

THE INDYPENDENT

#248: JULY 2019 • INDYPENDENT.ORG



**NY TENANT
TRIUMPH**
P6

**MEXICO'S
DILEMMA**
P15

**WOE
BEFORE ROE**
P17

*Supporters of
Tiffany Cabán
celebrate her
apparent victory
in the Democratic
primary for
Queens District
Attorney.*

IT'S FUN TO WIN

**TIFFANY CABÁN'S RISE SHOWS THE LEFT'S INSIDE-OUTSIDE
STRATEGY CAN KEEP PAYING OFF**

BY JOHN TARLETON, P4

SUE BRISK

**THE INDYPENDENT, INC.**

388 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217
212-904-1282
www.indypendent.org
Twitter: @TheIndypendent
facebook.com/TheIndypendent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

John Tarleton

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

Peter Rugh

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Ellen Davidson, Alina
Mogilyanskaya, Nicholas
Powers, Steven Wishnia

ILLUSTRATION DIRECTOR:

Frank Reynoso

DESIGN DIRECTOR:

Mikael Tarkela

DESIGNERS:

Leia Doran, Anna Gold

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER:

Dean Patterson

INTERN:

Garret Reich

GENERAL INQUIRIES:

contact@indypendent.org

SUBMISSIONS & NEWS TIPS:

submissions@indypendent.org

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION:

ads@indypendent.org

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS:

Linda Martín Alcoff, Charlyne
Alexis, Bennett Baumer, Sue
Brisk, Valerio Ciriaci, Rico
Cleffi, Renée Feltz, Lynne
Foster, Emma Gaffney,
Esteban Guerra, Lauren Kaori
Gurley, Theodore Hamm,
David Hollenbach, Manvi
Jalan, Sophia Lebowitz,
Derek Ludovici, Leonardo
March, Gary Martin, Lydia
McMullen-Laird, Farid Nassif,
Brady O'Callahan, Tiffany
Pai, Donald Paneth, Libby
Rainey, Mark Read, Reverend
Billy, Chelsey Sanchez, Steven
Sherman, Naomi Ushiyama,
and Isobel van Hagen.

VOLUNTEER DISTRIBUTORS:

Erik Anders-Nilssen, Eric
Brelsford, Chris & Pam
Brown, Hank Dombrowski,
Joseph Epstein, Kim Frazcek,
Lew Friedman, Mindy
Gershon, Tami Gold, Priscilla
Grim, Laura Kaplan, Michael
Korn, Jane LaTour, Dave
Lippman, Ashley Marinaccio,
Christine Miller, Saul Nieves,
Caroline Rath, Liam Reilly,
Norm Scott, Carol Smith, and
Becky Vaughan.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



NYCGOV/PARKS.ORG

JULY

THRU AUG 31

WED–SUN 11AM–8PM • \$25
EXHIBIT: BEYOND THE STREETS
Featuring dozens of artists and stretching more than 100,000 square feet, this exhibition showcases society's most pervasive mark makers and rule breakers, exploring the collective urgency of using the street as a canvas for expression.
BEYOND THE STREETS
25 Kent St., Bklyn

WED JULY 3

7PM • \$10–\$20 sliding scale, no one turned away
SPOKEN WORD: AN ALTERNATIVE 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION
A reading of excerpts from Frederick Douglass' Independence Day speech at the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society in 1852, featuring the jazz poetry ensemble Upsurge! Refreshments will be served.
NYC CHAPTER NATIONAL WRITERS UNION/UAW 1981
256 W. 38th St., 12th Fl., Mnhtn

SAT JULY 6

8PM–12AM • \$10 suggested donation
MUSIC: A BENEFIT FOR ELDER CARE IN GAZA
Featuring Phil From Accounting, Noods, Slight Of and DJ SAPHE. All proceeds go to support the American Friends Service Committee's campaign to provide care for elderly Gaza residents.
SUNNYVALE
1031 Grand St., Bklyn

WED JULY 10

6PM–8PM • FREE
SCREENING: HOW LONG WILL

WE WAIT? THE DESEGREGATION OF AMERICAN HOSPITALS

The New York Academy of Medicine hosts a screening of *Power to Heal*, a documentary narrated by Danny Glover about the desegregation of Americans hospitals in the 1960s, followed by a discussion with filmmaker Barbara Berney.
THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE
1216 Fifth Ave., Mnhtn

THU JULY 11

6:30PM–9:30PM
MUSIC: SONG SQUAD
This informal choir invites you and your friends to come sing. Conductor Uton Onyejekwe helps Song Squaders discover their individual potential and leave sounding amazing. Better yet, you will also have your own backup band — a collection of seasoned New York musicians. Grab a drink and be ready to have some collaborative musical fun!
STARR BAR
214 Starr St., Bklyn

JULY 12–JULY 13

FRI & SAT, 11AM–3AM • \$36–\$99
FESTIVAL: AFRO-LATINO FESTIVAL NYC
Come enjoy two days of nonstop music, dance and community. The theme of this year's fest is "Reclaiming Culture and Spaces."
CITY POINT STUDIOS
10 City Point, Bklyn

FRI JULY 12

7 PM • FREE
PERFORMANCE: LIVE OUT LOUD!
An open mic and social opportunity for anyone who struggles with mental health and their supporters. Share and listen to personal stories, poetry and streams of conscious-

ness surrounding mental health and related issues in a safe space for all.
BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE
172 Allen St., Mnhtn

SAT JULY 13

9:15AM–4PM • FREE
GATHERING: WITCH PRIDE PARADE/WITCHFEST USA
Come to Union Square in the morning dressed in your witchiest outfit — or as a pixie, fairy, wood nymph, etc. — and walk down Broadway to WitchFest USA, taking place all day at Astor Place.
UNION SQ S.
14th St. & Broadway, Mnhtn

SAT JULY 13

1PM–5PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: CHATPATI MELA
A showcase of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean cultural heritage, food and activism right in the heart of Queens.
77th St. btw 37th Rd. & 37th Ave., Queens

SUN JULY 14

12PM–7PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: ARAB AMERICAN BAZAAR
Celebrate Arab culture and community with an array of vendors, food and music, including a special performance from Freedom Dabka Group.
SHORE ROAD PARK
Shore Rd. at 88th St., Bklyn

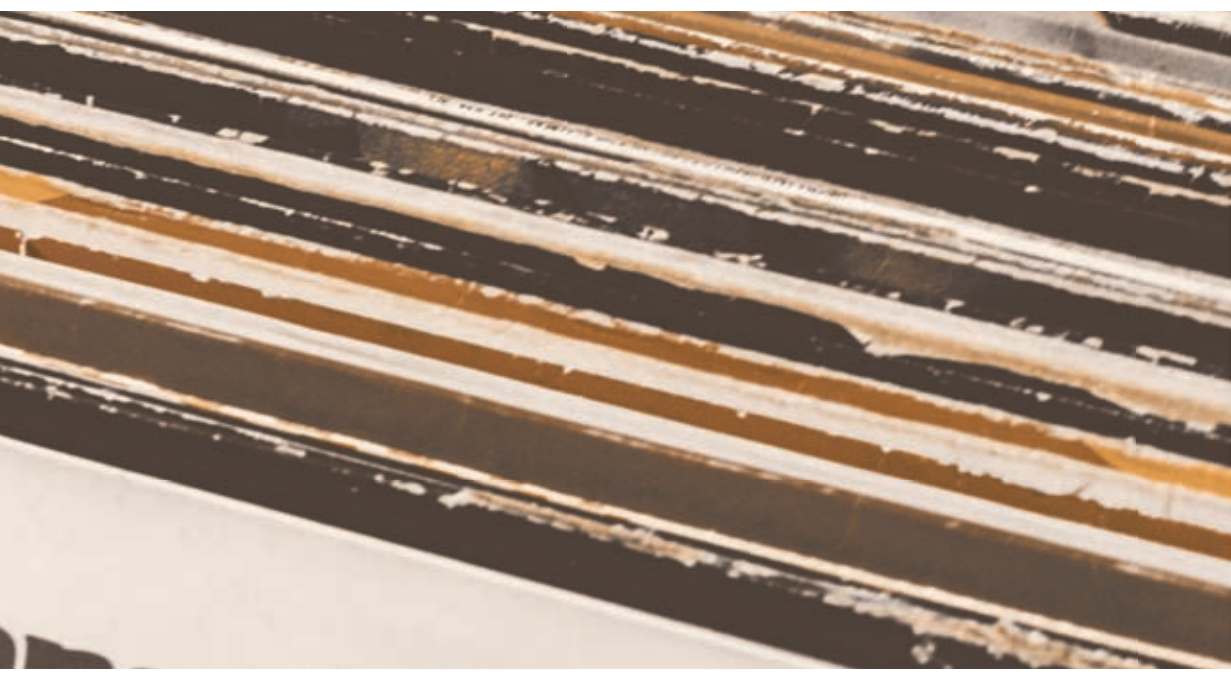
TUE JULY 16

5:30PM–7PM • FREE
LIT: POLITICS AND POETRY: LEGACIES OF AUDRE LORDE
Join writers JP Howard and Gena Mimoso for a night of poetry, prose and politics, honoring world-renowned black lesbian feminist, writer and activist Audre Lorde. In addition to learning about Lorde and her life, patrons are welcome share their own reflections on Lorde's

ADVERTISE IN THE INDY

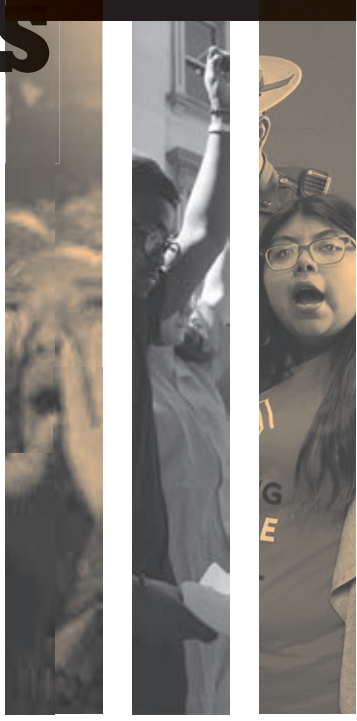
UNIQUE AUDIENCE • AFFORDABLE RATES • PERSONAL ATTENTION
FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL ADS@INDYPENDENT.ORG OR CALL 212-904-1282

THE INDYPENDENT



JOSEPH PEARSON

IN THIS ISSUE



KEEP 'EM COMING, P4
From AOC to Tiffany Cabán, NY progressives are on a steady march to power.

THE NEWS IN BRIEF, P5
The NYPD looks within and finds perfection, a tale of two de Blasios and more.

TENACIOUS TENANTS, P6
How New Yorkers secured the most comprehensive renters rights bill in the nation.

STATE LEGE ROUNDUP, P7
Bold climate change legislation, drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants, a farmworker bill of rights and more sailed through the state legislature in June.

WHY IS JOHN GIUCIA STILL BEHIND BARS?, P8
Brooklyn prosecutors withheld evidence, witnesses recanted and the accomplice says he acted alone.

WHEN YOUR TOXIC WASTE DUMP IS SUDDENLY COOL, P10
NYC wants to rezone the area beside the Gowanus Canal, but it could wash away years of cleanup work at the Superfund site.

INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY, P12
Expanding Social Security benefits for the old and making college free for the young is the way to go.

LADY IN PINK, P14
Peace activist Medea Benjamin on the U.S. march to war with Iran and why it must stop.

BETWEEN TRUMP & A HARD PLACE, P15
Mexico's new leftwing president is torn between appeasing his belligerent counterpart to the north and addressing the migrant crisis stemming from the south.

THE BORDER WITHIN, P16
The fight over Trump's border wall reveals that there have always been two distinct visions of what kind of country the U.S. should be, says historian Greg Grandin.

WOE BEFORE ROE, P17
Annie Ernaux's autobiographical novel about a botched abortion in '60s France offers a warning to supporters of a woman's right to choose.

POETRY, P17
Carolyn Steinhoff on the "huge NO that's said and unsaid..."

REV BILLY'S ADVICE, P18
What do you do when your friends hold distasteful views?



