sad, and there's a fair share here where she's wholly in her element. "Space Cowboy" is the best song in her impressive catalogue, turning a clever turn of phrase into a heartbreaking piece of poetic genius. "Velvet Elvis" is cheeky, fun stomper. "High Horse" is disco renaissance at its best. Anyone who turns their nose at the



first sight of the words “country music” would have a hard time resisting. *Golden Hour* is Kacey Musgraves’ introduction to the enormous audience she’s deserved for years.



MAC MILLER // *Swimming*

Mac Miller has sort of become a paragon for personal growth, which makes his untimely passing all the more tragic. Critically panned in his early days, Mac took most of negativity and turned it into drive. He quietly became one of the sharpest and most respected hip-hop producers and rappers among his peers, especially in the community he helped foster out of his home studio in Los Angeles. *Swimming* shows just how much Mac matured in the past decade. He tackles mental health, heartbreak and, most importantly, a strong desire to be better. *Swimming* showcases an artist better than he’s ever been, with promise to only get better. We won’t have the chance to find out what might have come next, but this album has already cemented his legacy.



WEYBOURNE CHESTER BINGLEY // *Keeps Streets Live*

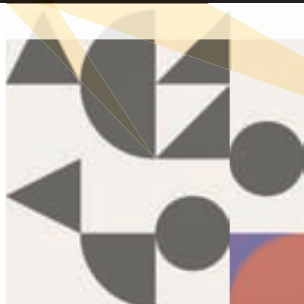
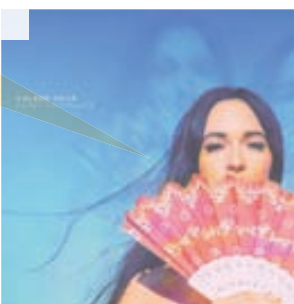
Keeps Streets Live is a compilation featuring some of Britain’s best buskers produced by prodigious corner troubadour Weybourne Chester Bingley. The top track is undoubtedly “Millionaires” by anarcho-folk-punks Phat Bollard whose raucous skiffle sound lambastes the hypocrisy of current consumer culture. The rest of the record lifts spirits through a variety of styles from jangly pop to peppy scat to country rock. *Keeps Streets Live* gives the word from the street and reminds the listener that while we’re all involved in the global struggle for equity, we can still make merry music.



MARC RIBOT // *Songs of Resistance, 1942 to 2018*

Ribot has lent his mastery at the strings to everyone from Ikué Mori to Elton John, Allen Toussaint to Allen Ginsberg. With *Songs of Resistance*, he gathers an impressive group of friends and collaborators to present a captivating collection of original and traditional protest songs that showcase the longevity of message and, conversely, the seemingly glacial nature of progress.

Perhaps the most poignant moment on the album is “Srinivas,” a lyrical document of Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a Sikh immigrant murdered in February 2017 by a racist who mistook him for a Muslim. It’s a horrifying story that sadly illustrates the reality of many Americans’ lives, the environment we have fostered for centuries and that has been stoked by the current administration. “My country, ’tis of thee” guest contributor Steve Earle sings repeatedly, though he never reaches, as if unable to, the commonly known following line. He sings of a nation in turbulence, one with unfulfilled potential, one where only certain populations are free to live without worry. Hopefully, one day soon, we’ll be able to rightfully call it Sweet Land of Liberty.



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POWER UP

Energy, A Human History
BY RICHARD RHODES
SIMON & SCHUSTER 2018

By Bennett Baumer

In the late 19th century, horses hauled wood culled from North America's great forests in order to heat and power cities. Over 100,000 work horses begrimed New York City's streets with millions of pounds of manure and 100,000 gallons of urine each day. By 1900, the country largely moved off wood to heat homes and horses began to diminish, but a new menace of black smoke appeared.

For backers of a Green New Deal, Richard Rhodes' new book on the history of energy reminds us that dramatic changes in how our civilization produces and consumes energy have occurred before and can happen again. Rhodes, who is best known for his Pulitzer Prize winning *The Making Of The Atomic Bomb* (1986), tells a story of one form of energy supplanting another — a slow decarbonization spanning industrial development. In 1870, burning wood accounted for 70 percent of total energy needs but by 1900 coal became king. Growing reliance on coal for industrial production and also domestic usage befouled the world's air.

Pittsburgh features prominently in Rhodes' book. My father-in-law, born in the city during the middle of the previous century, recently recounted that his father's department store recommended employees bring an extra shirt to change into at work because the very air soiled their white button downs during their commutes.

