

THE

= NYC'S NEXT SOCIALIST WAVE — P6 =

INDYPENDENT

#251: OCTOBER 2019 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

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FIGHT BACK
P4**

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INSIDE THE AMAZON

ESTEBAN GUERRA

**WHY THE WORLD'S LARGEST RAINFOREST CONTINUES TO BURN
AND HOW IT AFFECTS US ALL
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COME CELEBRATE WITH US!

THE INDYPENDENT'S 250TH ISSUE PARTY

SATURDAY OCT 19

AT SIXTH STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

SEE PAGE 7 FOR PARTY DETAILS



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

OCTOBER

TUE OCT 8

2PM-TBA • FREE
ACTIVISM: REBEL FEST
Teach-ins, workshops, art mak-
ing, meditation, yoga, live music,
talks and nonviolent direct action
training hosted by Extinction
Rebellion as part of XR Global
Rebellion NYC. Civil disobedi-
ence protests will be taking place
throughout the week.
Washington Square Park, Mnhtn

WED OCT 9

7PM-9:30PM • FREE
**BOOK LAUNCH: CAPITAL IS DEAD
BY MCKENZIE WARK**
Join McKenzie Wark in conversa-
tion with Natasha Lennard around
the launch of *Capital Is Dead: Is
This Something Worse?* Wark
argues that the all-pervasive
presence of data in our networked
society has given rise to a new
mode of production, one not ruled
over by capitalists and their fac-
tories but by those who own and
control the flows of information.
VERSO BOOKS
20 Jay St., Suite 1010, Bklyn

SAT OCT 12

10:30AM-5PM • FREE
LIT: PEOPLE'S BOOK FAIR
Browse collections from a variety
of radical and leftist presses.
THE PEOPLE'S FORUM
320 W. 37th St., Mnhtn

OCT 12-OCT 13

SAT-SUN 12PM-9PM • \$15-\$50
**FOOD: NEW YORK AFRICAN RES-
TAURANT WEEK FESTIVAL**
A showcase of the best of the
African and African-inspired cui-
sine in New York. Part of African
Restaurant Week Oct. 4-Oct. 20.
MIST HARLEM
46 W. 116th St., Mnhtn

SUN OCT 13

12PM-6PM • FREE
**MARKET: JERSEY CITY ODDI-
TIES MARKET**
Featuring over 70 purveyors of
the old and the odd.
HARBORSIDE JC
210 Hudson St., Jersey City

SUN OCT 13

2PM-4PM • FREE
**NATURE: ECOSOCIALIST HIKE:
MARINE PARK SALT MARSH**
Join the NYC Democratic Social-
ists of America's Ecosocialist
Working Group for an easy walk
through Brooklyn's largest park,
one of the few remaining pre-
serves of liminal wetland space
in NYC. Salt marshes and wet-
lands are diverse ecosystems,
supporting hundreds of species
of birds and fish, and are protec-
tive against storm surges but also
uniquely climate-vulnerable.
SALT MARSH NATURE CENTER
3302 Ave. U, Bklyn

SUN OCT 13

6PM-9PM • Donations welcome
SCREENING: THEY LIVE
Horror and socialism have long
gone hand in hand. In *Capital*,
Karl Marx writes, "Capital is dead
labor, which, vampire-like, lives
only by sucking living labor, and
lives the more, the more labor
it sucks." Catch this outdoor
screening of the cult-classic *They
Live* and help raise funds for the
Brooklyn Democratic Socialists
of America.
472 79th St., Bklyn

OCT 13-OCT 14

SAT & SUN 11AM-2PM • FREE
**EVENT: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S
DAY CELEBRATION**
Mark 527 years of survival since

Columbus's landfall and sup-
port the call for NYC to change
Columbus Day to Indigenous
Peoples Day. Speakers include
Pua Case, of the fight to save
Hawaii's Mauna Kea mountain;
and LaDonna Brave Bull Allard,
Standing Rock's Sacred Stone
Camp Founder.
Randall's Island, NYC

THU OCT 17

7PM-9PM • FREE
**LIT: OCEAN VUONG, WITH DA-
RIN STRAUSS**
Ocean Vuong's debut novel, *On
Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, was
published by Penguin Press this
summer. He is also the author of
the poetry collection, *Night Sky
with Exit Wounds*, winner of the T.
S. Eliot Prize. He'll be in conversa-
tion with National Book Critics
Circle Award winner Darin Strauss.
*LILLIAN VERNON CREATIVE
WRITERS HOUSE*
58 W. 10th St., Mnhtn

SAT OCT 19

11AM-5PM • FREE
**PARTY: SUPER SÁBADO: DIA DE
MUERTOS CELEBRATION**
Celebrate Mexico's beloved 3,000
year-old tradition that commemo-
rates friends and relatives who
have passed away, with face
painting, art making, performanc-
es and more.
EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO
1230 Fifth Ave., Mnhtn

SAT OCT 19

7PM-1AM • \$10-\$20 donation
**PARTY: CELEBRATE 250 ISSUES OF
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE**
For going on two decades, *The
Indypendent* has been the voice
of movements for social justice,
underground culture and the

place New Yorkers
turn for hard-hitting
reporting that pulls
no punches. This fall
we published our
250th issue. Join us

at the Sixth Street Community
Center Saturday, Oct. 19 as we
mark this momentous occasion.
Performers include: Reverend
Billy & the Stop Shopping Choir,
Outernational, Sleepy Kitty, and
Grace Bergere. There'll be a
live auction, plus drink specials
(including an exclusive Indypen-
dent-inspired cocktail).
*SIXTH STREET COMMUNITY
CENTER*
638 E. 6th St., Mnhtn

SAT OCT 19

7:30PM • \$79 & up
MUSIC: THE ORIGINAL MISFITS
Enjoy a ghouls' night out, just in
time for Halloween.
THE GARDEN
4 Pennsylvania Plaza, Mnhtn

SUN OCT 20

2PM-4PM • FREE
**TALK: MEET CRAZY HORSE FAM-
ILY ELDER & AUTHOR MATSON**
Crazy Horse family elder Floyd
Clown, Sr. and author William
Matson discuss and sign their
book *Crazy Horse: The Lakota
Warrior's Life and Legacy* based
on the family's oral history.
*AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY
HOUSE*
39 Eldridge St., 4th Fl., Mnhtn

MON OCT 21

7PM-9PM • FREE
**NIGHT SCHOOL: ELECTIONS AND
THE STATE**
Any socialist project that seeks
to engage in political struggle will
have to come to a clear understand-
ing of what the state is. Focusing on
the work of Ralph Miliband, explore
which aspects of the state make it
"capitalist" in nature.
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THE INDYPENDENT



REBECA ANCHONDO

THU OCT 24

7PM–9:30PM • FREE

BOOK LAUNCH: *THE STARS AND THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THEM*

Junauda Petrus-Nasah reads from her new book *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*, a work of queer magic-real-

ism, liberation, Black diaspora and astrological love.

BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE, CAFÉ, & ACTIVIST CENTER

172 Allen St., Mnhtn

FRI OCT 25

7:30PM • \$10–\$15 sliding scale

MUSIC: HALLOWEEN PUNK SHOW TO BENEFIT THE BLACK TRANS TRAVEL FUND

Bring your spooky wear. Funds go to help provide black transgender women with resources to ensure they are able to travel to and from their destinations safely and free from verbal harassment or physical harm.

STARR BAR

214 Starr St., Bklyn

SAT OCT 26

8PM–1AM • \$20

DANCE: ASSATA SHAKUR FREEDOM DANCE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the city's best fundraiser to free long-held political prisoners. Admission includes one drink and food is on sale.

NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

2031 5th Ave., Harlem

SUN OCT 27

12PM–5PM • FREE

LIT: THE FREE BLACK WOMEN'S LIBRARY SALUTES TONI MORRISON

Come and share your favorite passages, books, essays, speeches, poems, memories and stories of the ways the Pulitzer Prize-winning black feminist writer has influenced your art, writing and life.

THE FREE BLACK WOMEN'S LIBRARY

1072 Bedford Ave., # 39, Bklyn

IN THE NEXT WORLD: Honor those who have passed on in your life at a traditional Day of the Dead ceremony hosted by the Museum of the American Indian on Nov. 2.

IT'S DEAD AROUND HERE:

The West Village turns into the site of one of New York's most rowdy and ghoulish parties every Oct. 31.

THU OCT 31

6:30 PM – 11 PM • FREE PARADE: WEST VILLAGE HALLOWEEN PARADE

The world's most inventive and hilarious costumes. This year's theme is Wild Thing. 6th Ave. from Spring St. to 16th St., Mnhtn

SAT NOV. 2

9AM–5PM • \$5–\$15 CONFERENCE: WOMEN, ACTION & THE MEDIA

This year's theme will be #FeministAF when journalists, editors, filmmakers and communications professionals gather for panels on inclusive language, safety for reporters, unions in digital media and a workshop on negotiating pay. Includes a keynote by media critic Soraya Chemaly, author of *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*. **THE PEOPLE'S FORUM** 320 W. 37th St., Mnhtn

SAT NOV 2

11AM–5PM • FREE

FESTIVAL: DAY OF THE DEAD/DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS Performances by the Aztec group Cetiliztli Nauhcampa, a community "ofrenda" (altar) and hands-on activities for all ages.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

1 Bowling Green, Mnhtn



ALEX/FICKR

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Rather than pay their drivers a minimum wage, rideshare companies are simply booting them off their apps when it is convenient.

THE NEWS IN BRIEF, P5

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How the NYPD arrested a victim, let a perp walk, and what the cover-up says about our criminal justice system.

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Activist and bestselling author Naomi Klein tells The Indy what it'll take to win a Green New Deal.

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The eclectic punk band Outernational reunites to fight Trump's racist agenda.

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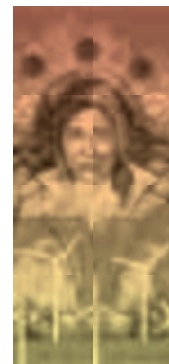
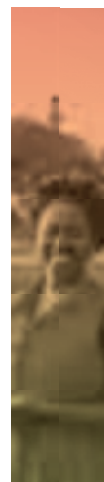
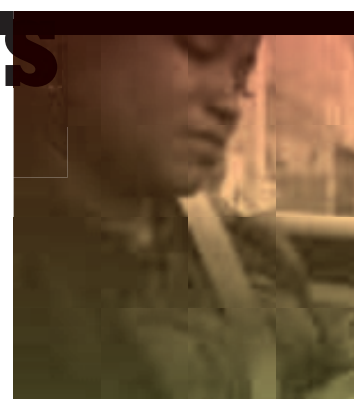
Set in a Parisian bicycle shop during a transit strike, a new novel offers a tale of community, regret and redemption.

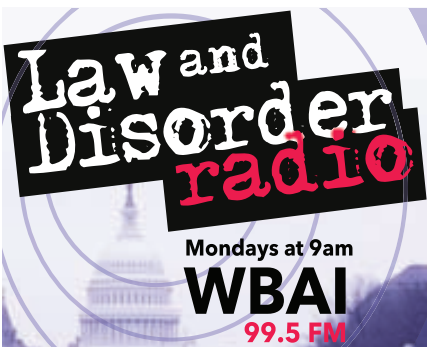
POWER TO THE PEOPLE, P22

Two new books by Bhaskar Sunkara and Astra Taylor explore socialism and democracy respectively.

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P23

Indy advice columnist Rev. Billy on "early onset racism" and impeachment.





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SAT OCT 12 • 7-9:30PM

BOOK LAUNCH: In *Hustling Verse*, 50-plus self-identified sex workers explore their experiences with nuance and beauty.

MON OCT 21 • 7-9:30PM

READING: Mab Segrest shares from her classic *Memoir of a Race Traitor* and discusses her decades of experience as a white lesbian fighting far-right movements in the South.

NG THE COLO

RESIST!