July 2019 THE INDEPENDENT

legacy, as well as original writing.
STAPLETON LIBRARY
132 Canal St., Staten Island

JULY 17-JULY 31
WED, 7PM • FREE
FILM: SUMMER MOVIES UNDER THE STARS AT PROSPECT PARK
This year the popular summer series highlights stories of bravery, love and expanding horizons. Movies include *Brave* (July 17), *Love and Basketball* (July 24) and *Babe: Pig in the City* (JULY 31). Screenings preceded by live entertainment. Visit nycgovparks.org for more film screenings.
PROSPECT PARK
95 Prospect Park W., Bklyn

SAT JULY 20
12PM-4PM • FREE
PARTY: 14TH ANNUAL BUSHWICK PRIDE
A space to celebrate community and resiliency. Be free and dance!
MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK
301 Grove St., Bklyn

SAT JULY 20
3PM-10PM • FREE
MUSIC: CONEY ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL
Featuring The Feelies, Bane's World, The Mystery Lights, Los Wilds, The

Advertisers, Miranda & The Beat and more.
Stillwell Ave. btw Surf St. & Boardwalk
3100 Stillwell Ave., Bklyn

JULY 27-JULY 28
SAT 11AM-7PM, SUN 11AM-5PM • FREE
LIT: THE NEW YORK CITY POETRY FESTIVAL
Poetry organizations and collectives of all shapes and sizes bring their unique formats, aesthetics and personalities to the festival grounds, which are ringed with a collection of beautiful Victorian houses and tucked beneath the wide, green canopies of dozens of century old trees.
COLONEL'S ROW
Governors Island, Mnhtn

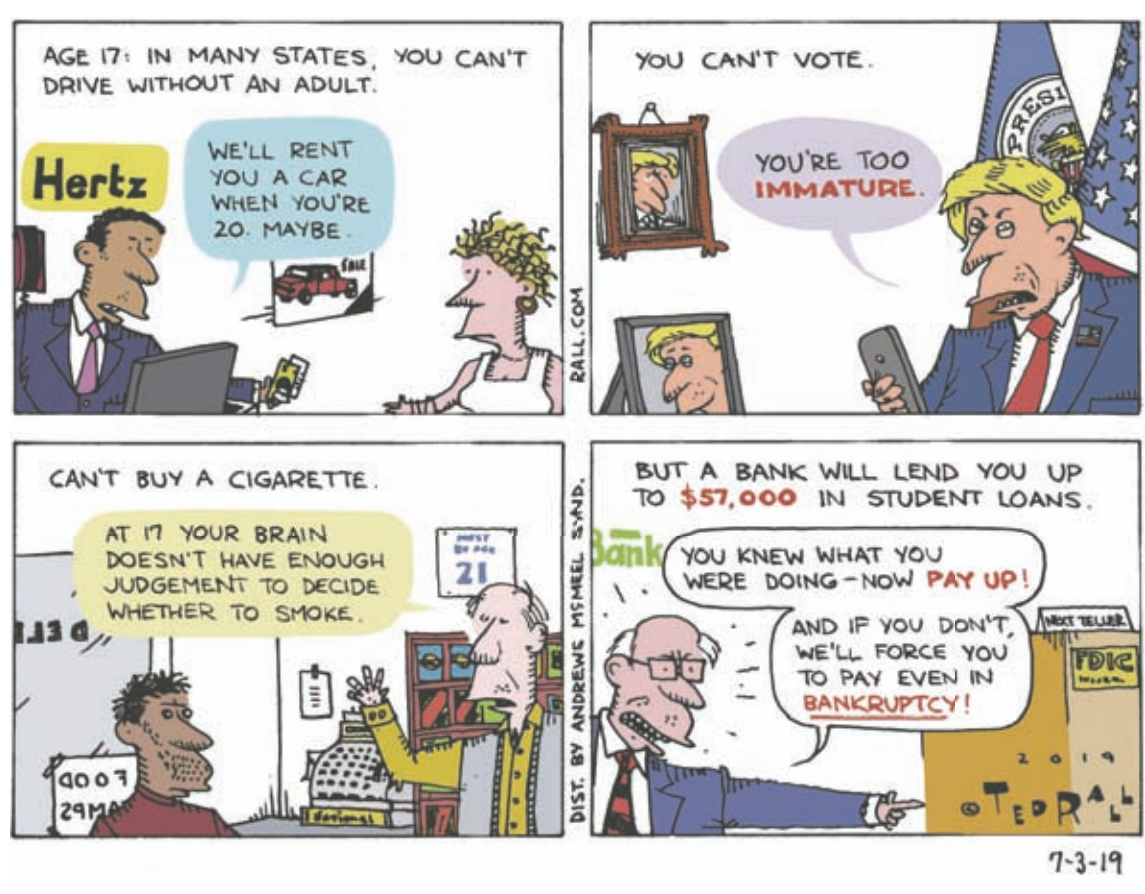
JULY 27-JULY 28
SAT 1PM-10PM, SUN 11AM-4PM • \$10-\$30 a day
MUSIC: HUDSON VALLEY BRASS-ROOTS FESTIVAL
Enjoy brass music in a rural, accessible and family-friendly environment. Featuring 11 brass bands over two days, as well as local food vendors, drinks, farm tours, a bonfire, dancing in the open air

DIG IN & FEAST YOUR EARS: Scour for vinyl gems at *Crate Diggers*, July 27.

NO TICKET NEEDED: Catch movies in Prospect Park and many more outdoor locations this summer for free.

and, for the first time, a "Meet the Musicians" workshop.
SEED SONG FARM & CENTER
160 Esopus Ave., Kingston, NY

SAT JULY 27
10AM-6PM • FREE
MUSIC: CRATE DIGGERS
An opportunity to buy and sell records, listen to music and dance alongside those that share a passion for vinyl. Come and dig for the rarest records and music collectables across all genres. After party includes performances from Roy Ayers, Method Man, Redman, Smif-N-Wessun, Funk Flex & DJ Red Alert, Black Moon and Mad Skillz.
PLAYSTATION THEATER
1515 Broadway, Mnhtn





SUEBRISK

LET'S KEEP DOING THIS

THE ELECTION OF A QUEER, FEMALE AND SOCIALIST DA IN QUEENS IS FURTHER PROOF THE LEFT IS ON THE RIGHT PATH

By JOHN TARLETON

Alex Vitale is a CUNY professor and the author of *The End Of Policing*, a carefully argued call to roll back the power of law enforcement. In recent months, he has moonlighted as a policy advisor to Tiffany Cabán in her run for Queens District Attorney.

A small businesswoman and community activist in southeast Queens, Maxine Gallman canvassed door-to-door for Cabán and shared campaign literature, as well as hundreds of copies of the June *Independent*, which features Cabán on its cover, at her church, her credit union and local libraries.

Moumita Ahmed is the millennial daughter of Bangladeshi immigrants who founded a group to promote Cabán's underdog campaign in the Jamaica, Queens community where she grew up.

Vitale, Gallman and Ahmed were three of the hundreds of Cabán supporters who packed a cavernous nightclub in Woodside, Queens on June 25. As the crowd roared "Si se puede!" and "Black lives matter!" they nervously watched their candidate — a 31-year-old public defender with no previous political experience who vowed to "decriminalize poverty" — hold onto a narrow lead over Queens Borough President Melinda Katz. Shortly after 11 p.m., Cabán declared victory in the Democratic primary, which in Queens is tantamount to winning the general election in November.

As *The Indy* goes to press, the final results won't be known until July 3 when the last of more than 6,300 absentee, military and affidavit ballots have been counted. However, it's unlikely Katz can overcome Cabán's 1,090 vote lead with the remaining votes being divided between seven candidates.

Cabán's apparent win is the latest in a string of victories for the left in New York, including the election of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the defeat Amazon's HQ2 in Long Island City and the flipping of the state Senate from Republican control and the subsequent passage of sweeping rent law reforms (See Page 6).

"We have a very special moment," Ahmed said afterward, "and the progressive left is seizing that moment." Indeed.

The scale of the effort that put Cabán over the top is staggering. According to her campaign, their team knocked on 120,000 doors in the last four days prior to voting, with 1,400 volunteers taking 3,500 shifts, including 1,600 on election day. This was preceded by

months of canvassing and community outreach by a big tent coalition that included the NYC chapter of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the Working Families Party and community-based organizations.

Cabán received more individual campaign contributions from Queens than her six opponents combined and was able to mobilize small donor support (and a few large donations from wealthy backers of criminal justice reform) from across the country. Likewise, DSA was able to mobilize members in other cities to assist with phone

and text banking, and sending thousands of personalized postcards to Queens voters, reminding them to vote for Cabán.

The Queens Democratic machine was fully engaged this time after party boss Joe Crowley's shocking defeat to Ocasio-Cortez. Katz started with \$1 million dollars in the bank, the support of most Queens elected officials and the united backing of the city's largest unions.

In the end, it wasn't enough.

Cabán won by overwhelming margins in the same Western Queens neighborhoods that went heavily for Ocasio-Cortez. Thanks to the one-on-one conversations volunteers like Gallman and Ahmed had with their southeast Queens neighbors, she was able to cut into Katz's advantage in what has long been a machine stronghold.

"The people I spoke with barely knew Cabán," Ahmed said. "But the fact that someone came to knock on their door, motivated them to come out and vote."

After Cabán's victory, anything is possible in New York politics. Expect the same leftwing coalition that lifted Cabán to victory to mount numerous primary challenges to entrenched machine Democrats in the next round of state legislative and City Council races in 2020 and 2021 and then statewide contests in 2022.

"We got to break down the machine so people can get what they need," said Gallman, an African-American mother of three.

If the success of Cabán, AOC and dozens of other socialists who have been elected to federal, state and local offices across the country in recent years is a threat to centrist Democrats, it's also disruptive for some on the radical left, which has mostly been losing for the past 40 years.

Whether the Republicans or Democrats were in power, there were always more wars, more tax cuts for the rich, more free trade agreements and more favors for Wall Street while unions grew weaker, income inequality soared and the planet baked.

Winning seemed impossible. It wasn't even clear if we should be trying and risk corrupting ourselves in the process. This void was filled by a constellation of theory-laden academic Marxists, enfeebled third parties with no chance of gaining office, prefigurative anarchists intent on creating their own semi-private utopias, identity-first border guards eager to police the boundaries of proper discourse and various pious souls ready to bear witness to enormous societal evils as an end in itself.

Good intentions abounded but what was in scarce supply in this mostly-white milieu was any idea or inter-

est in how to build power, institutionalize change or communicate our ideas to a larger society that didn't share our concerns.

If there one thing almost everyone could agree on was that the Democratic Party was hopeless. It was the "graveyard of social movements," the slightly less repressive wing of the capitalist class.

It was a catechism that was self-evidently true. Then something shifted.

A new generation of radical social movements exploded — Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, a revitalized climate movement. Many of their concerns found expression in Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential run. The gruff old socialist popularized the left's most popular ideas — Medicare-for-all, free public college, Green New Deal, a \$15 an hour minimum wage — and a new kind of presidential campaign sprang to life. It thrived almost entirely on millions of small donations and the labor of a self-organizing network of hundreds of volunteer groups.

"We've come a long way," Alex Vitale observed, "from debating the fine points of scientific socialism to carrying out the concrete tasks of organizing."

No longer acting like "internal aliens in their own land," as the political theorist Michael Walzer once put it, leftists are now knocking on doors and having conversations *with* their fellow Americans instead of talking at them or over them. In the process, they discovered they were not alone in their politics.

The Democratic establishment is still deeply corrupt. At the same time, the party is one of two incredibly valuable ballot lines in our winner-take-all electoral system. Inhabiting it makes winning a general election vastly easier than going third party. Why not seize it when you can? A party that contains Joe Biden and Nancy Pelosi as well as Bernie and AOC is more like a coalition of parties forced to operate under the same banner, each vying for supremacy.

Having allies inside the power structure is only part of the battle. Issue-based social movements that can mobilize communities and exert pressure for reform from beyond its confines is also crucial. The left is shedding sterile, self-defeating habits and is starting to discover a power that was always there but rarely tapped into.

It's a new day. While the menace of the authoritarian right grows and the center collapses, more and more people on the left are doing the hard work it takes to win. Socialist movements have been crushed in this country before so it's impossible to say where this is all headed. But in the meantime, look for more raucous victory parties like the one that greeted Tiffany Cabán's victory declaration.

IT'S A NEW DAY IN QUEENS: Cabán supporters cheer at her June 25 victory party.



CENTER FOR POPULAR DEMOCRACY

BRIEFING ROOM

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

PLUGGING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Going forward there will be fewer cops and more counselors roving the hallways of NYC's public schools — long the demand of a student-led, citywide campaign. Additionally, under the new agreement reached between the city's Department of Education and its police force, officers will refrain from making arrests for low-level offenses such as graffiti, disorderly conduct and marijuana possession. The new memorandum of understanding announced in June scraps an earlier agreement made during the Rudy Giuliani administration. In-school arrests have declined in recent years but racial disparities in enforcement have persisted. Black and Latino students account for about two thirds of the student population and 92 percent of those arrested, according to a data analysis of the 2016–2017 school year by the Center for Popular Democracy and the Urban Youth Collaborative.

NO FREEZE IN JUNE

The rent is about to go up for some two million apartment dwellers in NYC who live in rent-stabilized housing. Over shouts of “shame” at Cooper Union's Great Hall, the Rent Guidelines Board approved hikes of 1.5 percent for one-year leases and 2.5 percent for two-year leases. Tenant advocates had sought a rent freeze, something the RGB has only granted twice in its history. Landlords had sought a much higher increase, given renter protections approved in Albany this June that will make it harder to evict tenants, commit fraud or take apartments out of rent stabilization.

SOUNDING THE CLIMATE ALARM

Sixty-six climate demonstrators were arrested during a sit-in in front of the *New York Times* building in Midtown Manhattan on June 22. The activists, members of the global “Extinction Rebellion” movement, want the *Times* and major media outlets like it to cover climate change with the same depth and urgency the press has devoted to worldwide existential crises of the past, such as World War II. Four days later, NYC joined more than 650 municipalities in 15 countries — including London and Sydney — who have so far declared a

FIGHT THE POWER: NYC public school students protest the school-to-prison pipeline outside the Department of Education.