The struggle over the future of energy can seem esoteric, but by turning to the past Rhodes is able to enliven the subject with people, events, times and places that keep you turning the page.

Many industrialists populate *Energy*, like inventor and early General Motors executive Charles Kettering. In 1911 Kettering created the electric car ignition that allowed many women who had difficulty using hand cranks to drive cars. He also helped eliminate "engine knock" (high pitched rattling) by raising the octane level in gas. There are also more familiar characters, like United Mine Workers President John Lewis who presided over the coal strikes of 1945 and 1946, another transitional moment in the history of U.S. energy usage.

The strikes, *Energy* states, were partly waged over the conversion of Texas-based oil pipelines to natural gas. The pipelines extended into the Northeast, where most cities produced a coal-derived fuel called "town gas" for local consumption. Natural gas would compete against town gas. The United Mine Workers of America won economic gains from the strikes but the pipelines switched to natural gas following year.

Natural gas burns cleaner than coal. However, fracking, the drilling process commonly used to access natural gas reserves buried deep in the earth, yields high levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and poisons the air and water of adjacent communities. Meanwhile, King Coal is by no means obsolete. At current domestic demand the federal government estimates U.S. recoverable coal reserves will last another 325 years. Keeping it in the ground is essential to check global warming.

Is nuclear power a part of the solution? Rhodes is a longtime proponent of it and answers in the affirmative. For environmental activists who thought they killed off the nuclear power industry and its lethal dangers 40 years ago, reviving it as a green, eco-friendly alternative to climate apocalypse is practically no choice at all.

Reactors deliver tremendous energy capacity and allow for greater urban and industrial development but can be cost prohibitive. The Nuclear Energy Agency estimates that a new one gigawatt nuclear power plant that can power 750,000 homes costs around \$4 billion to construct. That is a lot of wind turbines, geothermal systems and solar panels that could be built instead.

Rhodes references the 1967 Sierra Club commissioned book *The Population Bomb* to link what he sees as environmentalism's anti-human "neo-Malthusian" fear of overpopulation and resource consumption to nuclear power opposition. Reticence to nuclear energy production has been intimately tied to the atom bomb's awesomely destructive power and reactor meltdowns and waste. Starting in the Eisenhower years, the federal government promoted the growth of the domestic nuclear power industry under the banner of "Atoms for Peace" while also presiding over a growing Cold War nuclear arsenal.

"Fear of radiation and misunderstanding of its effects were powerful drivers of antinuclear sentiment," Rhodes writes. "Activists encouraged this response over the years with claims that a meltdown would destroy an area 'the size of Pennsylvania' (Ralph Nader) or that 'nearly a million' had died from Chernobyl fallout (Helen Caldicott, the Australian physician)."

Just 31 people died from acute radiation exposure in Chernobyl and lower levels of radiation are difficult to directly link to mortality but the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates another 4,000 died due to lower radiation levels from the 1986 meltdown. By contrast the WHO estimates ambient air pollution caused 4.2 million deaths worldwide in 2016. Rhodes will garner more sup-

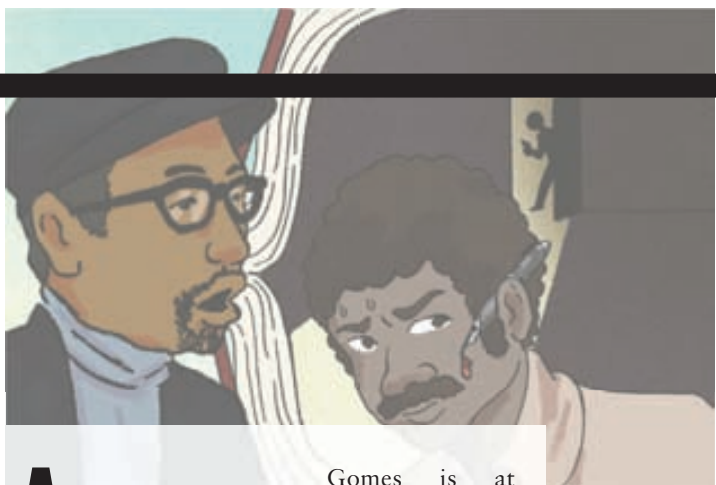


GARY MARTIN

port for nuclear in relation to global warming and health. He cites NASA stats that global nuclear power prevented an average of 1.84 million air pollution-related deaths and 64 gigatonnes of CO₂ released into the atmosphere since 1971.