ZAPATISTA STOR

HISTORY
D STATES

LABOR



SUE BRISK

UBER EXPLOITED, LYFTED DOWN

DRIVERS FIGHT BACK AS COMPANIES TRY TO CHEAT THEM OUT OF THE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE THEY WON LAST SPRING

BY PETER RUGH

It was a hard-won victory, and one New York City's app-based drivers now find themselves fighting to preserve. Last August, the City Council passed a law requiring the city's Taxi and Limousine Commission to set a minimum wage for drivers with app-based taxi services like Uber and Lyft. The TLC's minimum, \$17.22 an hour after expenses, went into effect in February. But some drivers say they're now making less money, as app-based companies tweak their algorithms to avoid having to pay that much.

"It's never been worse," Tina Raveneau of Brooklyn tells *The Independent*. Attracted by the flexibility the work seemed to offer, the 39-year-old single mother began as an app-based driver for Lyft two and a half years ago. She now finds herself struggling to pay bills and worries she'll have to go on government assistance.

Lyft filed a lawsuit against the TLC in January, attempting to prevent the minimum wage from going into effect. After a state Supreme Court judge dismissed the suit in May, Lyft and later Uber took another route to escape the new requirements. They have both narrowed when and where drivers can sign in to their apps to work. Raveneau can get onto the Lyft app during the morning rush hour, but not during the time she is available.

She switched to Uber, but in mid-September, Uber began bumping drivers off the app if they don't get to a "high-demand zone" within 30 minutes of dropping off a fare. Drivers say they are not being told when they have been bumped.

"I would think that I was working, but I wouldn't really be working," Raveneau said. But with no ride alerts coming into her phone as she drove around, it didn't take her long to catch on to what was happening. The TLC has "all these regulations," she says, "but drivers are still driving around, praying that they can get to a hot spot so that they can make money."

The rideshare minimum wage is calculated based on utilization rate, the percentage of time the vehicle has a fare. The formula was proposed by Michael Reich of the University of California at Berkeley and the New School's James Parrott, who conducted a study on app-driver earnings for the TLC last year and found that Uber and Lyft's predominately immigrant drivers were earning \$14.17 and \$13.88 an hour respectively, less than the \$15 minimum for New York City. The TLC adopted pay regulations meant to account for driver costs like gasoline and to compensate for the amount of time spent behind the wheel cruising without a passenger.

The minimum-wage law was part of a package of bills the Council enacted last August intended to help drivers. Another bill largely stopped the city from issuing new licenses for "for-hire vehicles," the category that includes app-based cabs.

The two rival unions organizing drivers took opposing positions

ROADBLOCK: Tina Raveneau says Uber and Lyft aren't paying her minimum wage.

on that cap. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance, which uses a worker-center model to organize yellow-cab, black-cab, car-service and app-based drivers, supported it, saying that Uber and Lyft's business model of flooding the city with vehicles had slashed drivers' incomes. The Independent Drivers Guild (IDG), an International Association of Machinists affiliate that worked out an agreement with Uber in 2016 for a voice in the workplace

without collective bargaining or employee status, opposed the cap. It advocates limiting the number of new drivers instead.

The IDG lobbied hard for the minimum-wage bill, but does not advocate making app-based drivers employees instead of independent contractors. In September, after the California legislature passed a bill drastically narrowing when workers can be defined as independent contractors — who don't have to be paid minimum wage and can't legally form unions — Uber said it would not change. Drivers' work is "outside the usual course of Uber's business," the company's head lawyer argued, because it's not a taxi company, it's an app.

Under the TLC's minimum-wage rule, when drivers fail to earn a base pay of \$17.22 an hour after expenses, the companies are required to make up the difference. The TLC projected in January that it would increase earnings for the city's 80,000-odd app-based drivers by a total of \$737 million this year, more than \$9,000 each.

The TLC doesn't yet have figures on drivers' incomes since Uber and Lyft began dropping drivers from the app when demand goes down, but at a Sept. 10 City Council hearing, acting TLC Commissioner Bill Heinzen said total driver earnings had risen \$225 million in the first five months the rules were in effect. The IDG says that means the collective increase this year will fall \$197 million short of the commission's projections.

The TLC has "started to shift their language," says IDG executive director Brendan Sexton. "Instead of saying 'minimum pay per hour,' they're starting to say 'average pay per hour,' which completely changes the whole dynamic of what the minimum pay was. That's like having a McDonald's where one person makes \$20, another makes \$15 and another makes \$10 — on average, sure, we're all making \$15 an hour."

The wage law was meant to set a consistent minimum pay base for all drivers.

The IDG is calling for the TLC to be abolished and for the City Council to step in and close the regulatory loopholes Lyft and Uber are exploiting.

On Sept. 17, it organized a slow-motion motorcade that ground morning rush-hour traffic to a standstill as it oozed over the Brooklyn Bridge and along FDR Drive to Gracie Mansion, Mayor Bill de Blasio's residence. An outraged *Daily News* editorial board called on the city to "bring down the hammer" if drivers attempted such a protest again. "Suspend ride-hail licenses," read an op-ed published the following day. "Make arrests."

But drivers like Raveneau say they will keep fighting until they are paid a wage they can live on. "We're the drivers who move New York," she says. "We should come first."

BRIEFING ROOM

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

CUOMO FINALLY APPROVES VOTING REFORM

Voters in New York State now have until Feb. 14 to register to vote and to change their party affiliations in order to be eligible to vote in primaries next year. The state legislature scrapped the earlier Oct. 11 deadline back in June but Andrew Cuomo took his time signing it. The governor's dallying led Bernie Sanders' campaign manager to send a letter to the Democratic National Committee last month urging it to force Cuomo's John Hancock. "In 2016, countless voters across the state of New York were disenfranchised by the state's arcane and inexcusable early party affiliation deadline — countless voters whose first attempt to engage with the Democratic Party saw them turned away," wrote Faiz Shakir. One week later, Cuomo signed the bill into law. The presidential primary will be held in New York on April 28, Congressional and state primaries occur on June 23.

MTA NEW BUDGET OFF-TRACK

The board governing the Metropolitan Transit Authority unanimously approved a four-year, \$51.5 billion capital budget in September, its largest ever. Though work on the capital plan was underway for more than a year, MTA Chairman Pat Foye acknowledged that it "came together late." Many board members were given copies of the budget the day of the vote. Though all voting members backed the measure, mainly on the expectation that it will be amended down the line, some worried that the capital funds could come at the expense of day-to-day operations. "We're going to have the most fabulous new signals, the most fabulous new rolling stock, accessibility for all, but it's going to be running less frequently," fretted non-voting member Andrew Albert.

A BAILOUT FOR CABBIES?

Support for a bailout of New York City's ailing taxi industry is gaining momentum following a fiery speech from Rep. Alexan-

dria Ocasio-Cortez during a September

Congressional hearing on predatory lending practices. Thousands of cabbies, many of whom live in AOC's Bronx-Queens district, were given expensive loans for overpriced medallions before the market bottomed out with the influx of rideshare vehicles into the city during the mid-2010s. They now find themselves enmeshed in debt. "Regulatory agencies knew, the city knew," AOC said of the shoddy loans, adding that drivers are being forced to endure "manufactured financial indentured servitude." City Councilmember Mark Levine has been leading an effort to pass a bailout bill, but Mayor Bill de Blasio has balked at the price, which his office puts at \$13 billion. Levine says the mayor is exaggerating the cost. Buying out and refinancing the loans will cost the city about \$1 million per driver, he says, which is what cabbies were paying for their licenses when medallion prices were at their peak in 2014.

LES PARK BATTLE RAGES ON

After months of growing protests by Lower East Side residents, Mayor de Blasio announced Oct. 2 that the demolition of East River Park and the building of a flood barrier and a new park will take place in phases instead of all at once, allowing locals some access to the park throughout the construction process. Supporters of the park said it's not enough and an earlier community-backed flood control plan should be adopted. "Our park will still be completely destroyed — just over a longer period of time — five years instead of the original three and a half years," said Pat Arnow of East River Park Action.

REBECCA VAUGHAN

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COURTESY

NYC'S NEXT SOCIALIST WAVE

DSA TAKES AIM AT THE STATE ASSEMBLY'S OLD GUARD

BY THEODORE HAMM

The Democratic Socialists of America have clearly rocked the New York City political establishment over the past two years. The group helped elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to Congress, knocked out a longstanding machine politician in the state Senate, and nearly seized the most important elected office in Queens. As the 2020 state races take shape, the local DSA chapters are seeking to expand their influence — and taking on an even wider range of entrenched politicians.

So far, 10 candidates have sought the Brooklyn DSA's support for their 2020 state office campaigns. In mid-September, the group announced its endorsements in four races: Boris Santos, running to unseat Assemblyman Erik Dilan in Assembly District 54 (Bushwick); Pharah Souffrant Forrest in her challenge to Assemblyman Walter Mosley in AD 57 (Crown Heights); Marcela Mitaynes, running against Assemblyman Felix Ortiz in AD 51 (Sunset Park); and Jabari Brisport (Bed-Stuy), who's seeking the State District 25 seat currently held by Velmanette Montgomery, who may be retiring.

One reason the Brooklyn DSA chose only a handful of prospective challengers is to focus the group's energy and resources. Like its Queens counterpart, the chapter only supports candidates with an explicitly socialist vision, which includes a pledge not to take developer or corporate donations and a vow to advocate for social justice on numerous fronts. (For example, left-leaning Emily Gallagher, who is challenging incumbent Assemblyman Joe Lentol in Greenpoint, did not receive the DSA's support because she considers herself a progressive rather a socialist.) A candidate's perceived viability was also a consideration in the Brooklyn endorsements.

One of the most common slams against the DSA is that the group is full of mostly white newcomers to gentrifying neighborhoods and thus hypocritical in claiming to advocate for diverse working-class residents facing displacement pressures. But the Brooklyn DSA's 2020 slate consists of four candidates of color who grew up in the borough — either in the districts they seek to represent or in adjacent ones.

All three of the Brooklyn DSA's Assembly candidates maintain that the incumbents in their districts should be judged not by their voting records but by their leadership or lack thereof on housing, health, criminal justice, immigration and voting rights. The New York State Assembly, after all, is more than two-thirds Democratic, making a member's ultimate support for a bill less important than what they did to hasten its passage.

Santos, who is 29 and State Senator Julia Salazar's chief of staff, says that Assemblyman Dilan "has not been a helpful advocate" on housing and other matters. Souffrant, a 30-year-old nurse who has been a lead organizer with the Crown Heights Tenants Union, views Mosley as "an all-talk, no action politician." And Mitaynes, who is 45 and has spent the last decade fighting displacement in Sunset Park with Neighbors Helping Neighbors, explains that protecting tenants is "not a top priority for Ortiz."

The State Assembly is currently run by Speaker Carl Heastie, a Bronx machine politician. While the group has made inroads in the State Senate, where Salazar is a member and Jessica Ramos is also closely aligned with the group, the DSA has not yet made inroads into the other chamber. "This election season is about us gaining a presence in the Assembly," says Santos.

Heastie is widely viewed as a business-as-usual Democrat. During the 2019 legislative session (January–June), his PAC took in nearly \$300,000, roughly two-thirds of which came from unions and the PACs of various business interests in the state, ranging from Albany lobbying firms to chiropractors. Heastie collected over \$40,000 from the health care industry, precisely as the NY Health Act establishing single-payer insurance stalled and over \$12,000 from law enforcement groups, while marijuana legalization never made it to the Assembly floor.

During the home stretch of the Queens DA primary in June, Heastie funneled \$20,000 from his PAC to Melinda Katz; at the same time, he never sent a key piece of passed legislation

concerning affidavit ballots to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, which ultimately

hurt DSA-backed Tiffany Caban's insurgent campaign. It's a safe bet that many of the incumbents facing DSA primary challengers will receive money from Heastie's war chest.

As a leader, Heastie is viewed as a transactional figure, who negotiates individually with Assembly members about what their districts need. He then doles out discretionary funding for members' preferred projects in exchange for their support for his agenda. Any successful DSA candidates will thus need to be ready to fight hard and loud against Heastie.