“climate emergency.” Although the City Council's declaration was largely symbolic, it has taken some concrete steps to address global warming, including the recent approval of a measure to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

THE NYPD ISN'T BIGOTED, SAYS THE NYPD

There have been 2,495 complaints of bias filed with NYPD against its officers since 2014 yet, according to a report issued on June 26 by a city watchdog, the police department has not found a single instance credible. More than 1,900 allegations have already been closed on the grounds that they were unfounded or could not be substantiated, with the NYPD misclassifying or failing to interview witnesses in some instances, the Department of Investigations found. The report recommends the NYPD change what it considers as evidence. Currently, the use of racial and ethnic slurs or homophobic utterances is not considered proof of bias. The NYPD began investigating bias as part of a settlement reached in a 2013 class action lawsuit over civil rights abuses through its stop-and-frisk policy.

DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

Watching NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio on the presidential debate stage on June 26 it was easy to forget that he has overseen a sprawling crisis in affordable and public housing, has been accused by both local and federal investigators of doling out favors to wealthy campaign donors and that he is subsidizing a ferry system to the tune of nearly \$11 a ride that essentially serves as yachting service for tourists and the city's well heeled. Of the 10 Democratic contenders on the stage that night, he competed with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) for the prize of most progressive, attacking the 1 percent, defending immigrants and calling for the abolition of private health insurance. Earlier in June, de Blasio received his first endorsement for president from the mayor of Orangeburg, S.C. — population 13,000.

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG AT THE LEFT FORUM 2019

Events on Saturday, June 29

Understanding Right Wing Internationalism

10:00am - 12:00pm, Room H202

Perspectives from Brazil, Germany, and the US to understand right wing international networks across Europe and the Americas.

- Chip Berlet, Research for Progress (US)
- Talia Lavin, Freelance Writer (US)
- Esther Solano Gallego, Federal University of São Paulo (Brazil)
- Susanne Götze, Independent Journalist (Germany)
- Andreas Günther, RLS-NYC (Chair)

A Socialist Defector: From Harvard to Karl-Marx-Allee, a Conversation with Victor Grossman

12:30pm - 2:30pm, Room 4th Fl. Humanities Lounge

RLS-NYC Executive Director Andreas Günther welcomes Victor Grossman for a discussion of his new memoir about his life in the German Democratic Republic.

Looking Back, Building Forward: Putting Reparations in Perspective

3:00pm - 5:00pm, Room H302

We will take a look at claims for reparations voiced by the descendants of formerly enslaved peoples in the US and formerly colonized peoples in what is today Namibia.

- Jefta Nguherimo, US-based Namibian Activist
- Obden Mondesir, Weeksville Heritage Center
- Kazembe Balagun, RLS-NYC (Chair)

Left Perspectives on the European Elections

3:00pm - 5:00pm, Room H303

High-level European politicians and legislators from left parties will discuss the outcomes of the recent EU elections.

- Marga Ferré, Izquierda Unida (Spain)
- Heinz Bierbaum, Die Linke (Germany)
- Angelina Giannopoulou, transform! europe (Greece)
- Andreas Günther, RLS-NYC (Chair)

www.rosalux-nyc.org

@rosaluxnyc

ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG
NEW YORK OFFICE



MAKE THE ROAD NY/TWITTER

A REAL DEAL

HOW TENANTS FROM ACROSS NYS BANDED TOGETHER AND CRACKED THE LANDLORD LOBBY'S HOLD ON STATE POLITICS

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

In June, New York State enacted the most significant strengthening of tenant protections in 45 years. It came about after almost two years of intensive groundwork and legwork by housing activists, electing pro-tenant legislators to replace real-estate collaborators and building an unprecedented statewide coalition.

The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, passed by the legislature and signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo June 14, repealed most of the loopholes in the state's rent regulations enacted in 1997. It ended the deregulation of vacant rent-stabilized apartments with high enough rent and the 20 percent surcharge on vacant apartments. It sets tight limits on how much landlords can raise rents for renovations and gives tenants more time to challenge illegal rent increases. It will make the "preferential rent" discounts given to some 300,000 tenants last until they move out. It also lets local governments upstate and on eastern Long Island enact rent stabilization and includes protections for mobile-home residents.

Tenants did not get everything they wanted. The law enacted does not ban eviction without a specific "good cause" — which would have protected more than 1.6 million households — abolish rent increases for renovations or reregulate the estimated 300,000 apartments decontrolled since 1997. But they cracked the hold the real-estate lobby has had on state government for decades.

"Instead of fighting for what we already have and trying to protect it, we decided to go on the offensive," says Cea Weaver, campaign coordinator of the Housing Justice for All coalition. "Landlords are not going to be dictating public policy in New York State anymore."

Tenant groups, who began organizing in earnest in the fall of 2017, waged a classic inside-outside campaign. First, primary challenges that unseated six of the eight state senators from the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), whose alliance with Republicans had ensured that no pro-tenant legislation would ever come to the floor in the Senate.

"The key for us was organizing massive turnout to elect folks who are clearly progressive," says Jonathan Furlong, director of organizing at Housing Conservation Coordinators

in Clinton. For example, Julia Salazar (D-Brooklyn), lead Senate sponsor of the good-cause eviction bill, defeated a more centrist incumbent.

"They ran because of renters and they didn't back off," says Michael McKee of TenantsPAC. "In fact, they helped us twist other arms. This was a core issue for them."

Second, building a genuinely statewide coalition. Housing Justice for All encompassed more than 65 organizations, from longtime New York City

tenant and neighborhood groups such as the Metropolitan Council on Housing and the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition to a trailer-park tenant association in a small town east of Buffalo and the 300,000-member health-care workers' union 1199SEIU.

This took "very intense" grassroots organizing, says Andrea Shapiro of Met Council, from canvassing in IDC members' districts to organizing building tenant associations.

People worked "night and day," says Ivan Contreras, lead tenant organizer at Woodside on the Move, knocking on doors, talking to every person in a building and holding meetings. Many in the heavily Latino and South Asian immigrant population of northwest Queens "didn't know they had rights," he says, but they understood "it was a fight for the right to stay in their communities." Some took days off work three or four times to go lobby and protest in Albany.

Building a statewide coalition required both logistics and creating a common agenda. The logistics part began in the fall of 2017, with a meeting in Rochester that brought groups from various places upstate together with the older New York City tenant movement. By this spring, they were in frequent contact with each other, says Garrard, state housing organizer for Citizen Action in Albany.

Rent regulations had long been seen as a New York City issue, as rent stabilization covers only the city and Westchester, Nassau and Rockland counties. But in places like Rochester, a city of 210,000 that's more than 60 percent renters, most of them poor, "those folks are facing the same gentrification pressure as in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens," says Weaver. The bills to allow rent stabilization statewide and to ban eviction without good cause gave upstate residents something to fight for and there were also local issues like private-equity firms buying up trailer parks and jacking up rents.

How did this translate into legislative influence? Although Democrats won a 39-24 majority in the Senate, the first time they'd had solid control since the 1960s, demographics didn't determine destiny. Ironically, the Assembly, whose nearly 2-1 Democratic majority had regularly passed bills to repeal the 1997 loopholes over the past decade, proved a bigger roadblock. Speaker Carl Heastie did not include good-cause eviction in his rent-law proposals and was also reluctant to

abolish increases for building-wide major capital improvements and individual apartment renovations.

Heastie as late as June was claiming that the issue didn't affect people in his northeast Bronx district, says Shapiro. After a town-hall meeting there June 6, he posted on Twitter that none of his constituents had attended. "On Monday the 10th, we delivered our petition," she adds. It had more than 1,100 signatures from rent-stabilized tenants in the district.

Tenant groups also shut down the Capitol with sit-ins twice, including a June 4 action where 61 people were arrested. All this pressure, Weaver says, made it "politically toxic" to be on the side of real estate. It also pushed wavering legislators to support more than token improvements.

A turning point, organizers say, was when Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins persuaded Heastie to draw up a bill without including Gov. Cuomo. "She outfoxed the governor," says McKee. "He would have watered everything down." An angry Cuomo threatened to veto any bill that didn't have his input, but with rent stabilization expiring June 15, that would have made him the person responsible for killing it.

Activists are calling the legislation a "historic victory," winning the repeal of vacancy decontrol after a 22-year struggle. Still, "we have a lot to fight for next time," says Furlong. The legislation passed "failed to get any meaningful protection for market-rate tenants," notes McKee.

Allowing rent stabilization anywhere in the state might regulate about 39,000 apartments, a report released by the Community Service Society (CSS) in May estimated, including about 7,200 in Buffalo, 3,700 in Albany and 2,600 in Troy. The bill also includes procedural protections that will mean upstate renters won't be "getting evicted by the end of the month," says Shapiro.

Still, that is far less than the more than 1.6 million rental units CSS estimates would have been covered by the good-cause eviction bill. It would have protected not just tenants upstate and on Long Island, but those in almost 600,000 city apartments that are in buildings too small (less than six apartments) or too new (built since 1974) to be covered by rent stabilization. In Rochester, which would not be able to enact rent stabilization because its vacancy rate of 5.5 percent is over the limit for a "housing emergency," CSS said it might cover 48,600 rental units.

"The fight for good cause in 2020 has definitely begun," says Garrard. "We think it's attainable."

"We're already having meetings," says Contreras.

IN DA HOUSE:

Tenants occupying the state capital building on June 4 are escorted out.



SUE BRISK

STATE LEGISLATION ROUNDUP

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

GO GREEN: *Climate activists sit-in outside Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office in mid-June demanding New York State move toward zero carbon emissions.*

ALBANY SCORECARD

In addition to sweeping rent law reforms, the legislature enacted two other major bills: one intended to reduce the state's net carbon-dioxide emissions to zero by 2050 and another to let undocumented immigrants get drivers' licenses. The climate-change measure would require the state to get 70 of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and to cut CO2 emissions 85 percent by 2050, with the rest balanced by measures such as planting trees. The driver's license bill, which could enable more than 250,000 people to drive legally, is facing resistance from several county clerks upstate.

In criminal justice, the legislature changed the rules for discovery in criminal trials, so prosecutors have to turn evidence over to the defense within 15 days of arraignment instead of just before trial. But sponsors dropped a bill to limit solitary confinement to 15 consecutive days, in exchange for lesser administrative limits on isolating prisoners.

On labor issues, a new law will give farmworkers rights to form unions and get overtime pay, basic rights they've been excluded from since the 1930s. However, a bill to expand prevailing-wage requirements — that contractors on public construction projects must pay more or less union-level wages — to include private projects substantially subsidized by the government failed to reach the floor after Gov. Andrew Cuomo demanded that it exempt New York City.

The state Senate passed a bill to set up an automatic voter-registration process for anyone filing paperwork with a state agency such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, but it failed to pass the Assembly after a typographical error was discovered that instructed non-citizens not to check the opt-out box on the form. Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie promised to enact it next year.

And New York cats will no longer have to fear that their paws will get truncated, as the Legislature also passed a bill to ban declawing. Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal (D-Manhattan), who has sponsored similar measures since 2015, called declawing “a cruel, unnecessary amputation.”

POT REFORM UP IN SMOKE

Pot won't be legalized in New York State this year. The Legislature ended its session early in the morning of June 21 without coming to a deal on a bill that would allow adult use, cultivation and sales of marijuana. It had been widely expected to pass a legalization measure this year — in February, Assemblymember Richard Gottfried (D-Manhattan) told *The Independent* that the debate on whether to legalize was over, it was now about the details of how it would be done — but it failed to reach an agreement on those details.

The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, sponsored by state Sen. Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) and Assemblymember Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D-Buffalo), contained provisions intended to bring smaller businesses into the cannabis industry and earmark part of pot-tax revenues for quasi-reparations. Gov. Andrew Cuomo, however, proposed a narrower measure. Other legislators wanted the law to restrict ganja stores to communities that had specifically opted in to allowing them.

Instead, the legislature passed a last-minute decriminalization-enhancement bill endorsed by Cuomo. It will reduce the penalty for possession of marijuana in public from a misdemeanor to a violation with a \$200 fine for people caught smoking. It also includes provisions for people to get possession convictions expunged.

“The inability of the state legislature and Governor Cuomo to pass comprehensive marijuana legalization means that Black and Latinx individuals remain disproportionately in the crosshairs of harmful marijuana enforcement,” *Kassandra Frederique*, New York State director of the Drug Policy Alliance, said in a statement June 19. “Decriminalization alone is not enough to deal with the full impact of marijuana prohibition.”

Sen. Krueger said June 20 that while the decriminalization bill would “improve the lives of many New Yorkers,” she hoped that “we will soon be able to find the courage to dive into the full legalization that is supported by a majority of voters in every region of the state.”

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

DEMOCRACY
NOW!

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

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

Follow Us @ DEMOCRACYNOW



CINDERELLA LIBERATOR

“Solnit is, in many ways, our fairy godmother. With the tap of her pen and fervor of her imagination, she has transformed a beloved but morally outdated classic into a powerful narrative of female agency with a moral compass we can all believe in.”
—*Brit Marling*



HaymarketBooks

REBECCA SOLNIT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ARTHUR RACKHAM





BREAK THE RULES, WIN ALL COSTS

NYS'S TOP COURT GIVES PROSECUTORS GREEN LIGHT TO CONCEAL EVIDENCE FROM DEFENDANTS

BY THEODORE HAMM

Did John Giuca give Antonio Russo the gun that killed Mark Fisher in a high-profile 2003 Brooklyn murder? Did a glamorous prosecutor (and now TV expert on criminal law) deprive Giuca's defense lawyer of substantive evidence that her key witness got favorable treatment from the Brooklyn DA's office?