Lastly, Rhodes argues nuclear waste disposal is a political but not intractable technical problem and that a 1,300-foot-deep cavern in Carlsbad, N.M. could "easily accommodate the entire world's nuclear waste for the next thousand years." Like solar panels, nuclear power plants only release greenhouse gases during construction and decommissioning but produce zero emissions once constructed. Unlike solar, nuclear power plants get their energy source from open-pit uranium mining, a carbon intensive, water-consuming, poisonous process.

Amid growing concerns about climate doom, *Energy* ends optimistically by arguing that the United States could decarbonize its economy if it chose to do so. In other words, the technology, money and engineering exist to radically decarbonize. The only thing missing is political will.



RACE & A SMALL TOWN MURDER MYSTERY

The Man Who Fell From The Sky
BY BILL FLETCHER
HARD BALL PRESS, 2018

By Michael Hirsh

“Race” as a biological category differentiating humans has been a spurious and discredited marker for more than a century.

Yet even those who know that it is rubbish and militate against it are stuck with it.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a respected labor and social justice activist, currently field services director for the American Federation of Government Employees and author of the must-read *They're Bankrupting Us: And 20 Other Myths About Unions*. The black activist, scholar and journalist is well placed to write meaningfully on where class and the color line meet. He does so again in his newest book, a highly readable and well-told crime novel.

The Man Who Fell From The Sky, his first effort as a novelist, does not disappoint. It shows him to be not just a sage storyteller but no less than a prized canary, warning of dangers past and present.

The 1970-based plot is vintage good stuff, with enough twists to keep the reader guessing. The top draw mystery involves the ferreting out of a murderer whose identity is suspiciously masked as either a maniac or an avenging angel in exterminating a clutch of ex-U.S. World War II army airmen. The central figure investigating the deaths is David Gomes, a journalist of Cape Verdean extraction and the Americanized child of immigrants of mixed African and Portuguese heritage, typical of the islands' diaspora who came to inhabit much of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island coastlines. That mixed heritage alone makes the story a cultural inquiry in itself, with many Cape Verdeans ranging from white to dark skins even within the same family, making identity in a racist society especially complex.

Gomes is at pains to explain that his name is not pronounced like the Spanish “GO-mezz.” He is not the hardboiled, scandal-mongering newspaper reporter that often inhabits many a crime novel and “B” movie. Instead, he is a decent, young general assignment reporter for a sleepy, understaffed weekly newspaper who unexpectedly finds

himself chasing down a big story that could cost him his life. Fletcher catches the times nicely, with pithy references to radical insurgencies, the television series *Mannix* and hurrahs for Jimi Hendrix. As the plot develops, Gomes comes to see that the murders are likely linked, either tangentially or instrumentally, to the army's earlier Jim Crow policy of restricting airmen's positions not only to men but to white men.

What makes the story work so well is not only its plot line but its capture of time and place. There is the bright and helpful bank teller who in any nonsexist society would be the bank manager. There are the bumbling FBI agents, insisting that the murders are linked — and on the basis of no information — to the Black Panther Party and efforts to aid draft resisters fleeing to Canada. There's the evocation of Cape Cod as not only idyllic physically but a locus for excellent, inexpensive cuisine. The final plot unraveling is worth the reader's wait. Enjoy this well-crafted, politically engaging thriller.

COMING OF AGE AMID AIDS

Sketchtasy
BY MATTILDA BERNSTEIN SYCAMORE
ARSENAL PULP PRESS

By Eleanor Bader

Lambda Literary Award winner Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore has described herself as “a gender-queer faggot, and a queen, on the trans continuum, in a gender-bending, gender-blur kind of place.” The same can be said of Alexa, the protagonist of Sycamore's intensely atmospheric and poignant ninth book (and third novel), *Sketchtasy*.

It's 1995. Alexa, a 21-year-old college dropout, is living in Boston, turning tricks, dancing till dawn, and ingesting monumental quantities of cocaine, doxepin, ecstasy, ketamine, marinol, Xanax, and weed, all of it washed down with an array of alcohol-soaked concoctions.

For the moment, life seems to be a 24/7 party.