Both Souffrant and Mitaynes already have a track record of doing so. In early June, they were among the 61 activists arrested at the state capitol demanding the passage of a set of pro-tenant housing bills. While the protests helped spur the Assembly to action, leading to expanded rent stabilization and several other pro-tenant measures, Mitaynes said the victories were "amazing, but bittersweet," because the "Good Cause" eviction bill was not included in the package. She and Souffrant both vow to continue to draw on their community organizing experience if elected.

All three of the DSA's Assembly candidates can expect the Brooklyn Democratic machine to fight hard against them. But as seen in Salazar's successful state Senate run last year against longtime incumbent Martin Dilan (Erik's father), the party apparatus no longer wields control in Williamsburg and Bushwick. Party boss Frank Seddio also was unsuccessful in his effort to help Assemblyman Ortiz unseat City Councilman Carlos Menchaca in 2017. As the Assistant Speaker of the Assembly, Ortiz, running for his 14th term, is likely to get Heastie's full support.

Souffrant, meanwhile, clearly has the most formidable opponent of the three. Congressman Hakeem Jeffries will likely fight hard for his protégé Mosley, who is also viewed as Seddio's likely successor as party boss, meaning that other Brooklyn elected officials are likely to lend their support to Mosley as well.

And while the DSA's vision is one of multiracial solidarity, New York City politics historically have been driven by ethnic divisions. Dilan thus may play up his Puerto Rican and African American identity against Santos, who is Dominican and Salvadoran; and Mosley may align himself with African Americans against Souffrant, who is Haitian American. Ortiz, meanwhile, almost certainly will try to rally Puerto Ricans against Mitaynes, who is Peruvian-American.

All three DSA candidates for Assembly nevertheless have ample experience building alliances with multiple groups. And across Brooklyn, Souffrant says, there's a "new feeling" shared by fellow activists. No longer content to let the old guard run the show, the DSA, she says, is "going to create the world we want for ourselves."

BORIS SANTOS

PHARAH SOUFFRANT

MARCELA MITAYNES

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SUE BRISK

THE NYPD'S STUPIDEST ARREST AND THEN THE COP LIED ABOUT IT WITH NO CONSEQUENCES

BY THEODORE HAMM

On a Friday evening in late October 2016, Frankie Breton, a senior at NYU, returned from the first day of his internship at a Manhattan consulting firm to his girlfriend Katherine Tejada's place in Washington Heights. When Breton arrived, he found Tejada's ex-boyfriend furiously trying to kick in her apartment door.

When Tejada's ex, Manny Matias, saw Breton, he yelled out, "That's homeboy! It's on!" Matias then charged at Breton and landed several punches. The fight spilled out of the building, at which point Matias took out a knife and began stabbing Breton, who suffered sharp cuts to his right hand.

Breton next tackled Matias, forcing him to drop the blade. Breton then grabbed the knife, put it in his pocket and ran down the block. Matias picked up a piece of wood and chased after Breton, who called 911 and flagged down an NYPD squad car.

As Breton and the officers arrived back at Tejada's building, more cops pulled up. When Breton exited the squad car with the officers, Matias shouted, "That's him!" Breton showed his bloody hand to the cops, but Matias, though unscathed, insisted, "No, he stabbed me."

NYPD Sergeant Freddy Cruz then searched Breton for a weapon and found Matias' knife in his pocket. Although Tejada and other witnesses assured them that Matias was the assailant, the cops nevertheless cuffed Breton. He and Matias were brought to the 33rd Precinct, where the latter was already wanted for earlier assaults on Tejada.

At the station house, Matias gave a statement against Breton, whom cops then charged with first-degree assault. Matias walked out of the precinct a free man.

Breton was held in custody until his arraignment that Saturday in Manhattan Criminal Court, where — despite being charged with a violent felony — he was released without bail. Breton's hand was still bleeding, so he went to New York-Presbyterian Hospital, where doctors told him that although his hand needed sutures, too much time had elapsed after the initial wound to apply them. He had received no treatment while in custody.

Things then got even more absurd.

On that same Saturday afternoon, NYPD officer Steven Clarke — who had arrested Breton, taken Matias' statement at the precinct and sent the report charging Breton to the Manhattan DA's office —

DEMANDING JUSTICE: Frankie Breton stands outside the Southern District of New York courthouse in Lower Manhattan.

visited Tejada's apartment.

Clarke proceeded to apologize to Breton for wrongly arresting him and to Tejada for releasing Matias without searching for active warrants. Clarke's remorse, however, was not combined with an important corresponding action: He did not withdraw the initial reports against Breton that he filed with the District Attorney.

In late January 2017, just over four months after Breton's arrest, the Manhattan DA's office, which had conducted its own investigation of the incident, dropped the charges on the grounds that Breton had acted in self-defense.

Such are the facts of the case as alleged in a civil lawsuit filed by attorney Andrew Stengel in the Southern District of New York. The suit's primary claim is wrongful arrest, and it names the City of New York and NYPD officers Clarke and Cruz as the main defendants.

Earlier this month federal judge John Koeltl rejected an effort by the city's lawyers to dismiss the case. During oral arguments that preceded his ruling, Koeltl clearly viewed the above outline of events in the case to be compelling.

"[T]he plaintiff has made a strong case that there was evidence here that contradicted probable cause" to arrest Breton, Koeltl told the city's lawyers and Stengel. He further advised the city's team that the "case cries out to be settled sooner rather than later."

As Stengel told Judge Koeltl, initial settlement discussions between the two sides had stalled by the time of the late July court appearance. "[Y]ou may want to reconsider," Koeltl advised the city's lawyers at the time.

But as Stengel tells *The Independent*, the city's team then made an offer that "was not serious and in bad faith." And in early September Koeltl thus issued a ruling allowing the case to go forward to a possible trial, where a jury could award Breton a far greater amount than he has requested.

"No probable cause" decisions are not common," says Stengel, who credits Brooklyn exoneree Jabbar Collins, now a paralegal, for his "indispensable" consulting work on the case.

"The NYPD doesn't have license to ignore affirmative evidence of a suspect's innocence," Collins says. "And they also must inform the DA when they uncover such evidence."

As George Joseph and Ali Winston reported for *Gothamist* this week, Stengel has been waging a battle in State Supreme Court to force the city DAs to turn over any "Do not call" lists of cops with track records of making false statements. Officer Clarke might be a good addition to the Manhattan DA's list if he isn't on there already.

Epilogue: Matias was not charged for his assault on Breton. But he's had several scrapes with the law since the 2016 incident.

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CALIFORNIA TENANTS WIN PARTIAL VICTORY

WITH COST OF HOUSING SOARING, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

California has enacted a law that will limit rent increases for an estimated 8 million tenants, but the measure is closer to Oregon's new anti-gouging law than to New York's rent-stabilization system.

Assembly Bill 1482, passed by the state legislature Sept. 11, will limit annual rent increases to 5 percent plus inflation (with a maximum of 10 percent) in buildings more than 15 years old and single-family houses owned by corporations or real-estate investment trusts. It also requires "just cause" to evict tenants who've rented their homes for more than a year.

"It's the first time we've had such a strong law passed on the state level," says Larry Gross, executive director of the Coalition for Economic Survival, a Los Angeles-based tenant-rights group. "But, he notes, 'it's not rent control.'"

The bill was passed amid rising pressure for the state to do something about its housing crisis. More than half of California's 17.5 million renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, according to a study released last year by the University of California at Berkeley's Haas Institute. San Francisco and San Jose have among the highest rents in the nation. In Los Angeles, where about 60 percent of residents are renters, about one-third of tenants spend more than half their income on rent, says Gross.

About 15 California cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley, have rent-control laws. However, a 1995 state law, the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, prohibits them from limiting rents on vacant apartments, single-family homes, or in buildings constructed after 1995. Last November, Proposition 10, a ballot initiative to repeal that law, lost by a 59-41 margin. Landlords outspent supporters by three to one.

"We've seen more activism around tenants-rights issues than we've seen in decades," says Gross. But Proposition 10 only won in areas that have an established tenant movement: San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley, and the city of Los Angeles. It did worst in areas where tenant organizing is minimal, such as the Central Valley and the Inland Empire, L.A.'s far-eastern suburbs.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, who opposed Proposition 10, backed the rent-cap bill. It was also palatable to landlords: The California Apartment Association trade group did not oppose it, although the California Association of Realtors did. The California Building Industry Association, the developers' leading lobby, announced it would not oppose the bill after a compromise exempted buildings less than 15 years old from the rent cap.

That it covers single-family homes is significant: Private-equity funds bought up thousands of foreclosed houses in California after the Great Recession. Invitation Homes, a spinoff from the Blackstone Group private-equity fund, is the largest private landlord in the Sacramento area, says Anya Svano of the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment.

Merika Reagan, an ACCE member who lives in an Invitation-owned house in eastern Oakland, says that provision will be a lifesaver. She joined ACCE when the landlord whacked her with a \$350 rent increase, and the group organized protests that pressured the company to bring it down to \$50. Still, she's working 12 to 14 hours a day to make her \$2,100 rent.

"These corporations are out of control," she says. "Every time my lease is up, it's like a panic attack." Her neighborhood is gentrifying, with white people paying \$3,000 for a one-bedroom house.

That displacement will continue, says Gross, unless two state laws are repealed: the Costa-Hawkins Act's ban on

restricting vacancy increases, and the Ellis Act, which developers have exploited to buy rent-controlled buildings and demolish them to build luxury housing.

To win that, housing activists say, grassroots organizing needs to develop enough power to counter real-estate money. An emerging battleground is the state capital of Sacramento, where more than half the 510,000 residents are renters.

"Folks are having trouble," says local activist Elizabeth Uribe, a school-bus driver and member of Service Employees International Union Local 1021. "The rent eats first."

Last year, a coalition of several groups collected 44,000 signatures to put a rent-control amendment to the city charter on the ballot for the March 2020 primary election. It would limit rent increases to between 2 and 5 percent a year, based on the Consumer Price Index.

The City Council responded on Sept. 12 by passing a rent-cap measure similar to the state law. But in exchange, it asked the coalition to withdraw the ballot initiative. Some groups agreed, figuring getting something was better than the risk of getting nothing if the initiative was swamped by real-estate money.

ACCE, the Sacramento Tenants Union and SEIU 1021 are persisting with the initiative. But the Council "is balking at putting it on the ballot," says Uribe. The law doesn't specify when initiatives with enough signatures have to be placed on the ballot. The city just has to inform people not less than 88 days before the election, says Elliot Stevenson of the Sacramento Tenants Union.

Proposition 10 won only 39 percent of the vote in Sacramento and its suburbs, but carried the city center solidly. "We will have a huge fight on our hands," says Uribe. When she was phone-banking for Proposition 10, she says, she talked to people who believed "bizarre" misinformation from real-estate attack ads, such as that their rent would go up if local governments could enact stricter regulations.

"We are going to be campaigning," says Stevenson. "The laws are only as good as the power built by tenants."

PREZ HOPEFULS UNVEIL HOUSING PLANS

From astronomical rents and foreclosure to crumbling public housing, homelessness and racial discrimination, the U.S. has a housing crisis with multiple fronts. Yet housing has been barely mentioned in this year's presidential campaign.

The two leading left-leaning candidates have proposed multiple initiatives, though Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' "Housing for All" platform, released Sept. 18, would spend almost \$1.5 trillion over 10 years to build or preserve 7.4 million permanently affordable homes in both rural and urban areas, plus \$70 billion worth of repairs to public housing. It would also repeal the federal ban on constructing more public housing units.

Sanders also advocates national rent control, restricting rent increases to 3 percent a year or 1.5 times the Consumer Price Index, and prohibiting evictions without "just cause." Other proposals

take aim at predatory lending and racial discrimination, and it sets a goal of achieving "a fully decarbonized building sector by no later than 2030."

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren's American Housing and Economic Mobility Act, introduced in March, is more narrowly focused. It would invest \$500 billion over the next 10 years in units "affordable to lower-income families," much of it leveraged through private dollars. She says this would reduce rents by 10 percent, and could be paid for by raising the estate tax.