In its June decision restoring John Giuca's 2005 murder conviction, New York's highest court ruled that the evidence of Giuca's guilt outweighed prosecutor Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi's misconduct.

That the 5-1 majority decision by the Court of Appeals was written by Chief Justice Janet DiFiore was no coincidence. Prior to being named by Gov. Andrew Cuomo as the state's top judge when her predecessor Jonathan Lippman retired in 2015, DiFiore had spent the bulk of her career as a Westchester prosecutor, serving as DA from 2006 until she moved to the Court of Appeals in 2016. Lippman, a strong proponent for defendants' rights while chief justice, had never been a prosecutor.

DiFiore's ruling in the Giuca case was "a backward-looking decision," says veteran exoneration lawyer Ron Kuby. "Instead of forcing prosecutors to live up to their constitutional duties," he continues, "the decision encourages the suppression of favorable evidence — and after conviction, allows prosecutors to argue the defendant was so guilty that the evidence didn't matter."

Four appellate division judges had unanimously overturned Giuca's conviction in early 2018, a decision that the Brooklyn DA's office appealed. In advance of the Court of Appeals hearing of oral arguments this past April, exoneration lawyer Joel Rudin wrote a lengthy advisory brief on Giuca's behalf, which was co-signed by the Innocence Project, ACLU and the Legal Aid Society, among many other groups. In response to DiFiore's majority decision reversing the lower court's ruling, Judge Jenny Rivera — a CUNY Law School professor with a strong civil rights background — issued a forceful dissent.

In reinstating Giuca's conviction, DiFiore and her colleagues thus repudiated leading exoneration advocates and at the same time bucked recent legislative initiatives in Albany toward greater prosecutor accountability and full disclosure of evidence. Yet while all of the 10 appeals judges have found misconduct, how can the five on the higher court know for certain that Giuca is guilty?

• • •

IN SEPTEMBER 2005, John Giuca and Antonio Russo were each convicted for the 2003 murder of Fairfield University student Mark Fisher after a house party in Prospect Park South. The tabloid-ready trial of both defendants was handled by Brooklyn ADA Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi, who was considered the star

prosecutor in Joe Hynes' office.

A decade later, Giuca's attorney Mark Berderow argued in a hearing that newly discovered evidence Nicolazzi had withheld from Giuca's trial lawyer provided grounds for a retrial. Brooklyn Supreme Court Judge Danny Chun found no misconduct on Nicolazzi's part. In early 2018 the appellate division reversed Chun's decision and ordered a retrial, but last month the Court of Appeals overruled the appellate division and affirmed Giuca's 2005 conviction.

The evidence not turned over by Nicolazzi to Giuca's trial lawyer pertained to the favorable treatment Rikers jailhouse informant John Avitto received in exchange for testifying against Giuca. Nicolazzi had not mentioned Avitto in her opening statement. Two key eyewitnesses then contradicted each other regarding why Giuca allegedly gave Russo the murder weapon, although neither placed him at the scene. Nicolazzi then brought forth Avitto, whose testimony enabled the prosecutor to revise her theory of the case and now claim that Giuca was at the scene, gave Russo the gun and told Russo to kill Fisher.

The question debated by the appellate judges is whether Nicolazzi turned over all evidence to the defense of the favorable treatment she and the DA's office provided to Avitto, who had been cycling through Brooklyn's drug court and had been at Rikers on a burglary charge when he claimed to have overheard Giuca tell his ailing father and two aunts that he handed off the gun to Russo.

Nicolazzi gave Giuca's trial lawyer Sam Gregory some but not all of the evidence he requested, leaving out Avitto's medical records (he was on medication for hallucinations while at Rikers) and details regarding Nicolazzi's unusual appearance at drug court on his behalf. Nor did Gregory receive the internal correspondence from the DA's office, which included an email from Anne Swern — then a top Hynes executive who oversaw the drug courts — deeming Avitto's case worthy of "special attention."

In her majority decision, DiFiore acknowledges that there was indeed "undisclosed evidence that would have enabled [Gregory] to deepen his argument that Avitto was testifying falsely in order to receive favorable treatment from the court." She does not submit an explanation for why such material was not turned over, however. Instead, she argues that the pivotal issue is the "materiality" (i.e. relevance) of the information. Because Gregory presented other facts about Avitto's questionable track record and possible motive to lie, DiFiore thus asserts that the undisclosed stuff would have made no difference in any of the jurors' determinations.

After excusing Nicolazzi's misconduct, DiFiore maintains it cannot be "ignored that... the People presented strong evidence of [Giuca's] guilt at trial." Yet what the chief judge calls strong evidence is quite flimsy. She refers to the "self-incriminating statements Giuca made to friends," but neglects the fact that none of the statements placed Giuca at the scene (thus contradicting Avitto's claims,

AT

which Nicolazzi repeatedly stressed in her summation). DiFiore insists that Giuca made “efforts to dispose of the gun shortly after the murder,” which is based solely on the trial testimony of a witness but leaves out the fact that the gun was never found. And she says that there was a blanket from Giuca’s house found at the murder scene, which proves nothing because there’s no dispute

that Fisher had been at Giuca’s house party.

The brief on Giuca’s behalf written by Joel Rudin (and co-signed by the Innocence Project’s Barry Scheck and Nina Morrison, et al.) zeroes in on the question of why a prosecutor should be allowed to withhold key evidence. Rudin, best known for the protracted exoneration fight he and Jabbar Collins won against the Hynes administration, foregrounds DiFiore’s late 2017 directive to state judges that prosecutors must turn over “favorable information” to defendants, regardless of whether the prosecutor deems the material important. He explains that New York courts have long held that it’s the role of the jury, not the prosecutor, “to evaluate the truthfulness and the significance of evidence that favors the defense.”

Judge Jenny Rivera’s dissenting opinion in the Giuca case is in sync with the Rudin brief. As Rivera explains, “there is no dispute that the prosecutor suppressed information about her involvement” in helping Avitto get uniquely favorable treatment at drug court three months before the trial. In Rivera’s view, Nicolazzi’s undisclosed appearance at drug court, where she approached the bench to speak directly with the judge (who then gave Avitto a favorable deal), could have allowed the jury to infer that Avitto got something in return for his damning testimony. (Notably, one of the four appellate judges who initially overturned

Giuca’s conviction, L. Priscilla Hall, had presided over Brooklyn’s drug court.) Nicolazzi’s moves, according to Rivera, amounted to a “particularly egregious violation of our law and the prosecutor’s ethical obligations” regarding disclosure of evidence.

“Nicolazzi’s conduct was outrageous,” says Mark Bedrow, whose legal battle on behalf of Giuca produced another piece of evidence — a detailed pre-trial statement in 2005 by Joseph Ingram, another Rikers informant, that describes Russo acting alone and includes that Giuca did not help Russo get rid of the gun. Not surprisingly, Nicolazzi also failed to turn that over. Toward the end of the audio-recorded statement, Nicolazzi asks Ingram (who was also with Giuca at Rikers), “Was there any conversation about speaking with John’s lawyer?” about what Russo had told Ingram. Ingram’s answer was “no, because his lawyer is on vacation.” Nicolazzi’s concern about what Giuca’s lawyer might know clearly suggests her intent to conceal evidence that undercut her case.

• • •

THE WILLINGNESS OF DiFiore and her colleagues to excuse Nicolazzi’s misconduct is alarming. Westchester exoneree Jeffrey Deskovic, who now advocates on behalf of others wrongfully convicted, argues that DiFiore’s decision “shows the problem when prosecutors become judges.”

As Westchester DA, DiFiore gained notoriety in 2006 for allowing the DNA test that cleared Deskovic of a 1990 conviction for the rape and murder of a Peekskill teenager. (DiFiore’s predecessor, Jeannine Pirro, had refused to allow that test.) While DiFiore has continued to use his case to show her bona fides regarding wrongful convictions, Deskovic opposed her nomination in late 2015 as chief

judge precisely because she had blocked many subsequent potential exonerations.

“Fair trial rights not upheld by the courts, and are only on paper, in reality do not exist,” says Deskovic regarding the Giuca decision. He adds that the ruling conflicts with the current direction of public policy in New York State. Last summer Gov. Cuomo agreed to the formation of a prosecutorial misconduct commission, an initiative pushed by Deskovic and other leading exoneration advocates.

Earlier this year the legislature passed the discovery reform bill, which makes major improvements in New York State criminal procedures. Under the new rules, and in accordance with DiFiore’s 2017 directive, prosecutors would be required to turn over all exculpatory evidence, which would include the Avitto materials and the Ingram statement.

And yet, like a district attorney’s office unwilling to admit wrongdoing, New York’s highest court redecided Giuca’s guilt and tailored its ruling accordingly. “My worst fears about DiFiore leading the Court of Appeals have been realized with the Giuca decision,” says Deskovic.

The next step for Giuca is to ask for a new trial based on the newly acquired Ingram evidence (and perhaps supplemented by Russo’s 2018 confession that he acted alone, which he gave to investigators from the Brooklyn DA’s office). The process is the same as what began in 2015 with the hearing based on the Avitto evidence. Once again, Giuca is setting forth on a long and winding road toward justice.



Tell Your Story at MNN!

At Manhattan Neighborhood Network, we're dedicated to programming for the community, by the community. That's where you come in.

Visit us for a free Orientation and learn how you can sign up for our low-cost classes in video production and editing!

Learn more about
Manhattan Community Media
at mnn.org



@MNNnyc



twitter.com/MNN59



facebook.com/mnn537



youtube.com/user/MNN537

MNN

Manhattan Neighborhood Network

Learn More at MNN.org/Orientation

Midtown Studios
537 West 59th Street
212.757.2670

**El Barrio Firehouse
Community Media Center**
175 East 104th Street
212.757.2670

ONLY IN NEW YORK

NYC'S LATEST LUXURY SCHEME COULD LEAVE GOWANUS RESIDENTS IN A FOUL PLACE

BY PETER RUGH

When yuppies arrive, so too do artisanal mayonnaise shops, doggy manicurists and baby strollers that go for \$1,000. But with New York City planning to rezone Brooklyn's Gowanus neighborhood to make room for 8,200 new apartments, most of which will be market-rate, locals are worried the yuppies will herald something far worse: a river of shit flowing into its legendarily putrid canal.

In few other places in America would elected officials, city planners and billion-dollar real-estate investors be falling all over each other to erect luxury condos beside a toxic-waste dump, but this is New York in the 21st century. Every square inch of this concrete grid might as well have a dollar sign emblazoned on it. Developers are squeezing this city like a lemon for every penny they can get out of it.

Meanwhile, there are roughly 60,000 homeless people in these five boroughs, and nearly half of New York renters are spending upwards of 30 percent of what they earn each month for rent. In response, Mayor Bill de Blasio has pledged to build or preserve 300,000 units of "affordable housing." But the way the city is going about it, while profitable to developers, is only exacerbating the emergency. It is upzoning whole neighborhoods and requiring in exchange that 20 to 30 percent of the new housing built rent for below market rate. The returns are diminishing. Most of the new housing is not only unaffordable for residents of the rezoned areas, but the new influx of wealthy residents living on high-value properties has caused rents to skyrocket all around them.

Which brings us back to Gowanus, where the de Blasio administration has set its sights for its biggest neighborhood makeover to date, and the coming river of shit. By the Department of City Planning's (DCP) own calculations, 179,000 gallons per day of raw sewage flows into the Gowanus Canal, 1.8 miles of some of the most spectacularly polluted water in the country. Some estimates put the figure much higher. Critics worry that the 18,000 new residents expected to live in 22- to 30-story buildings near or beside the canal could wash a years-long cleanup drive down the drain. "The neighborhood cannot handle that level of sewage," says Joseph Alexiou, author of *Gowanus: Brooklyn's Curious Canal* and a longtime neighborhood resident. "It already cannot handle the level of sewage that is there now."

The Gowanus was once one of the most heavily trafficked maritime passages in the United States, and irrigation problems have plagued it from its inception. Its pollution has two major sources. First, it contains the remnants of a century and a half of industrial waste, much from the coal-processing plants and other chemical manufacturing operations that lined its shores in the early 20th century. The second source is the human excrement that has been flushed into the canal for decades, which often lingers rather than drifting out to sea.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began overseeing the canal cleanup in 2010 over the objections of the city, which is named as a responsible party for the pollution under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. The law enables the Feds to designate certain highly toxic areas "Superfund" sites, and they can use it to force polluters to clean or at least cover the cost of remediation.

The Brooklyn gas-and-electricity utility National Grid and a host of smaller entities are also named as responsible parties. Together they're expected to pick up the \$500 million restoration tab. The city's initial opposition to the Superfund site designation had as much to do with a desire to skip out on that tab as it did with its desire to sell off the neighborhood. Then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration had planned to allow developers to build 3,200 new

apartments in the area surrounding the canal. That development was allegedly going to pay for the cleanup by itself. The Superfund designation forced the city to scrap its initial upzoning plans — but nearly a decade later, it is at it again.

In the intervening years, dredging and other restoration efforts have made headway and the Gowanus is cleaner than it has been in 150 years. Environmentalists with the Billion Oyster Project are reintroducing the shellfish to the canal. Paddlers, guided by the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club, are traversing its waters with increasing regularity.