That said, there's a heaviness to Alexa and her inner circle, all of them equally mired in drugs, booze, and sexual adventuring. For Alexa, it's the unshakeable specter of incest and the haunting memories of her psychiatrist father's blatant disregard for her bodily autonomy. For Polly, it's the aftermath of growing up queer in a fundamentalist Christian home, while for Avery it's a struggle over racial identity.

But their torment extends far beyond the personal as AIDS lurks over every encounter—remember, use of antiretroviral medications was not widespread in 1995 and gay men, IV drug users, and sex workers were dying by the tens of thousands — no matter how frivolous, light, or joyful they seem. On one hand, Alexa's social group eschews convention, dressing in all manner of colorful, mismatched clothing and grabbing attention by pretending that every locale, from a random sidewalk to a grocery store produce aisle, is a runway on which to strut their stuff; on the other, they are palpably fatalistic, fearful, and tearful when submitting to their periodic blood tests.

Still, unlike the previous generation, these Gen Xers are not interested in activism and rarely engage with groups like ACT-UP. What's more, they barely talk about the virus or discuss how best to protect themselves. In-

deed, it comes as a shock when one of their pals announces that his t-cell count has plummeted to five, prompting him to move back to his

parents Brandywine, Delaware home for his final weeks. Alexa is jolted by this, of course, and for a time stops drinking and drugging, but this proves to be a short-lived experiment in sobriety. Nonetheless, the scenario is evocative and moving.

Sketchtasy captures moments like this with rare precision and even if you, as a reader, have never intersected with anything approximating Alexa's world, Sycamore's prose will make you feel the immediacy of the era for this particular tribe of young adults.

As should be clear by now, *Sketchtasy* is not a typical coming-of-age tale. And, while the narrative can be criticized for being shorter on plot than it is on character and description, it is also a sharply observed showcase for the ways people support each other, alienate each other, and simply mark time with each other.

As readers witness Alexa's struggle to love herself, Sycamore suggests that it is possible to surmount abuse, neglect, and negative experiences. “We're brought up to hate ourselves, and we can go beyond that,” Alexa says early in the novel. Indeed, as #metoo has affirmed, it's essential that we do so.

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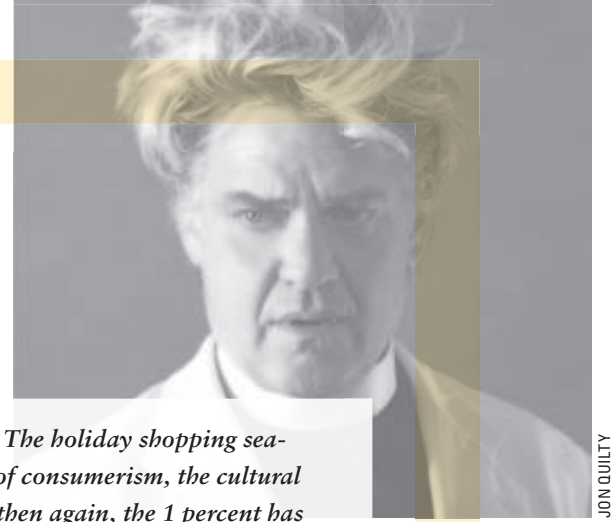
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REVEREND BILLY'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



JON QUILITY

Christmas? Resistance is futile. The holiday shopping season remains the flagship ritual of consumerism, the cultural enforcement of capitalism. But then again, the 1 percent has never seen anything like the Extinction Rebellion protests that have recently caught fire.

Finally, we are alarmed and we are panicked and we're speaking up. Mass extinction? Oh, I get it, extinction. This is about DEATH. Like, you mean, MY death and my kids' death, my cat and dogs' death... and the neighbors'...

Well, we could sense this, over the past years. We knew the scientists were right. We've been walking around a bit haunted, feeling a strange vertigo... And then, at some point, the radical decline in life forms became directly emotional for us humans. Something about the Irma-Maria-Florence-Michael-Paradise-Malibu series finally broke through to us.

The Extinction Rebellion is breaking through to us from the positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks. It has been snowballing in the United Kingdom since the summer and revealed itself on Nov. 17, as 6,000 people took over the five London bridges and ground the city to a standstill. Within weeks, Extinction Rebellion activists created holiday disruptions in 35 countries. Here in New York, meetings and actions are a'brewing.

In the end (of the world), there is one issue and that is Life. Each of us has our work and our issue. We are hard at work against racism and sexism and climate change, capitalism and industrial agriculture and guns and war. Point is, we need to be alive for our life work. One job we all have is to survive and save others.