Other provisions would crack down on redlining and add \$3.6 billion in new capital funding for public housing. The bill would also try to keep private-equity investors from buying up single-family homes, by requiring the Federal Housing Administration to sell 75 percent of those it acquires through foreclosure to owner-occupants.

Warren opposes national rent controls, however. Instead, her platform says she would "take whatever

legal steps she can to stop states from pre-empting local efforts to enact tenant protection laws."

Former Vice President Joe Biden does not include housing in the "Joe's Vision for America" section of his website. In July, his campaign said he wanted to set a "national goal" of ensuring that 100 percent of people released from prison have housing.

As for incumbent Donald Trump, his housing policy has been slipping far-right agendas into the fine print of agency regulations. In September, the Treasury Department proposed making it harder for apartment-building owners to get loans in places with rent-control laws.

— STEVEN WISHNIA



BERNIE SANDERS



BETH WHITNEY

THE MEDICARE FOR ALL MYSTERY

WHY CORPORATE AMERICA HATES THE HEALTH CARE REFORM THAT WOULD SAVE THEM BILLIONS

BY PADDY QUICK

Would “Medicare for All” mean higher taxes? It’s a question that keeps coming up whenever the Democratic presidential candidates take to the debate podiums. This September, former vice president Joe Biden went on the offensive, demanding of his rivals, Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, both of whom support a national health care system, how they would pay for it.

“I want to hear tonight how that’s happening,” he barked.

Biden and other critics of Medicare for All claim it amounts to “middle-class tax hike.”

Since it is an accusation frequently leveled against supporters of the health care reform, let’s break down the numbers. Would the Medicare for All Act, a bill introduced in Congress in February, lead to an

increase in taxes? Yes. But what people would save on medical bills and insurance premiums would far exceed the extra taxes they’d have to pay, with the exception of the very well off. In addition, both Sanders and Warren would shift the overall burden of taxes to the rich.

Medicare for All would actually cover much more than Medicare does now, such as dental, vision and nursing-home care, there would be no copayments or deductibles and people wouldn’t

have to buy private insurance to pay for the 20 percent of medical bills that Medicare doesn’t cover.

The need for a fundamental restructuring of the U.S. health care system is obvious. The United States spends about twice as much per capita on health care as comparably affluent countries in Western Europe, but its rate of infant mortality is often twice as high. For example, the U.S. spent \$9,892 per capita on health care in 2016, while Finland spent \$4,033. Finland’s infant mortality rate the next year, however, was 2.50 per 1,000 live births, compared to 5.80 in the U.S. That means that out of the 3.79 million babies born in the U.S. in 2018, about 12,500 died before their first birthday who would have lived if the U.S. had had an infant mortality rate as low as Finland’s — about 34 a day.

Insurance companies would be the main corporate losers from Medicare For All, but the private health

Continued on page 18

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October 2019 **THE INDEPENDENT**

THE AMAZON ISN'T DYING. IT'S BEING KILLED.

WELCOME TO THE EPICENTER OF DESTRUCTION WHERE AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE OF EVANGELICAL CATTLE RANCHERS AND BIG AGRIBUSINESS HOLDS DOMINION

BY BRIAN MIER

I arrived in Porto Velho, the state capital of Rondonia in the Brazilian Amazon, to find the city completely engulfed in smoke. My eyes burned and my sinuses clogged up as I got into a taxi. I asked the driver about it and he told me nothing was wrong.

"This is all just fake news," he says. "The media is making a circus out of it. We always have fires this time of year. It's just farmers burning weeds."

He is a young man with gel in his hair and a necklace with a crucifix hanging over his t-shirt. I assumed he was one of the 71 percent of voters in the state who voted last year for Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's new far-right president.

While it's true that many Brazilian farmers torch their land before planting to burn off weeds and enrich the soil with ash, there's a lot more fires this year than in the past. According to Rondonia's fire department, forest fires are up by 293 percent in the six counties surrounding Porto Velho and the increase is not being driven by brush fires but by burning trees inside of indigenous reservations. Satellite images from NASA confirm this. The Amazon rainforest does not naturally catch fire, so these are all man made.

"Our land is soaked in blood," says Luciana Oliveira, a local journalist who has received death threats from people connected to the ruralista lobby — the big ranchers and farmers who form a key support base for Bolsonaro's government. "We are the last frontier of forest cover, of jungle, so agribusiness moves forward. The environment is an obstacle which it can only cross by destroying, and all we have here is destruction."

• • •

THE WORLD GASPED IN AUGUST when it saw images of Brazil's Amazon rainforest going up in flames at an unprecedented rate. While major media outlets have moved on to other dramatic stories, the fires continue unabated in a rainforest that is home to hundreds of indigenous tribes and is the most biodiverse place on Earth. The Amazon is also the world's largest carbon sink, its 2.1 million square miles of lush vegetation removing CO₂ from the air and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. If it were to be transformed into dry grassland or desert as many scientists fear it will be within a few decades, it would be an environmental calamity for a world increasingly menaced by climate change.

While the fate of the Amazon is of global concern, the struggle over its future is a local story where two strikingly different visions of what the rainforest is for and how it should be managed are contending with each other.

Rondonia, which is the size of Great Britain, has been a bastion of right-wing politics since the 1980s when thousands of primarily white, evangeli-

cal Christian ranchers from southern Brazil poured into the area. The settlers followed in the wake of a \$440 million partnership between the World Bank and Brazil's former military dictatorship. By the time international outcry caused the World Bank to cancel the project in 1986, Rondonia had become a major beef supplier to McDonalds.

The disaster which befell Rondonia led to a fight for alternative development models. In the neighboring state of Acre, the rubber tappers union expelled the ranchers and gained control of the state government along with the leftist Workers Party (PT). They went on to transform it into a model of a low carbon economy. As of 2018, 87 percent of Acre's forest cover remained intact and its main commodities were sustainable rainforest products such as natural latex, Brazil nut and Acai. More recently, the expanding fires in Rondonia have burned their way into Acre spreading a swath of destruction.

The success of Acre's model influenced the environmental policies of the PT party, which won four consecutive presidential elections starting in 2002. President Lula da Silva appointed Marina Silva, an Acre senator and former top official in the rubber tappers union as his environmental minister. From 2003 to 2016, PT governments spent billions on solar energy, transformed Brazil into the sixth largest producer of wind energy, built one million family rainwater capture systems in the drought-plagued rural northeast, and pumped billions of dollars into technical support and financing for family farmers. Building on successful projects in Acre, the federal government also amped up support for renewable forest products, such as babaçu coconut oil, cocoa and rubber.

This is not to say that Brazil was an ecological utopia under Lula. He heavily subsidized monoculture production in parts of the country in order to boost export earnings while legalizing genetically modified crops in the process. Nevertheless, Brazil met its REDD+ greenhouse gas reduction goals nine years early and reduced deforestation by 84 percent. In 2014, the Union of Concerned Scientists made a presentation in the UN in which it called Brazil the "world champion in deforestation reduction." During the presidency of Dilma Rousseff, Lula's former Mines and Energy Minister, deforestation began to creep back upwards, but this was nothing compared with what would come next.

After Rousseff was impeached on spurious grounds in 2016, her conservative successor Michel Temer slashed funding for IBAMA, the environmental protection agency, by 51 percent. He also dissolved the Ministry of Agrarian Development, which had been set up to support small farmers. As new pesticides produced by the likes of Monsanto were legalized, profits soared for transnational companies like Cargill and Blackstone-financed beef producer JBS that grow monoculture crops in the Amazon.

Then things got really bad.

In 2018 Lula, who was still the most popular politician in Brazil, was jailed on trumped-up corruption charges. With Lula out of the way and unable to speak or give interviews from his prison cell and public discontent rising with insider politics as usual (does this sound familiar?), Jair Bolsonaro, a LGBT-bashing former army captain, won a surprise election victory. He was backed by a powerful alliance of Christian evangelicals, big agribusiness and the military, also referred to as "B, B and B" — Bibles, Beef and Bullets. These groups all see the Amazon as a resource to be opened up and exploited and the rainforest's indigenous inhabitants as savages to either be "civilized" or killed.

Known as the "Trump of the Tropics," one of President Bolsonaro's first moves was to announce plans to open up 50 percent of all indigenous reservations in the Amazon — which make up 23 percent of all remaining rainforest — for the loggers, miners, ranchers and farmers connected to international supply chains. He then fired 22 state directors of IBAMA and refused to replace them. It sent a signal to

deforesters that they will not be punished. When the head of INPE, the national space institute, warned the public that fires were beginning to burn out of the control, Bolsonaro fired him. Meanwhile, his environmental minister and his foreign affairs minister have all claimed that the increase in fires — which sent a smoke cloud up that was so big the city of São Paulo, over 1,500 miles away, went pitch dark at 3 p.m. last month, — is "fake news".

• • •

"THERE IS A LAND THEFT OPERATION UNDERWAY," says Frei Volmir, a long-haired Catholic Priest who has been working with indigenous people in Rondonia for 30 years. "A few days ago there were over 600 fire points registered near the Kari-puna reservation. What does this mean? That the people are burning and that they will burn more and the government is doing nothing to stop it. Inside the Kari-puna territory there were two free indigenous tribes living isolated deep in the forest. Now if you ask me if they are still living there, I don't know. Because as they kill the forest they kill the isolated tribes who live there."

As the PT regroups with unions and a social movement mobilizes to fight against Bolsonaro's plans for the Amazon, Ramon Cajui is running to be the PT's party leader in Porto Velho. A civil service worker of indigenous descent, I meet with him at Porto Velho's only scenic venue — a small public square with three Victorian-era water towers on it. From his perspective, the forest isn't the only thing that has been burned to the ground but also the administrative arms of the government that served the public interest.

"If FUNAI, the indigenous affairs bureau, wasn't great, at least the state was presented as an entity to contain this encroachment. Now it's gone," says Cajui. "And we no longer have a public prosecutors'

office that defends indigenous peoples. The structure of the Brazilian state in the Bolsonaro government has been turned against the indigenous people to reduce their territory and to dismantle land grants indigenous lands and forest reserves."

"What is happening this year," he adds, "is not caused by the drought, it is the result of a planned action by these political forces and the greed of capital to increase occupied territory to produce soy and beef."

As the fires raged out of control, Donald Trump has defended Bolsonaro. However, some U.S. lawmakers are waking up to the unfolding tragedy. On Sept. 25, a group of Democrats introduced Resolution 594 in the House of Representatives. In addition to calling for an investigation into the role the U.S. Department of Justice played in helping corrupt Brazilian prosecutors target Lula, it calls for both government funding and U.S. support for World Bank and IMF loans to Brazil to be cut off until the Bolsonaro administration shows a real commitment to protecting indigenous people and the Amazon. The resolution was introduced by Arizona Congressman Raul Grijalva and co-signed by 13 other Democratic members of the House. If you would like to show solidarity with the indigenous peoples of the Amazon and Brazilian left opposition to Jair Bolsonaro, please call your lawmakers and ask them to support this resolution and help put an end to this crisis. Another way to help is to vote out Bolsonaro's buddy Trump in 2020.

Brian Mier is the editor and publisher of *Brasilwire.com*.



ON FIRE FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL

BY NANCY ROMER & JOHN TARLETON

In her 2014 book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, Naomi Klein writes, “If enough of us stop looking away and decide that climate change is a crisis worthy of Marshall Plan levels of response, then it will become one, and the political class will have to respond.”

Five years later, it’s happening. Thanks to passionate young climate activists and bold new elected officials like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Klein’s vision of using sweeping government action to address both climate change and longstanding social inequities has arrived at the center of political debate. This time it comes under the rubric of the Green New Deal.

In *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal*, Klein continues to build the case for why dramatic climate action is not only urgently needed but could lead to a more just and humane world. In *On Fire* as well as this interview, she also explores the connection between climate denialism and white supremacy and the rise in recent years of violent movements that hold a very different vision of how to respond to climate change.

This interview was lightly edited for length and clarity.

THE INDEPENDENT: Bill McKibben of 350.org calls you the “intellectual godmother of the Green New Deal.” How does it feel after many years of speaking out for something like a Green New Deal to see it go from a fringe idea to one of the main issues in the presidential campaign?