"It used to be bad," said Jimmy Ravis, who was taking a smoke break outside the Eastern Effects film studio by the water on a recent weekday morning. "It used to be green. It's much better now." Nevertheless, at low tide, he added, diapers, dead rats and even the skeletal remains of cars can be seen resting in the black muck of the canal bed, known colloquially as "black mayonnaise" for its gel-like texture, creamy in all but color.

In May, the EPA warned that the fresh tide of crap the Gowanus upzoning will generate could overpower the city's already-weak sewage overflow systems and further pollute the waterway.

The canal floods roughly once a year. When Superstorm Sandy hit in 2012, its mire-ridden waters widened a block in both directions. In order to mitigate the contamination, the EPA has approved plans drafted by the city's Department of Environmental Preservation (DEP) to install a pair of sewage overflow tanks. The price of those tanks, originally estimated at \$77.7 million, has risen to \$1.2 billion, in part, the EPA says, because of the city's decision to construct them on privately-held land seized by eminent domain. That figure is more than double the entire projected cost of the canal remediation.

Then, in another twist, DEP announced plans in January to scrap the overflow tanks entirely and instead build a half-mile-long tunnel that will run 150 feet beneath the canal to capture the sewage runoff. While this new scheme will enable the city to capture about 4 million gallons of additional crap water and can be built out to accommodate more, the tunnel will cost \$1.25 billion and won't be completed until nearly 2040 — about half a decade after the tanks were expected to be finished. Meanwhile the buildup from the rezoning is expected to be complete by 2035, with 18,000 new apartment dwellers.

Other forces are also spilling into the neighborhood, mainly the swanky neighborhoods of Cobble Hill to the northwest and Park Slope to the east. Wedged right between these two bastions of cafes, galleries, restaurants and bars, Gowanus is now a desirable place to live, even if the smell of rot still wafts off the water on a hot summer's day. Residents of Lightstone Group's 365 Bond building — where a one-bedroom apartment overlooking the canal comes to nearly \$4,000 a month — can saunter over the Third Street bridge to the recently opened Whole Foods and pick up their morning powder and oat milk. Kushner Properties, owned by the president's son-in-law, and another development firm, SL Green, recently sold a parcel across from the grocer to RFR Realty for a reported \$120 million.

Their neighborhood suddenly hip, lifelong residents who lived in Gowanus when it was considered a post-industrial waste zone fear the rezoning will further intensify the gentrification already underway.

"It's not been a place where people wanted to live, because the canal was at the center of it," says Michael Higgins of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE). "Now that the Superfund has been going on for the last eight to nine years and the neighborhoods around the canal have seen substantial growth and huge rent increases, there's this demand to actually build residential on the canal. Our question is, how do you allow that and respect the environmental impacts of having thousands of new apartments



on this polluted waterway that is also an open sewer? And then how do you support the housing that's already there?"

Three New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) properties just north of the canal — the Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens Houses and the Warren Street Houses — have combined unmet capital needs of \$240 million. Residents of public housing, who make up about a quarter of Gowanus' population, however, were gerrymandered off the rezoning map.

FUREE and other members of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, a grouping of cultural, civic, environmental and religious organizations, are calling on the city to follow a "value capture" model as it upzones the canal, whereby developers who want to build have to put funds toward repairing the NYCHA properties. A similar development strategy helped fund the 7 train extension to Manhattan's Hudson Yards megadevelopment.

For now, at least, the city is going another route. NYCHA is selling off Wyckoff Gardens' parking lot to two developers — Sol Arker of Arker Companies and Two Trees' CEO Jed Walentas — who have together given \$124,600 to de Blasio's 2017 re-election bid and his charity Campaign for One New York, which shut down the previous year amid probes into its fundraising activities by both the federal Department of Justice and the Manhattan District Attorney's office. Charges were never filed, but a 15-page report by the city's Department of Investigation, released in April, found that de Blasio had violated conflict-of-interest laws on numerous occasions by doling out favors to big-time contributors.

In exchange for \$37 million to NYCHA, \$18.5 million of which will go directly to Wyckoff Gardens, Arker and Two Trees will build two 16-story buildings on the property, totaling 500 units, half of which will be market-rate. Tax subsidies have yet to be worked out, but a developer who reached a similar arrangement on the Upper East Side is giving NYCHA \$25 million for building rights and receiving a \$13 million tax write-off.

At the Warren Houses, the city began accepting requests for proposals from private management companies in February to take over the buildings after they're converted to Section 8 voucher housing.

FUREE opposes both approaches to addressing the NYCHA deficit, and wants an upfront commitment to public housing as the city rezones. When it comes to the approximately 3,000 apartments that are supposed to be "affordable" under DCP's proposal, it wants them to actually be affordable to locals, rather than by the "Area Median Income" metric that includes the wealthier enclaves of the city and its surrounding suburbs. The Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition is also pushing for a rezoning that doesn't add to the burden on the watershed but instead brings back the area's historical ecosystem, marshland. It has a vision for the canal as a "clean waterway that people can actually use, not just as something to look at that real estate can build next to," says Higgins.

He also worries that gentrification will alter the area's economic ecosystem. The rent-law reforms approved in Albany this June will make it harder for landlords to price rent-stabilized tenants out. But even if regulated and public housing remains secure, local businesses that the neighbor-

hood depends on could be driven out.

"It's not enough that you can afford your apartment, but can't afford anything around it," said Higgins.

The city is now conducting an environmental study on its rezoning proposal and is reviewing the public comments it received through May.

"A clean Gowanus Canal and neighborhood is a top priority," says DCP spokesperson Joe Marvilli. The department "is working closely with DEP on analysis of and solutions to sewer overflow, including plans for facilities that will intercept sewage before it reaches the canal" and a nearby Industrial Business Zone, one of 21 areas where the city has earmarked \$41 million dedicated to preserving manufacturing businesses. Marvilli emphasized that without a rezoning, there would be no way to force properties surrounding the canal to remediate.

Any proposal DCP puts forward will go to Community Board 6 for nonbinding recommendations and will ultimately come before the City Council. Councilmembers Brad Lander and Stephen Levin represent the area surrounding the canal and Lander has taken a leading role in championing the rezoning. He calls it an "opportunity to build a more affordable, integrated, vibrant, and sustainable community than the one we have today," in a statement on his website. But he cautions that there remains "substantial work to do on critical issues, including investing in the nearby NYCHA developments, strengthening the Industrial Business Zone, and more."

The Neighborhood Coalition has been meeting with Lander and Levin, both of whom seem receptive to their members' demands, says Higgins. It has also been in talks with the DCP. But, he adds, Mayor de Blasio will also hold a lot of sway, as he's a resident of neighboring Park Slope.

Should the rezoning go forward as is, what might save Gowanus, at least environmentally speaking, is that luxury housing in New York often sits vacant. According to the Census Bureau's 2017 Housing and Vacancy Survey, there were 75,000 units of housing in New York City occupied for only part of the year. Many of these apartments serve as pieds-à-terre for the wealthy. Perhaps the new neighbors coming to Gowanus won't be home so often to pull their toilet handles.

Depending on the tide, the waters of the Gowanus range on average from 10 to 20 feet deep, but underneath the canal bed lies another 10 to 20 feet of coal tar. In the areas surrounding the canal, the underground tar deposits can stretch much deeper. A block uphill to the west, at a vacant city-owned property on the corner of Smith and Fifth Streets that the rezoning plans designate for an affordable housing development, the tar deposits go as far as 125 feet down.

The EPA is dredging the canal and laying down a new foundation composed of pollution-absorbent clay and protective gravel. Meanwhile, the shit keeps coming, regularly overwhelming the city's meager sewage system and flowing directly into the Gowanus, where it stagnates or, during heavy rains, overflows the Gowanus' banks — leading to what some refer to as a "poo-nami."

BLACK MAYO

You hear a lot unsavory language when it comes to the Gowanus Canal. New York Times reporter Andy Newman once compared inhaling its scent to "sticking your head into a rubber boot filled with used motor oil and rotten eggs." Then there is the colloidal mixture of dark grime that resides beneath the canal's surface that even EPA scientists have taken to referring to as "black mayonnaise."

There's nothing artisanal about this stuff.

The EPA's Christos Tsiamis, who is managing the Superfund cleanup, explained its origins to Brownstoner in 2017: "The combination of the chemicals and sewage gave the sediment the soft texture of mayonnaise, while the combination of liquid tar from the manufactured-gas plants, petroleum products (such as motor and lubricating oils), decomposed organic matter and sewage gave to this sediment its black color."

ALL PHOTOS: LEONARDO MARCHI



PUBLIC DOMAIN

A GRAND IDEA

GRANNY, GRANDPA AND GRANDKIDS ARE BETTER OFF WHEN THE RICH PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE

BY NANCY ALTMAN

President Franklin Roosevelt famously remarked of attacks on Social Security, “It is an old strategy of tyrants to delude their victims into fighting their battles for them.” We can see that strategy at work today.

The “tyrants” are the billionaire class, ideologically opposed to contributing their fair share to the common good and the politicians they finance. Those powerful forces are working surreptitiously to frame a narrative that so-called greedy geezers are to blame, selfishly taking for themselves at the expense of their grandchildren. Former Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY), who has used the term “greedy geezer” so often that many think he coined the term, said about seniors fighting cuts to Social Security, “[W]ho are the people howling and bitching the most? The people over 60... Those people... don’t care a whit about their grandchildren... not a whit.”

The goal of Simpson and his billionaire cronies is to convince younger generations to fight older generations over scraps, rather than joining together to demand more. A recent Twitter kerfuffle exemplifies the strategy to “delude their victims into fighting their battles for them.” This June, a story aired on NBC Nightly News about the Senior Citizen Education Program at the University of Minnesota. This program allows senior citizens to take college courses for only \$10 a credit. Many people, particularly on Twitter, were outraged at the story. Why, they asked, are seniors taking classes for a nominal fee while young people are buried under a mountain of student debt?

That’s the wrong question. The right question is, how can Americans of all generations come together to fight for greater economic security for all of us? That includes expanded Social Security, tuition-free college and cancellation of student debt. The truth is that younger workers are going to rely on Social Security even more than today’s retirees. The truth is that seniors are better off if their grandchildren can start their adult lives debt-free.

The truth is also that, the University of Minnesota’s program aside, seniors across the country are in fact trapped

by student debt along with their younger counterparts — and are even having their hard-earned Social Security benefits garnished to pay off those debts. According to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, student debt is an increasingly heavy burden on seniors. In 2005, 700,000 Americans aged 60 and older had student debt. By 2015, that number quadrupled to 2.8 million — and it’s no doubt considerably higher today. Seniors

owe over \$86 billion in student debt.

In many cases, this debt comes from helping their children (or grandchildren) attend college. Our broken system forced these seniors to choose between their own retirement and their children’s futures, and they picked their children. For the crime of wanting their family to live out the American Dream, they are condemned to decades of poverty.

In other cases, this debt comes from going back to school themselves, relatively late in life. Many people, particularly women, face ageism in the workplace as early as their 40s. Employers don’t want to pay the higher salaries that more experienced workers command, and they especially don’t want to pay higher health care costs (one of many reasons we need to enact Medicare for All).

Those laid off in midlife often chose to go back to school to gain new skills. In the process, they incur student debt that will follow them for the rest of their lives. Instead of a source of outrage, the University of Minnesota program should be a source of inspiration. It should be a model for what we need to offer everyone, of all ages.

Thomas Paine, a founding father of our nation, proposed that all young people be given a lump sum payment at the age of 21. Paine rightly saw that not only should people start adulthood free of debt, but they should also start with some property.

Tuition-free public college does not go as far as Paine’s vision, but it is an important start. People should be starting their adulthood with assets, not burdens. In the wealthiest country in the history of the world, everyone who wants an education should be able to get it without being shackled to debt for decades.

Furthermore, we must act aggressively to protect those who are already caught in the student debt trap. Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) have introduced the Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act, which would stop the federal government from garnishing the Social Security checks of people with student debt. Passage of this bill would be an important first step. But we must go further.

This June, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Congress-

woman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-MN) introduced a college affordability package. The package makes public colleges and universities tuition-free for all who attend and cancels all student debt.

In the fight to pass these wise proposals into law, we must be ready for Roosevelt’s “tyrants,” who will seek to use their money and influence to thwart the common good. They have always been with us and probably always will.

In the 19th century, the nation recognized the importance of public education. In response to the idea, John Randolph, a Virginia politician and wealthy landowner, argued against universal public schools, claiming it would perniciously “ease individuals of their natural and moral obligations” to take responsibility for the education of their own children.

Today, you hear similar arguments about the moral obligation of paying off the outrageous debts incurred for the “crime” of higher education. Just as our forebearers made public K-12 education a right, we must make public college a right despite the objections of modern-day John Randolphs. We must cancel the debt of those of all ages who find themselves caught in the student debt crisis. And we must be on guard against those who seek to divide and conquer us.

The reality is that, in the 21st century with its technological advances, today’s work often requires more than a high school diploma. Like free high school, there should be free college as well. It only makes sense that those who have been caught in the web of unaffordable college now have those debts canceled.