We are made of the Earth. The soil and water and sky is in our blood. Our eyes carry the perspectives of ecosystems, of the forests and wetlands and fields. That's why we still have a conscience for the Earth. We won't stop loving the Earth. We can listen to evolution. We can hear the instruction to radically change.

Corporate Christmas is the rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born. But what if that beast is stopped on the highway by a million humans who want to survive? The beast will be stopped by you and I, a superstorm of people. A perfect gift.

— Reverend Billy

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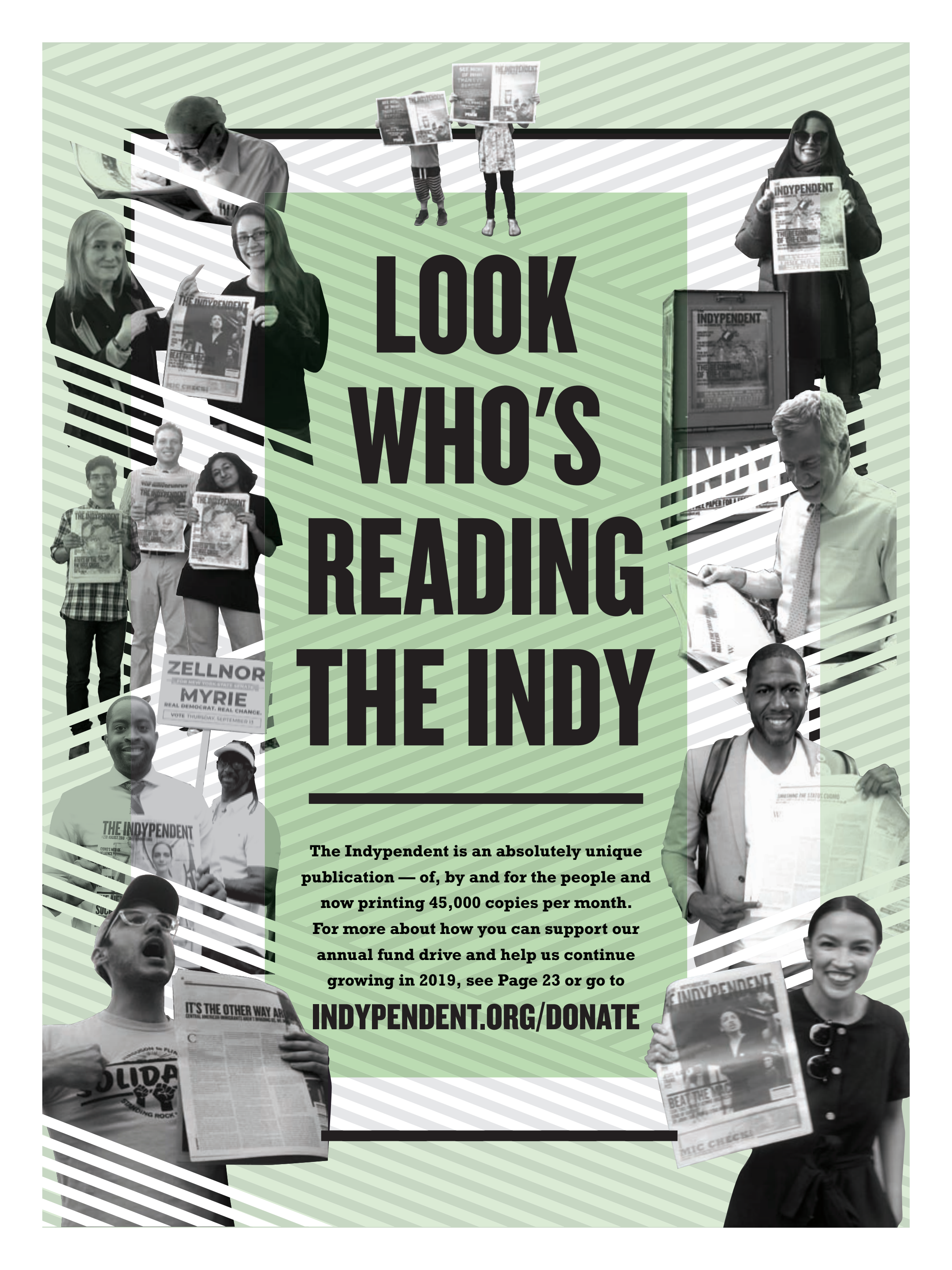
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