NAOMI KLEIN: It feels surreal and very exciting that we’re finally actually talking about solutions on the scale of the crisis. It’s been too long in coming. So as exciting as it is, I think anyone immersed in the climate science can’t help but feel a sense of loss about the time that was missed when we could have been doing this.

You begin *On Fire* by focusing on the recent surge in youth activism. Why is that?

I start the book talking about the youth climate strikes because I think young people are bringing a fierce urgency to the climate crisis, a moral clarity and in the United States have absolutely changed the debate. The Sunrise Movement has organized brilliantly. They’ve put a huge amount of thought into what the pressure points are and how to build a mass movement, drawing on decades if not centuries of work from climate justice and indigenous organizers. They deserve a lot of credit for that, but it’s dangerous to have any kind of movement that limits itself by fetishizing one group over another. The most powerful, long-lasting movements are powerful in part because they recognize the power of having an intergenerational coalition.

In the book, you revisit long-held narratives about white supremacy and the domination of nature that exist in the United States and other settler-colonial societies.

For a long time now I’ve been trying to understand this thing called climate change denialism. I started by writing about the threat that climate action poses to an extreme free-market world view. If we’re going to take climate change seriously, we need massive investments in the public sphere. We need to reverse privatization so we actually have the levers to transform our transportation systems and our energy systems. So the whole neoliberal playbook goes out the window. And the climate crisis is also a threat to the fetish for centrism — don’t do anything rash, let’s split the difference, don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good — because there’s no way to reconcile that definition of seriousness with the speed at which we need to move and the depth with which we need to change if we take the crisis seriously.

I also think the ideological worldview that the climate crisis challenges is deeper than either the fetish for liberal centrism or hard right free-market fundamentalism. It’s really a spiritual and narrative crisis that goes to the heart of the stories that underpin settler-colonial nations like the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Brazil. Nations imagined by Europeans as spare countries, embedded in the way they named them: New England, New France, New Amsterdam.

The narrative of the frontier is inextricable from the idea of

REEN

dominating nature and people. And that's inextricable from the age of fossil fuels and the beginning of climate change. The first steam engines were marketed as a way of dominating the natural world because you could sail your ships wherever you wanted, you could build factories

wherever you wanted, wherever labor could be best controlled. It's always been this story of infinitely abusable, infinitely inexhaustible, infinitely dominatable nature. It's always been this small group of powerful people, overwhelmingly men, who are able to dominate nature and the people seen as closest to nature whether they are African people, whether they are indigenous people, whether they are women who have so often been associated with nature.

And it continues to this day.

Exactly. When you see people like Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Trump, it's so clear that their hatred for the Earth, the glee with which they are setting the world on fire is intermingled with their misogyny and racism, which is essential to their project. So we have this small group of men dominating and destroying nature and anything associated with the feminine, anything associated with the Earth. We are in the death throes of this belief. But it's in the death throes that we see the worst effects.

You're describing neoliberal advanced capitalism at its worst. Are you imagining the next stage we're building as a socialist or social-democratic stage?

We're at a crossroads where if we are to avoid truly catastrophic climate change, we need not only a different economic model but truly different narratives at the heart of our project about who we are, about our relationship with nature. Is nature a machine we dominate? Or, are we in a web of life based on all kinds of different interdependent relationships?

You can call it ecosocialism, ecofeminism or ecofeminist socialism. There is no beautiful name for it. But it's not industrial socialism, because we know that didn't reckon with ecological limits. But we are at a crossroads not only for the battle

over different economic visions. It is a battle over worldviews and narratives and a reimagining of our place in the web of life. Do we continue down this path of what in the book I call climate barbarism, a barbaric resurgence of the most racist, supremacist dominance-based ideas that were absolutely fundamental to the forming of our nation as a settler-colonial state?

As more and more people are moving around the world seeking safety, we are seeing a resurgence of that supremacist worldview in order to justify fortressing our borders. It means allowing people to drown by the thousands in the Mediterranean Sea, die in the desert, be separated from their parents in utterly barbaric concentration camps on the border. Those supremacist ideas ebb and flow in history and they are always resorted to when needed to justify barbarism. This has been what the Trump presidency has been about since the first days of his campaign.

We recently saw a different kind of climate response from Jonathan Franzen in the New Yorker. He argues we are hopelessly doomed and that there's not one chance in 10,000 that humanity can rise to meet all the challenges placed in front of it over the next 12 years, as climate scientists warn we must do. What's your response to someone like this who identifies as a liberal, accepts the science of climate change but doesn't want his enjoyment of the present to be disturbed by thinking about a future problem that he thinks can't be solved?

I don't know how much I want to engage with Franzen specifically, but I believe he's emblematic of a generation of liberals who believe they're socially liberal, but who are incredibly suspicious of activism. They think it's kind of unseemly, have never actually been part of any social movement and don't believe that societies are capable of great change. That's why it's useful to revive the memory

of the original New Deal while being forever cognizant of the way it failed millions of people, so many black workers, women, domestic workers, agricultural workers left unprotected, the systemic discrimination in allocation of relief particularly in Southern states. With all of those reminders and caveats and warnings, I think it's still so important because in naming it the Green New Deal, we are reviving a historical memory in people that says: yes, there was a time not so long ago that the United States changed both its values and policies at an absolutely staggering scale and speed and placed at least the aspiration of social care at the center of its policies.

Many people were excluded from the New Deal's circle of care. So the tapestry is complex but reviving that history really flies in the face of the claim from the Jonathan Franzen of the world that we really can't do this, that humans are too inherently selfish and short-sighted. We need to revive memories of historical moments where we did come together and change quickly.

You're talking in favor of some kind of central planning and public ownership. How do you feel about organizing strategies that do incorporate public ownership?

There are all kinds of incredibly destructive, publicly-owned fossil fuel companies responsible for a huge amount of carbon in the atmosphere so public does not equal green. However, when the levers of ownership are in public or community hands, it's easier to change than when they are privately controlled.

That's why in Germany we saw hundreds of re-municipalizations of the energy grid. It wasn't ideological. The private companies were refusing to transition to renewable energy quickly enough.

You mentioned central planning — I would say we need

“WE NEED TO REVIVE MEMORIES OF HISTORICAL MOMENTS WHERE WE DID COME TOGETHER AND CHANGE QUICKLY.”

decentralized planning.

The great beauty of renewable energy is that it lends itself to much smaller-scale ownership and control structures. Because fossil fuels are so expensive to dig up and refine and export, it lends itself to monopoly power whether in the hands of public players or private players. Renewable energy is lighter, and the inputs are everywhere, whether it's wind or sunlight or wave power so you don't just need a few big players.

What the experience of Denmark and Germany shows is when you have community ownership over renewable energy, there's much less pushback against wind farms and solar farms because people are having a say over how their communities are being transformed. It's not just one landowner who suddenly sells off their land and gets a bunch of money and puts up a bunch of wind turbines. So if you want to move quickly, a commons approach based on communal ownership is incredibly practical.

In terms of how we organize, I think we have a long way to go in terms of organizing every sector in thinking about what a Green New Deal would mean, whether for teachers in schools, nurses in the health care industry, etc. What kinds of transitions are necessary that would both battle historic inequalities and injustices, and would get us to 100 percent clean energy? That kind of inclusive process is also practical because it would mean more and more people would feel a sense of collective ownership of the Green New Deal — and they would fight to win it.

Nancy Romer is the co-founder of NYC People's Climate Movement. John Tarleton is the executive editor of The Independent.



AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

FLEEING VIOLENCE IN THEIR HOMELAND, SYRIANS NOW FIND THEMSELVES HOUNDED IN TURKEY, A GATEWAY TO EUROPE

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACLYNN ASHLY

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, family and friends often gather together during the night hours, sipping tea and nibbling on sweets after a long day of fasting.

For Mustafa al-Mohammed and his family, a certain Ramadan night in May was all the more special. The day before, his son, 21-year-old Hisham al-Mustafa, and his son's wife, Mariam, 18, birthed their third child. They named him Shoaib.

"We always felt very comfortable here in Turkey," said Mohammed, whose family fled fighting near Aleppo, Syria three years ago and arrived in Istanbul, where they received temporary protection. "We were making a life here and we were almost happy."

At about 11:30 p.m. that evening, the family sat on the floor of their spacious, unfurnished living room in Istanbul's Bagcilar district, chatting with friends who had come to congratulate them. Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a loud banging on their apartment door.

A group of police officers, armed and wearing bulletproof vests, stormed into the apartment and shouted orders in Turkish. "I couldn't understand anything because I don't speak Turkish," Mohammed said.

After searching the house for about two hours, the officers told his son Mustafa to come with them and brought him to a local police station. The family immediately called a lawyer, who said the detention was routine and that the 21-year-old would most likely be released in a few days.

Instead, however, Mustafa was transferred to a detention facility and on June 19, along with a busload of other Syrian refugees, deported to rebel-controlled Idlib, where Syrian and Russian bombardments have killed hundreds of people since late April.

"I was shocked," Mohammed recalled. "My son is legally registered in Istanbul. He has a family and three children. He was the main provider for our family. How could they deport him?"

Mustafa, desperate to reunite with his family, attempted the dangerous journey across the Turkish-Syrian border numerous times. It involves scaling a more than 450-mile-long cement barrier Turkey has erected along its border. Each time he was caught and sent back. August 5 proved to be his last attempt. Turkish border guards released a flurry of bullets at the young man, shooting him to death.

THE CRACKDOWN

During a recent interview, Mustafa's young wife Mariam sat on the floor of the family's living room, holding one of their child in her arms.

"I never thought something like this could happen," Mariam told *The Independent*. These were the only words she could muster before her eyes flooded with tears and she could no longer speak.

The loud wailing of Fatema al-Khalif, Mustafa's mother, filled the silence. "If we knew we would face this in Turkey, we would have stayed in Syria to die," she said.

Turkey hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees — more than any other country in the world — who have been afforded temporary protection. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), half a million of these refugees are registered in Istanbul. Another 350,000 Syrians in Istanbul are reportedly registered in other Turkish cities, but have migrated to Istanbul to find work.

Syrians with kimlik documents — legal papers guaranteeing their protection — need special permission to travel outside the province where they initially applied for protection. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Syrian refugees in Istanbul are not registered at all.

Over the past few years, Turkey has pulled back its open-

door policies for the refugees, sealing its border and limiting their movement within the country. Turkish border guards have been accused by HRW of using "excessive force" to repel Syrian asylum seekers from attempting to cross into Turkey, resulting in injuries and death, and in 2017, Istanbul and nine other provinces on the border with Syria suspended the registration of new asylum seekers.

Just as the Trump administration has bullied Mexico into thwarting the passage of Central American migrants seeking to reach the U.S. border, stricter immigration measures here follow a 2016 deal between Turkey and the European Union aimed at curbing the passage of refugees to Europe, and coincide with a rise in public intolerance for the refugees, who are increasingly blamed for an economic downturn in Turkey.

In July, reports emerged that Istanbul police were cracking down on undocumented migrants, randomly stopping people on the streets to check IDs and raiding apartments. Images and videos circulated on social media show Syrians sitting on the floor of police vehicles in plastic handcuffs. Reports of refugees being coerced into signing "voluntary" return forms and being deported to northern Syria have sent the Syrian refugee community into a panic.

Istanbul authorities warn that Syrians registered outside of Istanbul have until October 30 to return to the province where they initially registered. Syrians who are unregistered will be taken to camps. But reports of even refugees living within the provinces where they registered being deported have sent a tremor through the Syrian community, which is becoming increasingly mistrustful of Turkish authorities.

The number of refugees who have been deported is difficult to determine, Emma Sinclair-Webb, a senior Turkey researcher for HRW, tells *The Indy*, but advocates estimate that it is a fate that has already befallen thousands.

'VOLUNTARY' DEPORTATIONS?

Turkey is bound by the international customary law of non-refoulement, which "prohibits the return of anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life," says Sinclair-Webb.