Expanding Social Security, tuition-free public college and the cancellation of student debt should not pit one generation against another. All of us are better off if grandparents have dignified and secure retirements, and grandchildren are well-educated, starting adulthood debt free. If we can join together to ensure that the wealthiest among us pay their fair share, all of that is within reach.

This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.



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

the Air — Max Elbaum

FEMINIST THEORY
FROM MARGIN TO CENTER

EVERY THURS • 6:45-7:30AM
YOGA: Start your day with sun salutations and a vinyasa flow.

SAT JULY 13 • 7-9:30PM
BOOK LAUNCH: Podcaster Keturah Kendrick reads from her new collection of essays, *No Thanks: Black, Female, and Living in the Martyr-Free Zone*.

SUN JULY 28 • 4-6PM
LIT: The "Anarchists Care About Books" club discusses *People in Trouble* by Sarah Schulman.

ING THE COLO
RESIST!
ZAPATISTA STOR
HISTORY
ED STATES

Law and Disorder radio

Mondays at 9am
WBAI
99.5 FM

Download Podcasts at
lawanddisorder.org

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

Co-founded by:
Michael Ratner (1943-2016)
President, Center for Constitutional Rights;
and hosted by movement lawyers:
Heidi Boghosian,
Executive Director, A. Muste Memorial Institute;
and **Michael Steven Smith**,
New York City attorney and author.

NOW ON FACEBOOK.COM

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

GET THE INDY DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR HOME EVERY MONTH

YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS A SINGLE ISSUE
12 ISSUES \$30 • 24 ISSUES \$54

INDYPENDENT.ORG/SUBSCRIBE

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

THE INDYPENDENT

THE PEOPLES FORUM

JULY Revolution

60 years of Sweat of the Cuban Revolution

60 años de Perseverancia Cubana

IMPERIALISM | MANU KARUKA
COURSE / JULY 16 > JULY 30, 2019
6:30PM - 8:30PM | FREE

AF3IRM NYC'S 8TH ANNUAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF WOMEN'S BOOT CAMP
SAT, JULY 20 - AUGUST 10
11:00 PM - 4:00 PM | 0 - \$100

SCREEN PRINTING WORKSHOP
SAT., JULY 6 - AUGUST 10
10:00AM - 12:00PM | FREE

#peoplesforumnyc

320 West 37th Street, New York, NY 10018 | info@peoplesforum.org | peoplesforum.org

July 2019 THE INDYPENDENT

'THIS IS A MANUFACTURED CRISIS'

CODE PINK'S MEDEA BENJAMIN ON WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IN IRAN

BY JOHN TARLETON

When Donald Trump makes a pronouncement on most subjects, the media has learned to treat it with a healthy dose of skepticism. Not so much with the United States' stand-off with Iran. To get some straight talk about the conflict, as well as the historical context in which it is taking place, *The Independent* spoke with Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the anti-war group Code Pink and author of *Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran*.

INDEPENDENT: *What do you make of the growing tensions between the United States and Iran? How dangerous is the situation?*

MEDEA BENJAMIN: This is a crisis manufactured by Donald Trump and his team. We'd never be in this situation if we had stayed in the Iran nuclear deal, a deal that was working, that was verified 13 times by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Trump pulled out of the deal and used the weight of the United States to impose sanctions that threaten countries and companies throughout the world that would want to do business with Iran. This led to a crisis in the Iranian economy and the Iranian government is trying to alert the world to the fact that 80 million people are suffering because of what Trump did.

Do you think this could escalate to a war? Or is the Trump administration merely posturing?

I definitely think this could escalate to a war. If Trump had not called off the bombing that was about to commence in mid-June, the Iranians would have retaliated, probably hitting U.S. troops in some nearby base and the United States would respond to that. The Iranians would then call in their allies to attack U.S. allies, like Hezbollah attacking Israel or Iranian-supported militia in Iraq attacking U.S. soldiers. This could easily spiral out of control.

What's the source of U.S. hostility toward the Iranian regime? The Iranians gave up 98 percent of their nuclear capability and complied with the agreement it signed with the Obama administration.

There are people in this administration who have been calling for war with Iran for the past decade and are very close to Israel and Saudi Arabia, two countries that see Iran as an adversary and don't want to fight Iran directly themselves but want the United States to attack Iran.

Both the Israelis and the Saudis are dependent on the U.S. for their survival, and are very worried about the U.S. getting closer to Iran. We should also recognize that Iran is a very resource-rich country and many of those resources have been nationalized. That was the original sin of Iran and why the CIA overthrew the Iranian government in 1953. Certainly, many U.S. companies would like to get their hands on Iran's resources.

From your visits to Iran, what is it that people from the United States should know about the country?

I'm not a supporter of the Iranian government, which is a theocracy. But it would make a much better U.S. ally than Saudi Arabia. The population in Iran is very pro-American. They make a clear distinction between the American people and the American government. They have a developed political system in Iran and it makes a difference if the more reformist or conservative

factions win the elections. Saudi Arabia has no democracy, it's just a monarchy where rule is handed down from one king to the next one.

Iran's cultural heritage spans back over millennia to the days of ancient Persia. To what extent has that heritage remained intact since the 1979 revolution and why that is an encouraging sign?

The Iranians are a very sophisticated and educated people. We went to some of the oldest cities in the world like Isfahan, you stand in awe of the archi-

tecture, the art, the rich literature tradition. Iranians love their poets. People gather in the evening at monuments to their poets, bringing their families to pay homage and recite their poetry.

There are many different ethnic groups that compromise Iran. Unlike other places, for the most part those ethnic groups consider themselves Iranian first. This is something the U.S. is trying to destroy because it's encouraging the ethnic groups to become secessionists and rise up. This is not something most Iranians agree with.

When you traveled in Iran, were you able to travel around independently? Some people would think the government would put guides with you only letting you go to what they wanted you to see.

There are guides with us most of the time but even so, we were allowed to walk around in the evening and we were able to stroll through the bazaars and talk to people on our own. We wore outfits that said we were from the United States and wanted peace with Iran, so people were constantly coming to talk to us. Many people complained about their own government, but said the United States made the situation much worse.

On the ground in Iran, what are the impacts of the sanctions?

The value of the currency is less than half of what it was in 2015. The unemployment rate for young people is so bad that many people are leaving the country if they are able to do so. I just had an Uber driver yesterday who told me that he was an Iranian engineer who had a print factory but with the sanctions the cost of the paper had tripled so people couldn't afford to put out their newspapers. He went out of business and is now in the U.S. driving for Uber. He's one of thousands of people who have lost their businesses because of these sanctions.

When the Iran nuclear deal was signed in 2015, there was euphoria in Iran with people dancing and singing in the streets but now they're very depressed without a positive future in sight. They see the economy getting worse as the U.S. puts the squeeze on, trying to get oil exports down to zero, and they don't see a political solution on the horizon either.

How much of the resentment to Iran do you think is held over from the taking of the U.S. embassy in 1979 and wanting to avenge that humiliation?

Many older Americans remember the hostage crisis and still harbor resentment towards Iran for the humiliation of holding Americans hostage for 444 days. But when we talk about 1979, we should also talk about 1953 because if it wasn't for the overthrow of the democratically-elected government in 1953, there never would have been the 1979 revolution that brought fundamentalists to power. U.S. government policies can have impacts that last for many decades and the best example of that today is the U.S. history in Iran.

If U.S.-Iranian relations get on a better track in the future, what would be the overall benefit to that?

I think it could defuse most of the conflicts in the Middle East — in Syria, in Iraq, in Yemen — as the Iranians are central to resolving those conflicts. Iran could also help end the conflict in Afghanistan. Instead of spending billions on perpetual war, we could use those funds to address the real global crisis of climate change.



EMILY GAGE



LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION/SEAN HAWKEY

BORDERLINE INSANE

MEXICO PAYS THE PRICE FOR TRUMP'S WAR ON MIGRANTS

BY LAURA CARLSEN

Imagine Donald Trump's re-election war room. The president of the United States checks tweets as his white supremacist strategists decide — just days before his re-election campaign launch — that it's time to play the immigration card big time. They hatch a plan to once again slam migrants as the source of all evil in a polarized, unstable, repressive and internationally isolated America, while forcing Mexico to its knees in the interests of "America First".

This bombshell turned out to be all too real and was, of course, announced in a tweet:

"On June 10th," Trump proclaimed, "the United States will impose a 5% Tariff on all goods coming into our Country from Mexico, until such time as illegal migrants coming through Mexico, and into our Country, STOP. The Tariff will gradually increase until the Illegal Immigration problem is remedied, at which time the Tariffs will be removed. Details from the White House to follow."

Massive scrambling ensued, as businesses and politicians sought to do damage control. The National Association of Manufacturers, farm associations and a coalition of U.S. and Mexican businesses led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce issued strong statements warning that the tariffs would punish consumers, dismantle production chains and thwart the new NAFTA. They sent teams of lobbyists scurrying to Washington. Major Republican leaders broke rank and declare their outright opposition to the measure. In Mexico, the new government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, or AMLO as he is widely known, sent its top cabinet members to plead for a reprieve.

U.S.-Mexico negotiations took place in a climate of chaos and confusion. Stock markets and currency exchanges punished the Mexican economy before anything real even happened. That's the big stick that the López Obrador government fears most and Trump knows it. By June 7, the two governments — one led by an anti-immigrant, capitalist conservative and the other by a center-left, self-proclaimed anti-neoliberal leader who promised a humane approach to immigration — reached an agreement.

When the dust cleared, it turned out there were two agreements: an initial one that extended the already-existing program to return Central Americans seeking asylum in the United States to Mexico to await their hearings and sent 6,000 Mexican National Guard members to the border, and a second announcement that if after 45 days Mexico has not complied to the Trump administration's satisfaction, it must consider an agreement that bars Cen-

tral Americans from applying for asylum in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security has been pushing Mexico to accept this "Safe Third Country" designation for months, while AMLO's administration steadfastly refused. Now the proposal could go to the Mexican Senate.

The big debate has been over which side won. But that's not the point. The manufactured immigration crisis and draconian response edged both countries toward a police state where democracy and human rights have been sacrificed in the name of a political campaign on the one hand and the transnational economy on the other. It also revealed the vulnerability of the Mexican government, hailed as a progressive beacon in a region turning toward authoritarian, elite rule.

Immigration from Central America — especially Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador — has spiked in recent months, but still falls well short of historic highs. Honduras is experiencing a full-blown political crisis under the discredited presidency of Juan Orlando Hernandez and with the vacuum of democratic institutions, state, domestic and gang violence has soared. El Salvador has a new government and old, deep-seated problems. Structures of violence left from the civil war fought in the 1980s, including U.S. support of death squads and exportation of gangs and weak institutions, place the average citizen in the crosshairs every day. Corruption, violence and inequality, especially for indigenous populations, has forced Guatemalans to leave in numbers well below those of the eighties, but climbing.

MANUFACTURED CRISIS, REAL THREATS

Although the supposed threat migrants pose to society is false, Trump's use of tariffs as a weapon and repression of migrants and their rights are very real threats to the economy, to democracy, to truth and to human security in the United States and abroad — even when he's bluffing. The tariff-crackdown trade-off may have twisted Mexico's arm on migration, but it will not solve the problem and it puts the lives of thousands of men, women and children who need international protection in jeopardy. It also risks instability in Mexico due to the burden of receiving thousands of asylum seekers. Shelters in northern border cities are already saturated and now, with the extension of the Remain in Mexico program and continued arrivals, local communities have begun to reject immigrants and immigrants are encountering deteriorating conditions. Trump's latest election-time threat to launch a major deportation drive, could add large numbers of Mexican deportees to the strain.

ARM-TWISTING & APPEASEMENT

AMLO came into office with a two-fold plan: to make migrants safer in Mexico by providing visas and basic needs for the large caravans and to focus on development in Central America to reduce forced migration. Trump's threats completely reoriented the first objective.

The Mexican president first reacted to the tariff threat with indignation and insisted on addressing the root causes of displacement, but his government now seems to have accepted the crack-down model and the absurd idea that migrant families pose a security threat.

The law states that every migrant seeking asylum has a right to protection. Setting quotas for detention and deportation threatens due process and violates rights. In the past weeks, Mexico has suspended the issuance of visas, tripled apprehensions for the year and expanded deportations. As the 45-day deadline looms, the director of the Immigration Institute vowed to reduce flows, as if the problem were numeric, not humanitarian.

Since he took office, Lopez Obrador has gone to great lengths to avoid confrontation with his northern counterpart. Under previous presidents, Mexico swallowed neoliberal formulas hook, line and sinker, becoming hugely dependent on the United States for trade and foreign investment. AMLO has ambitious plans to reorient the economy and reduce inequality — a shaky macroeconomic climate could derail them. What Mexicans are asking is: How far will the progressive president they elected go to preserve relations with a permanently hostile and anti-progressive neighbor? Since the immigration deal, criticisms of allowing foreign intervention in Mexican politics, the betrayal of principles and the violation of rights have multiplied.

A gap has widened between rhetoric and action. The government continues to push its regional development plan for Central America and southern Mexico as the long-term solution to forced migration. The program has the support of the United Nations and, on paper, of the Trump administration. While creating conditions to stay home is the only approach that can change current migration patterns, Mexico's plan focuses on development without much consideration of the political and social crises that wrack the Central American countries.