Turkey's Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu has denied reports that Syrians are being deported, and instead has maintained that some refugees "voluntarily want to go back."

"We have introduced policies to ensure that they go to safe areas," he said in July.

Critics say Turkey is abusing the voluntary return process.

The Istanbul-based We Want to Live Together Initiative has interviewed numerous deportees, all of whom were forced into signing voluntary return documents, which waived their temporary protection status. Refugees report being coerced into signing the form amid threats of ill-treatment and violence. Others have been threatened with indefinite detention and some were forced to sign the document despite not understanding Turkish.

"If people are being coerced into signing forms to voluntarily return [to Syria], this constitutes deportation and that's illegal," Sinclair-Webb said.

After news of Hisham al-Mustafa's death reached the press, Soylu alleged that the young man had volunteered to return to Syria, claimed Mustafa was arrested for having ties to "terrorist organizations" and denied that he was shot at the border.

"Why would he voluntarily return to Syria when his whole family is here?" his father Mohammed said. "It was only after he was killed that the Turkish government started to tell everyone that he's connected to terrorist organizations."

Under international law, suspicions of criminal activity do not legally nullify a person's protection status and are not grounds for deportation.

"You can't just smear someone with the taint of criminal activity or terrorism to justify deporting them," said Sinclair-Webb. "You have to follow a due process and investigate the allegations they are accused of."

Allegations of terrorism by the Turkish government are "over-used and misused to describe activities that don't even constitute criminal activity," she added. "It has become a way of smearing people, even in the absence of any evidence of criminal activity. It's a word that is used to stop the debate and repel any criticisms."



GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: Mustafa al-Mohammed holds his dead son's Turkish I.D. card.

LIVING MEMORY: Shoaib, Hisham al-Mustafa's son.

'SICK FROM FEAR'

Thousands of Syrian refugees in Istanbul like Mustafa's family are now living in a state of terror.

Bayan, a 30-year-old Syrian refugee from Aleppo, is afraid to leave her house. She is registered in Bursa Province, but moved to Istanbul to find work.

"I've been living in Turkey for seven years," she said. "I have friends here and a life. I can't imagine leaving and starting from zero all over again."

Bayan works at a Syrian TV station, about a 40-minute drive from her home in Istanbul. Since the crackdown, she has stopped driving her car to work, as the license plate identifies her as a foreigner, which she worries will make her a target for the police. Too afraid to take public transportation, where Turkish police often stop people and check IDs, she takes a taxi, forcing her to pay \$26 each day just on transportation.

"We've heard so many stories about police arresting people, even those who are registered in Istanbul," Bayan told *The Indy*. "It feels like there's nothing we can do to be safe. I started to feel sick from fear. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I have fallen into a depression. Now I'm taking medicine just to go to sleep and stop myself from thinking."

"We [Syrians] have tried so hard to live, but we are not accepted anywhere," she added. "We are all so scared and at the same time it feels like we have no power to do anything. It's like we're not humans."

Randa, 39, a refugee from Damascus, is registered in Sakarya, about a two-hour drive from Istanbul. She has also been avoiding leaving her house unless absolutely necessary. To make matters more complicated, her husband, a Palestinian from the northern occupied West Bank, is also living in Istanbul without any documentation. After meeting each other in 2014, he decided to overstay his student visa to be with her.

"We obviously can't go to Syria and she would not be allowed into the West Bank, so this is the only way we can stay together," he said.

Randa says that if she does leave her house, she keeps an eye out for the po-

lice. She noted that many Syrian refugees have stopped speaking Arabic on the street in fear the police will hear them.

"Many of my friends are now thinking of risking it at sea to try and get to Europe," she said. "It's not safe here anymore."

Other refugees are contemplating suicide, according to Bayan.

Back in Istanbul's Bagcilar district, Mustafa's family continues to mourn his death.

"We've been running for eight years," said his mother, Fatema al-Khalif. "And just when I think I've finally found a safe place for my family, they killed my son."

The family is desperately seeking resettlement to another country.

"We are afraid, and we have no way to defend ourselves," al-Khalif said, clutching her dead son's identification card. "All we have is this ID and it doesn't protect us anymore. Every day when the night comes, the whole family gathers together. We are scared that they will come and take one of us again."

PATHMAKERS TO PEACE

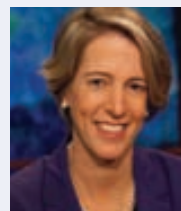


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HUMANITY ON THE MOVE

This is the second in a three-part special series by The Indy's Jaclynn Ashly that looks at the challenges faced by migrants in Europe and the Middle East at a time when anti-immigrant sentiments are erupting across the world.

PART 1

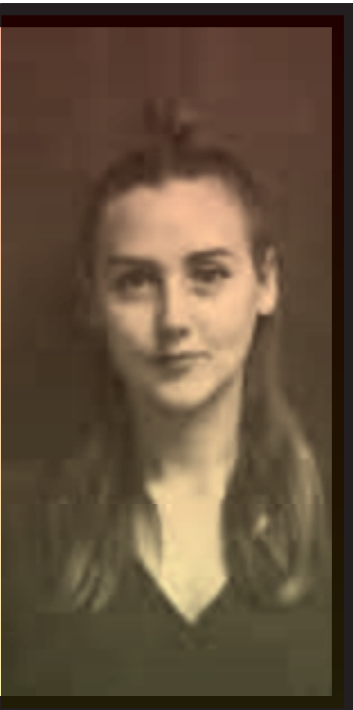
African migrants find themselves between a rock and a hard place in Malta.

PART 2

Turkey yanks the welcome mat for 3.5 million refugees from Syria's civil war.

PART 3

Iraq's Mandeian people are trying to start their lives over in Jordan, but the authorities there don't want them going anywhere near the river water that is sacred to them.



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MEDICARE-4-ALL

Continued from page 10

care insurance system is notoriously inefficient. Only 3% of Medicare's expenses today go to cover administrative compared to 25-30% for the insurance corporations. This has created a system where the first thing a patient has to do when visiting a doctor's office is speak with the clerical workers who are responsible for ensuring that the patient's insurance plan will cover the cost. These administrative costs are now paid for by the people they insure.

The current system is also expensive for businesses. Most of the largest U.S. corporations provide some of their workers with health insurance, at a cost that is often well over \$10,000 a year for a family. Employers continually try to get workers to pay a bigger share of the costs, from premiums to copayments to deductibles. One of the things that provoked the General Motors strike of September was that the company demanded that workers pay 15 percent of the costs

assumption that the distribution of the resources of society should be based entirely on market transactions.

Senators Sanders and Warren are the two Presidential candidates who have spoken forcefully in support of Medicare for All, though Warren has also indicated she might accept a weaker alternative such as "public option" insurance, allowing people under 65 to buy Medicare coverage.

If either is elected, they will make significant contributions to the desperately needed health and well-being of the working class. But while Warren campaign advocates a continuous process of "corrections" to the damages that result from unregulated capitalism, Sanders has brought into the arena of public debate the more basic contradiction between capitalism and human rights, and is thus a more formidable foe than Warren.

Warren proclaims herself to be a "capitalist to my bones" in her support for a market-based economy. But she sees universal health care as one of many "correctives" needed to make capitalism function better. Sanders is a democratic socialist who sees Medicare for All as

MEDICARE FOR ALL CHALLENGES THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIETY'S RESOURCES SHOULD BE BASED ENTIRELY ON MARKET TRANSACTIONS.

of their health insurance, instead of 3 percent. Another was that GM wants to keep using temporary workers, who receive few or no benefits, as 7 to 10 percent of its total workforce.

Why, then, is the U.S. corporate class so opposed to Medicare for All, if it would save businesses the expense of paying for workers' health insurance and the trouble of hiring staff to administer it?

The most basic reason is what it stands for. In a capitalist society, the need to obtain health care, along with food and shelter, is what requires workers to engage in the wage labor that generates the profits of the capitalists. Corporations that currently provide some form of health insurance benefits are well aware that the fear of losing those benefits makes workers more vulnerable to increased work pressure and less able to demand higher wages.

But even if corporations as a whole would be better off if the U.S., like most other countries, had an "efficient" health care system, they have a more fundamental reason for opposition. The most class-conscious capitalists recognize the danger inherent in the concept that health care is a human right. The growing support for Medicare For All is not simply a demand for "more," like the demand for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. It challenges the very heart of the capitalist organization of society, the

one of the components of a social system in which production is organized to meet the needs of people rather than the maximization of profits. This is a far more dangerous threat to capitalism than correcting its "inefficiencies." Not all those who support Medicare for All, including Warren, agree with Sanders, but the movement has succeeded in raising a challenge to the status quo that promises to continue long past 2020.

Paddy Quick is a professor emerita of St. Francis College in Brooklyn and a member of the Union for Radical Political Economics.

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COURTESY

TO THE OUTER LIMITS

'START A FUCK'N BAND,' THE CLASH'S JOE STRUMMER TOLD MILES SOLAY. HE DID.

BY CELESTINA BILLINGTON

*I dream of fire but I sleep so cold
I raise the red flag on the Alamo
I want to show you how our lives unfold
Deep inside underneath it all.*

These are the opening lyrics of Outernational's most popular song, "Todos Somos Ilegales," or we are all illegals. The revolutionary ballad decrying the injustice of the border system and American hypocrisy was produced by Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine and served as the title track for the band's second record — a concept album, a journey north.

"On the one hand you bring lived experience — the hopes, dreams, aspirations, fucking courage and sacrifice of being driven from your homeland and leaving everything behind," says Outernational frontman and cofounder Miles Solay, discussing the sojourn the record seeks to convey.

"You basically risk life and limb to just be able to survive," he said, wearing a t-shirt with a black and white print of a Pancho Villa-esque figure on it, the name of his band emblazoned above. "On the other hand, you are forced to come to a country that is responsible for so much immiseration and suffering all over the world, but in particular those very same freaking countries that so many people are forced to leave to come here."

Released as a single eight years ago, on the heels of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that found Arizona had run afoul of the Constitution when the state's governor deputized local law enforcement to scrutinize anyone suspected of being an undocumented resident, "Todos Somos Ilegales" continues to resonate in the age of Trump.

The single's initial popularity led to opportunities for Outernational at festivals in Europe and Latin America, with appearances at the likes of SXSW and Viva Latino! The tours continued up until 2015, when the musicians took a sabbatical to reboot. But recently they've picked back up, joining a growing Latinx music scene here in New York, where, across the city, musicians are responding to the racist ideologies shaping the nation's border policy with imagination, charisma and zeal.

SHOUTING

OUT: Miles Solay of Outernational.

Benefit shows and decolonizing concerts have blossomed, with proceeds being donated to activist and legal aid groups like

No Mas Muertes and RAÍCES. Recently Bleachers frontman Jack Antonoff pledged to match all donations to initiatives supporting children at the border up to \$10,000. Though musicians across genres have been participating in the movement, unsurprisingly, the loudest among them have been the punks. Groups like Outernational and deafening hardcore thrashers Junta are utilizing every method at their disposal — from social media to the stage — to give voice to the resistance.

Solay founded Outernational with bassist Jesse Williams. The two met at Revolution Books in Manhattan as teenagers during the mid-1990s and quickly began collaborating. At 15, Miles smooth-talked his way backstage at a taping of Saturday Night Live where Rage Against the Machine was headlining. There he forged a lifelong friendship with Morello, which eventually led to the "Todos Somos Ilegales" collab. Red Hot Chili Peppers' drummer Chad Smith and Puerto Rican rapper Residente also appear in the song.

Yet by far the biggest influence on the band's diverse style — which features sounds common in reggae, mariachi, hip hop and punk — is the Clash.

When Solay and Williams were first beginning to jam together they met former Clash frontman Joe Strummer at an after-hours bar. "It was like seven in the morning," Solay recalls. "He leaned in like kissing close, and was sort of like, 'Start a fuck'n band.' And you know, my whole face got wet."

Like his heroes, Solay sees his work as emblematic of his social responsibility as an artist.