Meanwhile, Trump's priority is to fuel the border crisis through November 2020, not solve it. In the next year and a half, we can expect continued attacks on Mexico and migrants, including inhuman conditions in expanded detention, more deaths in custody, pressure to reproduce anti-immigrant measures and the senseless militarization of the borders.

That means AMLO will no doubt soon face another crossroads — stand up to Trump or continue to appease him. If he chooses the former, he calls down the wrath of an erratic and dangerous leader with no real understanding of the vital links between the two countries. If he chooses the latter, he takes on an unsustainable and immoral commitment to a pre-fascist government and could be responsible for great harm to Central Americans seeking safety. By violating the trust of those who elected him, he also risks losing his base of support.

It's a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't dilemma, complicated by the fact that appeasement increases Trump's political capital. And the last thing Mexico wants is a second Trump administration.

**A LONG ROAD
AHEAD:** *Thousands of Central American migrants on their way north rest in southern Mexico.*

AMERICA'S INNER WAR, FOUGHT AT ITS EDGES

The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America

By GREG GRANDIN

METROPOLITAN BOOKS, 2019

By Steven Sherman

As indicated by its title, historian Greg Grandin's *The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America* is a sweeping history of the United States that aims to bring insight to bear on the present, in particular the racist nativism of President Donald Trump.

"What distinguishes earlier racist presidents like [Woodrow] Wilson and [Andrew] Jackson from Trump," Grandin writes, "is that they were in office during the upswing of America's moving out into the world, when domestic political polarization could be stanching and the country held together... by endless growth. Trumpism is extremism turned inward, all-consuming and self-devouring. There is no 'divine, messianic crusade' that can harness and redirect passions outward." In other words, Trump's campaign to build a wall along the Mexican border marks a break with the ideology that the United States is ever-expanding along an evolving frontier, but continues the nation's violent posture toward non-whites, particularly in the border territories.

Grandin recasts U.S. history as a war between two visions of the nation. We might call it the frontier vs. the social republic, if not barbarism vs. socialism. On one side are those who link individual freedom to attacking non-whites and to a limited federal government. On the other are those who call for an expanded government with responsibilities to all, including non-whites.

He begins his narrative before independence, when settlers' dreams of expanding westward and exterminating Indians were quickly constrained by British geopolitical aspirations. A similar dynamic continued after independence, as settlers felt yoked in by the federal government's perceived responsibilities towards Indians. At this time, James Madison developed his theory that the United States could resolve internal tensions by "expanding the sphere," spreading citizens over more territory.

The frontier ideology fully congealed with Andrew Jackson, who won the presidency in 1828 on a platform of removing Indians, waging war on Mexico and defending and extending slavery. His political rise was fueled by his confrontation with a federal agent while force-marching a group of slaves. Depending on who you believe, Jackson responded to the agent's request to see his passport by pulling out either his gun or a copy of the Constitution and saying, "Here's my passport."

By the 1890s, when the frontier was declared closed, the United States was "expanding the sphere" beyond North America through war with Spain. Grandin highlights how Confederate veterans reinvented themselves as proud patriots eager to fight more wars for lofty national ideals, wars that conquered non-whites. Black soldiers who hoped their service would enhance their

citizenship status were met with a much more mixed reception, as their aspirations got blurred with those of the non-white people the United States was repressing.

After World War II, the expanded sphere came to include most of the world, as the United States sought to bring "free enterprise" to every corner not already controlled by communist regimes. The Vietnam war was effectively another frontier war, as was Ronald Reagan sending Vietnam veterans and other disgruntled adventurers to fight communists in Central America.

lowed by Trump, who articulated the impulses of border vigilantes with a Jacksonian fury. By now, the border is everywhere. Federal agents, Grandin notes "have extra-constitutional powers in 'border zones,'" which are defined as anywhere within 100 miles of international boundaries — "an area that covers as many as 200 million citizens." The people of the United States are thus trapped in a seething, involuted society, even as corporations continue their plunder worldwide.

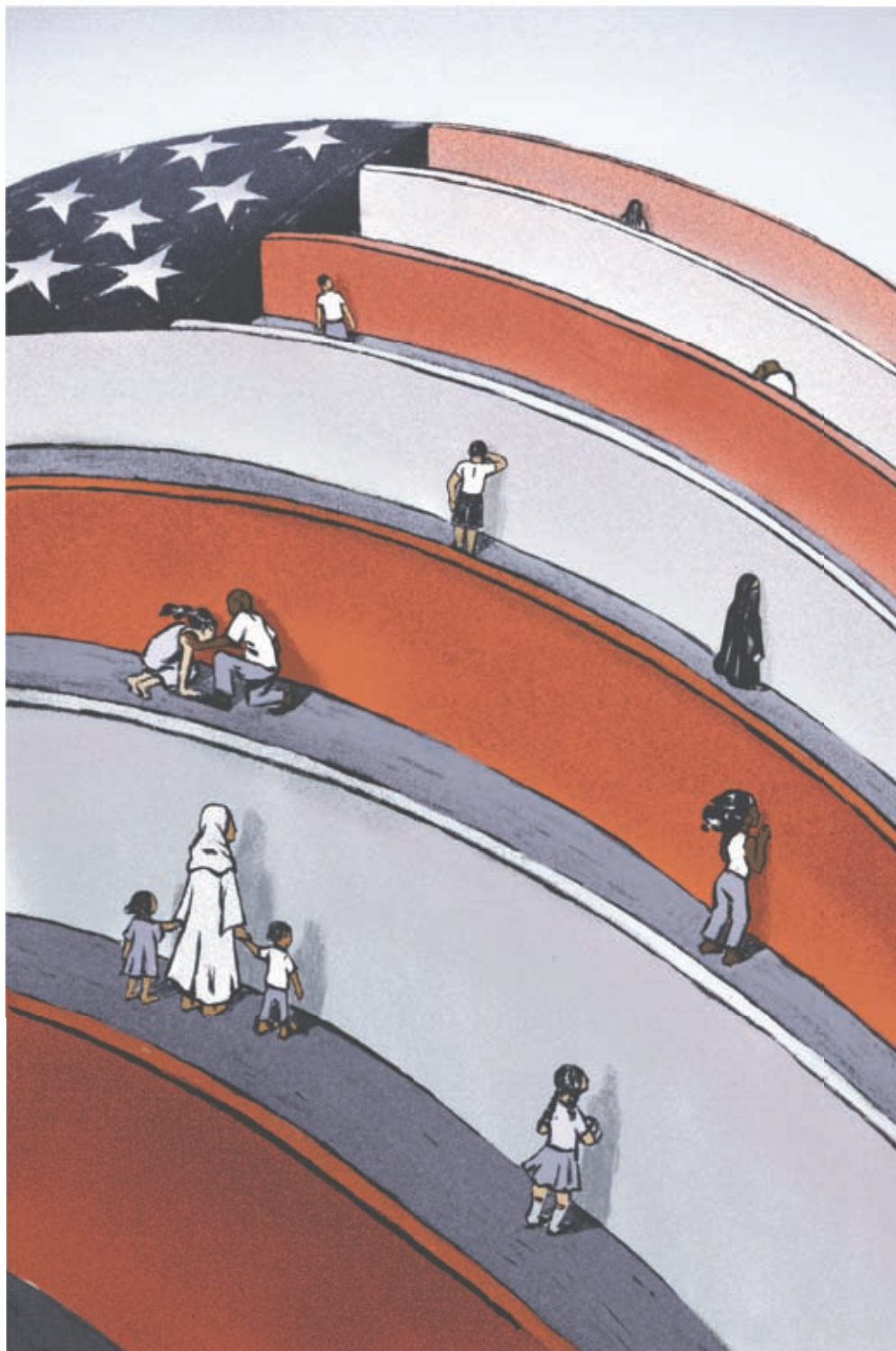
Grandin's narrative does not ignore countermovements. President John Adams had many reservations about expansionary wars and the dashed hope of using the sale of federal lands to fund infrastructure and social programs. The Freedmen's Bureau posed a sharper challenge to the frontier ideology after the

Civil War, seeking to help both newly-freed blacks and poor white Southerners. However, it didn't last, and its administrator was sent off to fight Indian wars in Arizona. The Mexican Revolution of 1910–20 was also a countermovement of sorts, shutting down agrarian capitalist expansion and provoking a fierce backlash in Texas against Mexican Americans.

The New Deal constituted a revival of the social republic. New Dealers were also willing to learn from Mexico's revolutionary experiments, defying the American-exceptionalist principle that the United States has nothing to learn from other countries. (The New Deal, however, continued to rely on expansion in some ways, most notably by boosting several export sectors.) And the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1967 speech opposing the Vietnam War is perhaps the most full-throated denunciation of the frontier mentality in U.S. history.

Grandin's handling of the current countermovement is too perfunctory, however. Although he acknowledges the revival of socialism, he doesn't discuss Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign at any length. Sanders constantly redirected public attention to a handful of domestic needs that can only be resolved through massive governmental interventions, a dramatic contrast both with Trump's surly, racist "America first" message and Hillary Clinton's confidence that she could run the world. Nor does Grandin look at such developments as the expulsion of the Confederate flag from the public sphere and liberals' embrace of immigrants' rights as a protest cause. There is considerable material to rebuild the social republic on hand for today's socialists and others who wish to join them. Thus, Grandin's picture of a seething, involuted society at war with itself is a little too one-dimensional and pessimistic, although we shouldn't discount any of what he describes.

Contemporary socialists should read Grandin's narrative closely and take it to heart. The pathological individualism we struggle against is not simply Ayn Randian greed. It is also a desire for freedom from government — to use guns to dominate non-whites and nature.



TIFFANY PAI

After the Cold War ended, Bill Clinton sought to expand the sphere economically through NAFTA, with promises that this would somehow end a "ghetto pathology" among African Americans. But the U.S.-Mexico border was emerging as the site for vigilantes looking to repress non-whites, and the mass migration spurred by NAFTA's crushing of the Mexican agricultural economy only accelerated this process. Sending troops off to fight in Iraq didn't reverse that.

Barack Obama embodied both the expansiveness of the United States, by his connections to Hawaii and Indonesia, and the victims of white supremacy, but could not resolve the contradiction with his technocratic approach to free trade, war and immigration. He was fol-

WHEN ABORTION WAS ILLEGAL

Happening

By ANNIE ERNAUX, TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY TANYA LESLIE

FIRST ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDITION SEVEN STORIES PRESS, 2019; FIRST FRENCH EDITION, 2000

By Eleanor Bader

When French feminist Annie Ernaux was a 23-year-old student at Rouen University, she faced an unplanned and undesired pregnancy. It was 1963. Abortion in France was illegal but, as in the United States, there was a well-established network to help women who did not wish to carry their pregnancies to term.

Some of these practitioners were highly skilled. Others were not. Worse, their standards of hygiene ran the gamut from clinical to unsanitary. But Ernaux was desperate and after an ill-fated visit to her family physician, she felt she had no choice but to ask friends for the name of an underground provider.

Ernaux's account of the era — a time rife with secrecy, shame and guilt about sexual exploration — is riveting, simultaneously sparely written and horrifying in the details it affords, giving readers a glimpse into the loneliness and terror that engulfed her. In this, it is both deeply personal and deeply universal.

She describes the abortion procedure in clear, emotionless language.

Nonetheless, as Ernaux recounts traveling from Rouen to Paris to meet Madame P-R, the lack of information she received about what the termination would actually entail is shocking.

(Although the French edition of *Happening* was published in 2000, almost 40 years later, Ernaux identifies each character in the book using initials, presumably to protect their privacy.)

Madame P-R “inserted a probe into the opening of the womb using a speculum. All you had to do was wait until you miscarried,” Ernaux writes. “It seemed easy and straightforward.”

Sadly, like many well-laid plans, things did not go as expected. In fact, nothing happened. This meant that sev-



PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

UNDERGROUND

PATIENT: A young Annie Ernaux.

eral days after seeing Madame P-R, Ernaux had to return to the abortionist's apartment. A perfunctory pelvic exam was followed by the insertion of a new probe, and she was instructed to return to her dormitory and wait.

The next day, she writes, “Spasms of pain, which I had barely noticed at first, seared through me... The attacks became more and more frequent. Hours passed. Then, she continues, “I was seized with a violent urge to shit... I pushed with all my strength. It burst forth like a grenade, in a spray of water that splashed the floor. I saw a baby doll dangling from my loins at the end of a reddish cord. I couldn't imagine ever having that inside me. I took it in one hand — it was strangely heavy.”

A friend, O, was with Ernaux throughout the delivery and she was charged with cutting the umbilical cord, which she did with a pair of unsterilized scissors. There was no time to think: Ernaux had begun hemorrhaging and within minutes she had to be rushed to a Rouen hospital.

Ernaux writes that she has never been able to forget the heinous contempt she was treated with by the doctors, nurses, and orderlies who staffed the facility.

Still, that's the least of it. *Happening* is a harrowing read about a time that should be confined to history. Indeed, the fact that stories like Ernaux's are not relics of the past is chilling. As recent events have shown, many U.S. lawmakers — not all of them Republicans — support reversing *Roe v. Wade*. That makes this book an essential tool for reproductive-justice activists. It's a reminder, should we need one, that legal abortion is an essential component of comprehensive, humane health care.

ereral days after seeing Madame P-R, Ernaux had to return to the abortionist's apartment. A perfunctory pelvic exam was followed by the insertion of a new probe, and she was instructed to return to her dormitory and wait.