He has some advice for his fans: "Even if you're in America, which is on the top of the trash heap of humanity, don't turn away. Don't turn away from the connectedness of humanity and how integrated everything is. It's time to get out of the comfort zone. That will require courage. I don't mean courage like 'I'm so tough.' I mean courage like epistemological courage. If you start searching, really searching for the answers, then you gotta keep digging, even if it challenges some of your most deeply held assumptions."

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JIMMY HOFFA IS BACK

The Irishman

DIR. MARTIN SCORSESE

OPENS NOV. 1, NETFLIX NOV. 27

By Robert Ross

Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, his latest cinematic exploration of the world of organized crime, is perhaps one of the most widely anticipated films of the year, but those looking forward to sitting down to the visual feast we have grown to expect from one of America's definitive directors may be disappointed.

The opening scene of the film, one of 309 scenes shot over a period of 108 days, in 117 separate locations, promises the usual fare. The camera snakes down a series of hallways in a long dolly shot, eventually coming to rest in a closeup of Robert De Niro, portraying Mafia hitman Frank Sheeran, the eponymous Irishman. This opening shot, a signature of Scorsese's, proves to be only a teaser.

typically shoots mostly on film, but 70 percent of this movie was shot digitally with two cameras, which he described as "three-eyed monsters." They permit digital aging without the actors having to wear any kind of mapping devices.

The director has talked openly about some of his reservations about this technical breakthrough, and although he has stated that the unfamiliar equipment did not slow down production, it may have played a role in determining the "look" of the film.

The first look at a de-aged De Niro, provokes uneasiness, as he at times resembles an action figure from Robert Zemeckis' *Welcome To Marwen*. But as the film unfolds in a largely chronological fashion, albeit in the context of a flashback narrative, this uneasiness fades and one begins to appreciate the real genius of the leading players in our story.

Pesci delivers an understated and rock-solid perfor-

Steve Zaillian's script takes great delight in finding humor in the darkest of scenarios, resulting in many laugh-out-loud moments — mobsters bicker and quibble over social niceties, punctuality and fish, while nonchalantly committing heinous crimes. It's the inherent humanity of these characters that allows us more access to their inner selves. The film becomes much more than a retelling of mobster apocrypha and lore, arriving at a meditative and thoughtful rumination on what it is to be a man, which one can expect from a director and cast who are well into their seventies.

By comparison, the female characters are given short shrift. It is a pity that an actor as talented as Anna Paquin is given little more than scowls and withering stares to elucidate the eternally complex nature of a daughter's relationship with her murderous father.

It's a good thing that *The Irishman* will be stream-

DEAD MAN

WALKING: Al Pacino as Jimmy Hoffa in *The Irishman*.



Sure, all the ingredients are there — the sea of familiar faces, De Niro, Joe Pesci, and Harvey Keitel. The smoke-filled nightclubs, the back-alley assignations and public assassinations, the paradoxical pathology of felonious family men who discuss the merits of meat sauce and machine guns in equal measure.

However, unlike Scorsese's earlier Mafia movies, *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, which snap and crackle as they barrel through their respective stories, propelled by Thelma Schoonmaker's unique editing and Scorsese's fondness for dolly shots, smash cuts and sudden zooms, *The Irishman* moves more like its hero, a 6'4", 250-pound lumbering menace who proceeds with the measured pace of a large man in no hurry to get where he's going.

Scorsese largely abandons his usual tropes for a more generic style, a decision that may in part have been dictated by the new technology he's working with for the first time. Much has been speculated regarding the use of the Industrial Light and Magic de-aging technology that enables actors to play characters half their age. Scorsese

mance as mob boss Russell Bufalino, Frank Sheeran's mentor. One gets the feeling that this may be the last we see of Pesci, which would be a shame, but it lends his performance an entirely appropriate fatalism. De Niro's Frank Sheeran is an uncomplicated man who proceeds through life with a resignation and stolidity that plays most effectively in the scenes he shares with Al Pacino, who gives us some of his best work in years, as mobbed-up Teamsters Union leader Jimmy Hoffa. Pacino's Hoffa is a garrulous force of nature that elbows and barges his way through the movie.

Prior to his disappearance in 1975, Hoffa was trying to claw his way back into power. Before going to prison eight years earlier, he'd headed what was then the largest union in the country, which he'd done a lot to build up. The Teamsters controlled virtually all over-the-road trucking, and their leadership was spectacularly corrupt. Their massive pension fund attracted all sorts of unsavory characters — who Scorsese portrays more as charmingly inept uncles than menaces to society.

ing on Netflix after its limited run in the movie houses, because this is a banquet of a film that cannot be fully appreciated in one sitting. I for one will definitely be going back for seconds.

FICTION

A PARISIAN PRESENT INTRUDES ON A LONG ISLAND PAST

The Art of Regret

BY MARY FLEMING

SHE WRITES PRESS, OCT. 22

By Eleanor Bader

At the start of Mary Fleming's insightful second novel, *The Art of Regret*, Paris resident Trevor McFarquhar is something of a sad sack.

The bike shop he owns is barely bringing in enough money to pay the rent on his shabby, under-furnished, studio apartment and he and his financially successful younger brother, mom and stepfather barely talk to one another, having settled into a thoroughly superficial relationship several decades back. He's pushing 40, has few friends and wants only "casuals" — multiple-night stands with comely young women that include neither strings nor emotional intimacy.

And although Trevor once dreamed of becoming a professional documentary photographer, a serious bike accident right

has the emotional wherewithal to broach these topics. Even more worrisome, he has to accept that raising them might hasten Helen's death or drive an even bigger wedge between them.

This is big stuff and the novel does not tackle these issues within a linear time-frame. Instead, long before the Big Reveal, a host of things happen. Among them, a prolonged transit

strike forces the city's people to become bike riders, filling Trevor's once-moribund shop with eager customers. Indeed, the volume becomes so overwhelming that Trevor hires an assistant, an undocumented Polish immigrant who quickly makes himself indispensable. In addition, a stroke of serendipity brings a dog into Trevor's life, giving his days an unfamiliar but oddly comforting routine and structure. Lastly, there's his relationship with Stephanie, an inappropriate sexual partner — or maybe an unhealthy obsession — that he knows cannot and should not be sustained.

As is obvious, there's a lot going on in *The Art of Regret*. Furthermore, the streets of both working-class and bourgeois Paris are presented in vivid detail. So, too, are political observations about social class,



TYRONE WALLACE

before he was scheduled to mount his first exhibition as an up-and-coming twenty-something derailed his career, leaving him mired in low-level depression, a condition he has done nothing to shake.

What's more, he's haunted by the past and the deaths, one year apart, of his sister and father. The family had been living in Long Island, New York, when five-year-old Franny was hit by a car. A year later, his dad tumbled off the roof of their home while supposedly securing a television antenna.

But was his death really an accident? Or did his dad commit suicide?

Trevor only knows what he was told as a 10-year-old kid, but he continues to stew in confusion and grief; this reaction is made worse by his mom's silence about what actually happened. Other questions also nag at him. Why, for example, did his mom move the family to Paris almost immediately after these tragedies occurred? Why did she marry Edmond, a Parisian financier, so quickly? Even more important, why didn't they ever talk about Franny? Had his mother completely forgotten their earliest years as suburban Americans?

Flash forward 30 years and Trevor's mom, Helen, is now dying of cancer. This gives Trevor an urgent, now-or-never opening to probe topics he had long assumed were verboten. The situation is, of course, highly fraught and Trevor has to determine if he

discrimination against immigrants, the sexual politics of family life and the pervasive belief that a heterosexual couple is incomplete without children. Relationship ethos are probed as are the limits of friendship and personal autonomy. In addition, a well-crafted denouement that addresses reconciliation — the healing that often accompanies forgiving those who trespass against us — gives the novel added heft as well as intellectual staying power.

Beautifully written, tender, evocative, and moving, *The Art of Regret* is a cogent reminder that risk-taking is essential to a well-lived life. Trevor's bravery in speaking to his mother about long-suppressed issues pays off, allowing him to parse the past with an adult understanding of mourning and its aftereffects, and open himself up to deeper relationships with friends and potential mates. It's hopeful and realistic, inspiring and heartfelt.

No one wants to die staring down a bushel of regrets or lamenting a roster of should-haves. Both Helen and Trevor provoke us to figure out ways to make sure that we confront our demons, push boundaries and live as fully as possible. I, for one, want to thank Mary Fleming for the reminder.

HERITAGE



ALL PHOTOS JIMIN KIM

BEATING THE DRUM

The annual Bronx Native American Festival, brought together hundreds of members of indigenous communities in the Western Hemisphere on Sept. 29. The gathering celebrates, and works to preserve and pass down indigenous cultures through dance, poetry, song

and food. Bobby Gonzalez, a Taino poet and lifelong Bronx resident, founded the festival 25 years ago.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF

OLD WORDS, NEW MEANINGS

The Socialist Manifesto: The Case for Radical Politics In An Era of Extreme Inequality

BY BHASKAR SUNKARA

HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, APRIL 2019

Democracy May Not Exist But We Will Miss It When It's Gone

BY ASTRA TAYLOR

HENRY HOLT, MAY 2019

By Steven Sherman

Only 10 years ago, the meanings of “democracy” and “socialism” seemed stable in the United States. The U.S. was a democracy, while socialism had few defenders outside of marginal corners of academia and cultish groups no one paid attention to. Most radical activists would say that they were promoting “social justice” (or “racial” or “global” justice). Although Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an avowed democratic socialist, had been in Washington for close to two decades, few paid much mind.

Things are very different now. We have a president who disrespects such basic democratic norms as elections and the rule of law. Simultaneously, critiques of the undemocratic nature of the Electoral College and the Senate have become more widespread, raising the question of how much of a democracy the U.S. really is. Sanders has reshaped discourse in the Democratic Party, and in his wake, the Democratic Socialists of America has flourished.

Two highly relevant new books take socialism and democracy as their respective topics. Bhaskar Sunkara, founding editor and publisher of *Jacobin* magazine, seeks to sharpen our understanding of socialism’s history and its potential in *The Socialist Manifesto*. Filmmaker and author Astra Taylor seeks to reground democracy in far more utopian terms than the liberal resistance to Donald Trump, with *Democracy May Not Exist But We Will Miss It When It is Gone*. Both are well worth reading, despite their limitations.

The Socialist Manifesto begins with speculative fiction about how a worker at the bottling plant for Bon Jovi Pasta Sauce (a real company) might experience change under the existing rules of the United States, Sweden, and a socialist future that follows the populist presidency of Bruce Springsteen. This is an amusing premise, but I also found it odd. Although plenty of American workers do work in factories, most do not, and service workers and public-sector workers face different challenges.

Given what Americans pay for housing, medical care, and to borrow money, it is unclear whether more surplus is flowing into the hands of capitalists through workplace exploitation or through rent-seeking. Sunkara ignores this and other matters that make present-day political economy more complicated than workers vs. owners/bosses. He doesn’t discuss the transformation of American family life by the imperative that all able-bodied adults should be working, nor

racial divisions. Nor does the intense connectivity that has turned every waking hour into a stew of work, consumerism, social life, financial management, and more factor in. Above all, the threat to existence posed by the rapacious exhaustion of the natural environment gets only a perfunctory mention. Speculative fiction is nice, but if the starting point doesn’t really resemble the present, what is the point?

Sunkara goes on to outline a history of capitalism and socialism. He locates the beginning of capitalism in 18th-century England with the birth of the industrial working class, ignoring the European conquest of the Americas and the creation of

itation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, which socialist sympathizer Martin Luther King was supporting when he was assassinated there?

In the final part of *The Socialist Manifesto*, Sunkara maps out a strategy for the U.S. socialist movement that, unsurprisingly, fails to acknowledge significant social actors besides the socialist movement itself and the labor movement. Nevertheless, he and his peers at *Jacobin* have dragged the idea of socialism out of sectarian corners and academic margins and thrust it into the mainstream of the American left and even into electoral politics. It is a thrilling development, even if it will fall on other writers to figure out how all of that stuff Sunkara has pushed from the margins transforms the analysis.