A DEAD COUNTRY IN YOUR HEAD

By Carolyn Steinhoff

In a country where they're trained to shed

old women like out-of-fashion coats

a Self has to be a container for everybody's No,

the sole repository of knowledge

about where you come from and where you go,

a holder of a dream, where you belonged

with some people, that you can be trying to remember;

trying to remember it makes you forget it

so you stop trying and that makes you forget the dream.

In the same way, for years you can be resuscitating

a dead person or country in your head and not know it

or you can feel the life you're living

is a false life without realizing it.

The past can come to seem

as if it's sending you some natural light,

into the dark dead air

of your big-city apartment. Some laughing

and hugging can exist in your memory,

which is the limbic system of your brain,

as closed as a defunded library

full of books sitting there aging, like grief

sitting there nice and neat on the shelves of the Self.

In the same way the huge No that's said and unsaid,

that lives in us, can sound louder to us than the clatter of glass

and plastic recycling the superintendent is handling

in the no-space between the buildings,

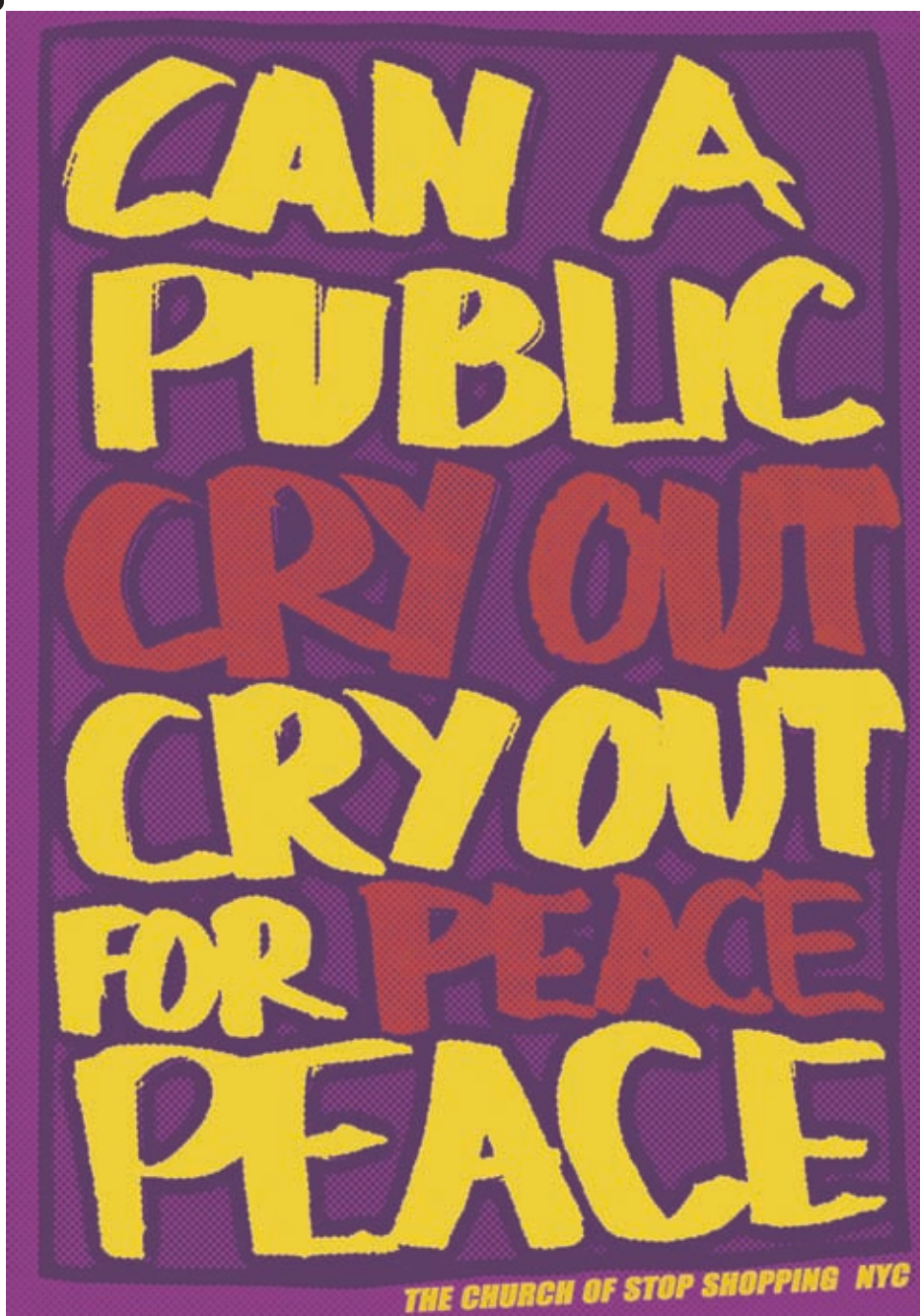
louder than a drill groaning like a beast,

that some people are using to renovate

an emptied apartment next to you to rent at a profit.

In a country like that

words of love coming to you out of the ether seem like angels.



**WE CAN FIX OUR SUBWAYS,
HAVE MODERN, WELL FUNDED SCHOOLS,
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
AND HEALTHCARE FOR ALL NEW YORKERS...**

**IF WE MOVE THE MONEY
FROM WAR TO
OUR COMMUNITIES**



Tell your councilmember: CO-SPONSOR RES. 747

Find your councilmember here: bit.ly/my-cm

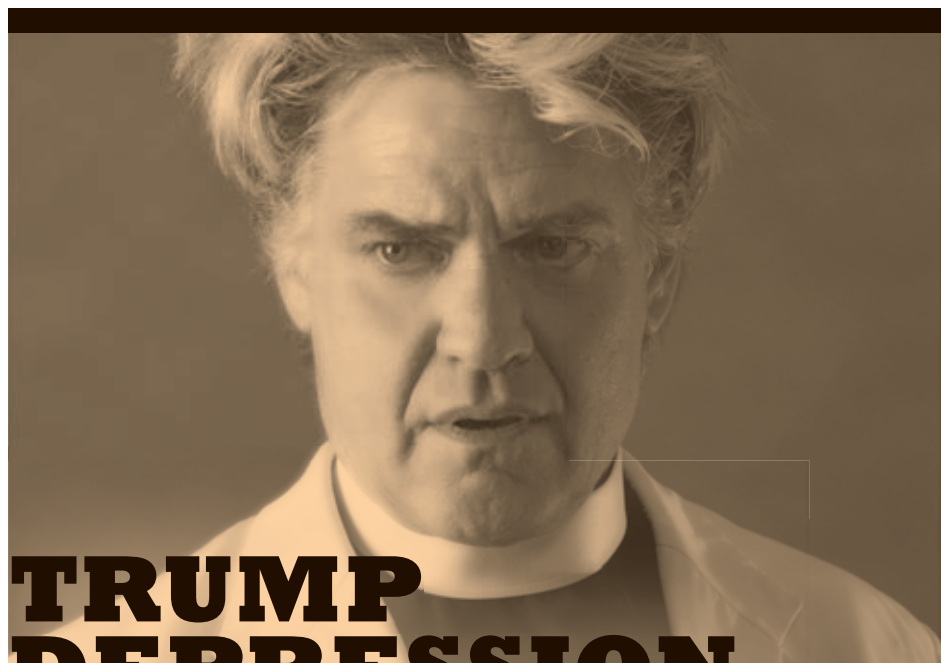
Email movethemoney.nyc@gmail.com to get involved!

Sponsored by a growing network of groups under the banner of **Move The Money - NYC**



BROOKLYN FOR PEACE
BROOKLYNPEACE.ORG
bfp@brooklynpeace.org | 718-624-5921

FIND US ON:
f t i
At brooklyn4peace



TRUMP DEPRESSION HOTLINE

JON QUILITY

Hey Reverend Billy,
I'm someone who values friendships, especially friendships that go back over many years. However, in these intensely polarized times, I find it harder to stay in touch with pals who hold problematic views on issues I care about. One example: a pair of old friends who have lived in Israel and have convinced themselves the Palestinians are a "made-up people" who never lived in Palestine in any significant numbers before 1948 and who never want to make peace. These are really nice people who are progressive on most issues, and we've shared a lot of good times together. Still, the mindset it takes to erase and not see a whole group of people who are being brutalized on their own land is something I just can't look past anymore. Their minds are made up as well. I also have a childhood friend who grew up to become an executive in a deeply destructive industry and has made millions of dollars. He too is a nice guy with a lovely family but is disconnected from what he's doing and won't acknowledge it despite my best efforts. I know you can always find new friends but in this case that doesn't feel like an entirely satisfactory answer.

— JOSEPH, Morningside Heights

DEAR JOSEPH,
Why are you offering courtesy that your friends haven't given you? Trump and Netanyahu did not invent the confusion of racism with national security, but they have made it very easy to fold hate into "support for Israel" or "American Greatness." Tell your friends in a straightforward way that Arabs and Jews are children of Abraham and if the two nations must be separate than they should be equal and secure. If your friendship cannot survive that, then move on. Integrate your peaceful values into the friendship and hold the friendship to that test.

As for the other friend with the 'destructive' company — are you talking about Exxon? Monsanto/Bayer? Chase? Well, the same idea should apply. Be straightforward about the violence. Your friends have obviously not been challenged by people they respect. Make sure that you are strong in your defense of peace, so that if this is your last exchange with these people, at least you might be leaving them a bit further from bloodshed or from financial support for killers. Lots and lots of people love

peace, Joseph, and you may find better friends among them.

...

Hi Bill, the Fourth of July is coming up. Me and the fam love hot dogs and fireworks and just getting together with our neighbors every year. But more and more, with that egomaniac in the White House, I feel like our country has turned sour. Yet there's got to be some room for patriotism these days right? How do I muster up that patriotic spirit?

— VICTORIA, South Slope

ALL MY LIFE the United States has started wars. From the Bay of Pigs to Vietnam to Reagan's death squads in Central America, Panama, on and on to the Iraq wars and Afghanistan and Yemen. Always small countries, and always people of color. (Well, the 78-day bombing of Serbia is the exception.) The carnival of exaggerations and lies that presidents use to start American wars is such an old tradition that no-one is believing Trump's stories about Iran. I hope that makes a difference.

At what point do nation-states lose our loyalty? Now. Right now. The U.S.A., in its blundering arrogance, has mistaken its next manufactured "rogue country" with something more powerful by many orders of magnitude — the Earth itself. Trump has put the source of all life on the terrorist list. The message to the American people seems to be, as the extinction of life accelerates, the income streams of wealthy are more important than breathing.

The first place we live is the Earth, not the United States, not the West, not Capitalism. The weapons we use to defend our Earth are the bodies she gave us, as we stop pipelines and chemical and oil and big bank climate-change-investing executives. We are armed with our bodies. Sing it to the skies — Earthalujah!

Have a good holiday, with veggie hot dogs!

— REV

REVEREND BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A POST-RELIGIOUS PREACHER OF THE STREETS AND BANK LOBBIES. HAVE A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY? JUST EMAIL REVBILLY@INDYPEN- DENT.ORG AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.

TM



International Publishers

COLLECTED WORKS OF KARL MARX & FREDERICK ENGELS

- International Publishers
235 West 23rd St, New York, NY
- Email: service@intpubnyc.com
- Phone: 212-366-9816
- Format: 5.5x8.5 hard cover
- Set: 50 Volumes

The English-language edition of the *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels, which is a joint publication of Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. International Publishers Co. Inc., New York and Progress Publis-

hing Group Corporation and the Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems (former Institute of Marxism-Leninism), Moscow, includes all the works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels published in their lifetime and a considerable part of their legacy of manuscripts as well as their letters.

The whole edition comprises fifty volumes, organized into three main groups: (1) philosophical, historical, political, economic and other works, in chronological order; (2) Marx's *Capital* with his preliminary versions and works directly connected with it; (3) letters of Marx and Engels.

The texts in volumes 28-37 represent the principal stages in the formation of Marx's economic doctrine.

Volumes 28 and 29 contain Marx's Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58 (the first rough draft of *Capital* – the, so called *Grundrisse*) and his work, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Part One (1859). Volumes 30 and 34 comprise the Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63 (the second rough draft of *Capital*). Volumes 35-37 contain volumes I II and III of *Capital*.

“There appearance marks a milestone in the dissemination of the publishable writings of the fathers of Marxism...”

-Choice

“Indispensable to anyone with a serious interest in Marx, Marxism and the 19th century” -

E.J. Hobsbawm

“The translation ... is masterly; not only faultless but immensely readable and displaying a fine ingenuity in making sense of the more abstruse—or merely tougher—Teutonic constructions” -

Y. Kapp in the Sunday Times

“... these volumes are essential to a scholarly understanding of Marxism” - Library Association Journal



The Collected Works in 50 Volumes

WE STAND UP FOR WORKERS. AND WE WON'T BACK DOWN.

The **Department of Consumer and Worker Protection** fights for the rights of all workers in NYC regardless of job or immigration status.

To ask questions or file a complaint, call **311** and say “worker” or visit **nyc.gov/workers**. You can remain anonymous.

We fight for
every worker in NYC.

NYC

Bill de Blasio
Mayor

**Consumer and
Worker Protection**

Lorelei Salas
Commissioner