Leaving things out isn’t likely to be a criticism hurled at Astra Taylor’s book. In over 300 pages, *Democracy May Not Exist But We Will Miss It When It is Gone* spans several millennia, and touches on not just virtually all of the topics noted above, but also the democratic rights of rivers or animals. The bulk of the book is seven chapters focused on antinomies of democratic theory: freedom and equality, conflict and consensus, inclusion and exclusion, coercion and choice, spontaneity and structure, expertise and mass opinion, local and global. The book’s conclusion adds two more: optimism and pessimism, and the tension between historical precedent and governing in the name of the present or future.

Those pairings are well chosen, speaking to deep tensions in understanding what democracy is and could be. To explore them, Taylor incorporates wide-ranging historical examples and interviews with academics, politicians, activists and many others, including what might be called the wisdom of “ordinary” people.

Ancient Athens and the American Revolution are particularly important touchstones, with the former often presented positively, while a very critical light is brought to bear on the founding fathers of the United States. There are occasional standout passages, such as Taylor’s description of the democratic governance of pirate ships and the federa-

tions of native peoples before the settler colonization of North America.

But at times Taylor’s focus gets lost amidst. Democracy, when wrenched out of specific contexts, can be a pretty fuzzy term, and here it starts to mean something like “the ideal society.” The problem is that evaluating societies in terms of whether they live up to principles like equality and inclusion may be at odds with evaluating whether the mechanisms to give people a voice and democratic control over their leaders are actually functioning.

Democracy May Not Exist But We Will Miss It When It is Gone is thus best seen as a spur to debate, raising far more questions than it answers. Taylor only briefly touches on how her queries relate to socialism, but that’s a question well worth delving further into.

LEFT TURN: Jacobin editor and publisher Bhaskar Sunkara has helped make socialism relevant again.

DEMOCRACY, NOW?: Astra Taylor explores the meaning of democracy in her new book.



ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG



COLUMBIAGSAPP

trans-Atlantic slavery more than two centuries earlier. As in the first chapter, wage laborers are foregrounded at the expense of other hierarchical identities.

A brief history of socialist parties follows. This is the strongest part of the book. Sunkara judiciously maps the challenges and dilemmas faced by early socialists, and his assessments are balanced, rather than crude cheerleading for one figure or another. But as he moves to the history of the post-World War II globe, he shows no interest in the efforts toward unity in the Global South led by developing nations in the 1970s or in the renewed internationalism of the World Social Forum. Nor does he have much to say about the explosion of social movements in the 1960s in the U.S. Can the story of American socialism be told without a glance at the way struggle rooted in black communities became class struggle — for instance, the black-led autoworkers’ Revolutionary Union Movement in Detroit? Without the role of Malcolm X or the Black Panthers, or the 1968 strike by san-



JON QUILTY

TRUMP DEPRESSION HOTLINE

Hi Billy,
I love living in a city that is so open and welcoming to immigrants from other countries. I also think this country could take in a lot more immigrants and be just fine. But I find myself scratching my head when you and others call for “no borders.” How would that work? If 50 million or a 100 million or a billion people suddenly came pouring into the country, there wouldn’t be enough schools for their children, houses for them to live in or food for them to eat.

— JAMES, Sunnyside

Dear JAMES,
Possibly, you’re white. Me too, and let me say this: That feeling of ‘what-if-they-all-come-and-overwhelm-us?’ is sneaky at first, like the first signs of the common cold, but you have to catch it early, because this is EARLY ONSET RACISM! If you don’t catch it, you can, as you get older, turn into Mitch McConnell.

Look at what you’ve said here, James, in your tone of Christian selflessness. By welcoming and not welcoming simultaneously, you are summing up the contradiction of late-stage America. We invite the world by our marketing seductions to the phantasia of a clean, safe suburb, while we just as strenuously disinvite with red-lining, toxic traffic, bad jobs and murderous police. The lie of democracy hurts those who find their best selves appealed to, their hopes lifted. Meanwhile, it schizzes those of us who copped the privilege. We realize that we’re winners in a vicious Ponzi scheme.

Look, James, the billion people are coming anyway. Our climate violence is forcing the results of our rapacious economy across our borders. Best to offer not a guilty apology, but a gift economy. Invite everyone in and share everything we can. Now, in these

final days, we can tell the truth by giving. Let them in! Let us out! Let them in! Hear us shout!

• • •

Dear Rev Billy,
After all the horrible things Trump’s done, he’s being busted for a shady telephone call with the president of Ukraine. I probably shouldn’t be picky. What do you make of the situation?

— LOUISE, Mott Haven

As Trump comes apart, we are surprised by his delicacy. He’s like a balloon sputtering all over the room, his sentences spewing out. He has the innocence of a broken robot. He’s shouting “Treason!” at people he’s can’t find. He’s haunted. He wants to execute the whistle-blower, but he wants to “interview” her.

The thing is, he is a lonely man who is as crazy as the systems that he inherited when he won the election. Our neo-liberal economy, for instance, is complete nonsense. Every object and every dream is for sale. Trump is a heavy-hitting clown who rose to be as ridiculous and evil as the prevailing culture. We need to figure out precisely how we invented him.

— REV

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- ⇒ Finally in **December, on the 12th** join professor Andrew Zimmerman who will discuss his book, *The Civil War in the United States*. —a compilation of he writings of Marx, Engels, Weydemeyer and DuBois on the U.S. Civil war; compiled, translated introduced by professor Zimmerman



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5:30				The Laura Flanders Show 5:30-6am			
6:00	City Watch Host: Jeff Simmons 6-7am	Rising Up with Sonali Host: Sonali Kolhatkar 6-7am		Jimmy Dore Show 6-7am			
7:00	Waking Up Host: Forlano & Downey 7-8am				Everything Old is New Again Host: Dave Kenny 6-8am		
8:00	Democracy Now! Host: Goodman, González, Shaikh 8-9am				Any Saturday Host: David Rothenberg 8-10am		
9:00	Law & Disorder Host: Smith & Bogosian 9-10am	Clearing The Fog Hosts: Margaret Flowers & Kevin Zeese 9-10am	Equal Rights & Justice Host: Mimi Rosenberg 9-10am	Equal Rights & Justice Host: Mimi Rosenberg 9-10am	The Aware Show Host: Lisa Garr 9-10am	Here of a Sunday Morning Host: Chris Whent 9-11am	
10:00	Bike Snob Host: Eben Weiss 10-11am	Black Platform Host: Bertha Lewis 10-11am	Talk Out of School Host: Haimson, Burris 10-11am	Black Star News Host: Milton Allimadi 10-11am	Morning Irsay Host: James Irsay 10-Noon	On the Count Host: Mangual & Ward 10-11am	Radio Free Eirann Hosts: McCourt & McDonagh 11am-1pm
11:00	Living for The City Host: Michael G. Haskins 11-Noon	Positive Mind Host: O'Donoghue, Starr, Diemer 11-Noon	New York, We + Thee Hosts: McCourt & McDonagh 11-Noon	Code Pink Radio Hosts: Benjamin, Evans & Co. 11-Noon		From the Streets with Bob Law 11-Noon	
Noon	The Gary Null Show Noon-1pm				Gary Null Show 1-2pm		
1:00	Leonard Lopate at Large 1-2pm				Heart of Mind Host: Kathryn Davis 1-2pm		
2:00	Thom Hartmann Show 2-3pm				Latin Roots Host: Felipe Luciano 2-4pm		
3:00	Sojourner Truth Host: Margaret Prescod 3-4pm				Jordan Journal Host: Howard Jordan 3-5pm		
4:00	Vantage Point Host: Dr. Ron Daniels 4-5pm	Outside the Box Host: Arthur Harris 4-5pm	The Katie Halper Show 4-5pm	Let's Talk Host: John Kane 4-5pm	Carribbean Voices & Beyond Host: Isaac Ferguson 4-6pm		
5:00	Advocating for Justice Host: Arthur Schwartz 5-6pm	Revolution Per Minute (RPM) 5-6pm	Max & Murphy Host: Ben Max, Jarrett Murphy 5-6pm	Driving Forces Host: Jeff Simmons 5-6pm	On The Ground Host: Esther Iverem 5-6pm	Voices of Resistance Hosts: Pagoda & Vizeu 1-2pm	
6:00	WBAI Evening News by the Independent Host: Pete Rugh 6-6:30 pm	WBAI Evening News Host: Paul DeRienzo 6-6:30 pm	WBAI Evening News Host: Paul DeRienzo 6-6:30 pm	WBAI Evening News Host: Paul DeRienzo 6-6:30 pm	WBAI Evening News Host: Paul DeRienzo 6-6:30 pm	WBAI Evening News Host: Paul DeRienzo 6-6:30 pm	City Watch Host: Jeff Simmons
6:30	CounterSpin from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting Host: Janine Jackson 6:30-7pm	Radio Gag Host: GAG 6:30-7pm	On Contact Host: Chris Hedges 6:30-7pm	Justice Matters Host: Bob Gangi 6:30-7pm	Economic Update Host: Richard Wolff 6:30-7pm	Laura Flaunders Show 6:30-7pm	Golden Age of Radio Host: Max Schmid 7-9pm
7:00	Building Bridges Host: Mimi Rosenberg & Ken Nash 7-8pm	FVIR Host: Tiokasin Ghosthorse 7-8pm	Women Fight Back Host: Rachel Silang 7-8pm	Indivisible 101 Host: Olenick, Raymond-Tolan, Paulker, Wagner, Naazmi, Gaillard, Weiss 7-7:30pm Special 7:30-8pm	Radio GBE Host: Imhotep Gary Byrd 7-9pm	Reel World Host: Mike Sargent 7-8pm	And You Don't Stop Host: Chuck D 8-10pm
8:00	Housing Notebook Host: Sommer & Kilgour 8-9pm	Green St. alt/w Ecologic Hosts: Patti, Doug Wood / Gale, Stein 8-9pm	Off the Hook Hosts: Goldstein, Kyle, Firefly, Alex 8-9pm	Education at the Crossroads Host: Basir Mchawi 8-9pm	Untitled Host: Malika Lee Whitney 9-10pm	Everything Old is New Again Host: Dave Kenny 9-11am	
9:00	Joy of Resistance Host: Fran Luck 9-10pm	Out FM Host: Out FM Collective 9-10pm	Cutting Edges Host: Dred Scott Keyes 9-10pm	Where We Live / Cuba In Focus Host: Sally O'Brien & Déqui Kioni-Sadiki 9-10pm		BBO Radio Show Host: Kraig Lewis 10-Midnight	Cat Radio Cafe Host: Janet Coleman & David Dozer 11pm-1am
10:00	Nightshift Host: Mike Sargent 10p-Midnight	Suga' in my Bowl Host: Joyce Jones 10-Midnight	Afrobeat Radio Host: Wuyi Jacob 10-Midnight	The Sweet Spot Host: Baby K & McNeal 10-Midnight	Midnight Ravers Host: Wilson, Rhodes, Walker, Eccleston, Heshimu, Fergusson, Charles 12-2am		Soul Central Station Host: Tony Ryan 10pm-1am
11:00		Mansion for The Rats Host: Ann Marie Hendrixon 12-1am	What's the Frequency Kenneth? Host: Paul Fischer 12-1am	Radio Unnameable Host: Bob Fass Midnight - 3am			
Mid.	From The Soundboard Host: Reggie Johnson 12-2am	The Dustbin of History Host: Hendrickson, Schmid 1-3am	Hour of the Wolf Host: Jim Freund 1-3am	All Mixed Up Host: Peter Bochan 3-5am	Labbrish Host: Habte Selassie 2-5am	After Party Host: Tony Ryan & Ray Caviano 1-3am	La Nueva Alternativa Latina Host: Ruben and Angel Lopez 1-3am
1:00		K-Wave Radio Host: Emerson 3-5am	Burn Baby Burn Host: Lister Hewan-Lowe 3-5am			Ear Massage Host: Mark Laiosa 3-5am	Latin Roots 3-5am
2:00	Haitian All Starz Host: DJ Harry 2-4am						
3:00	Arts Express Host: Miller, Shalom 4-5am						
4:00							