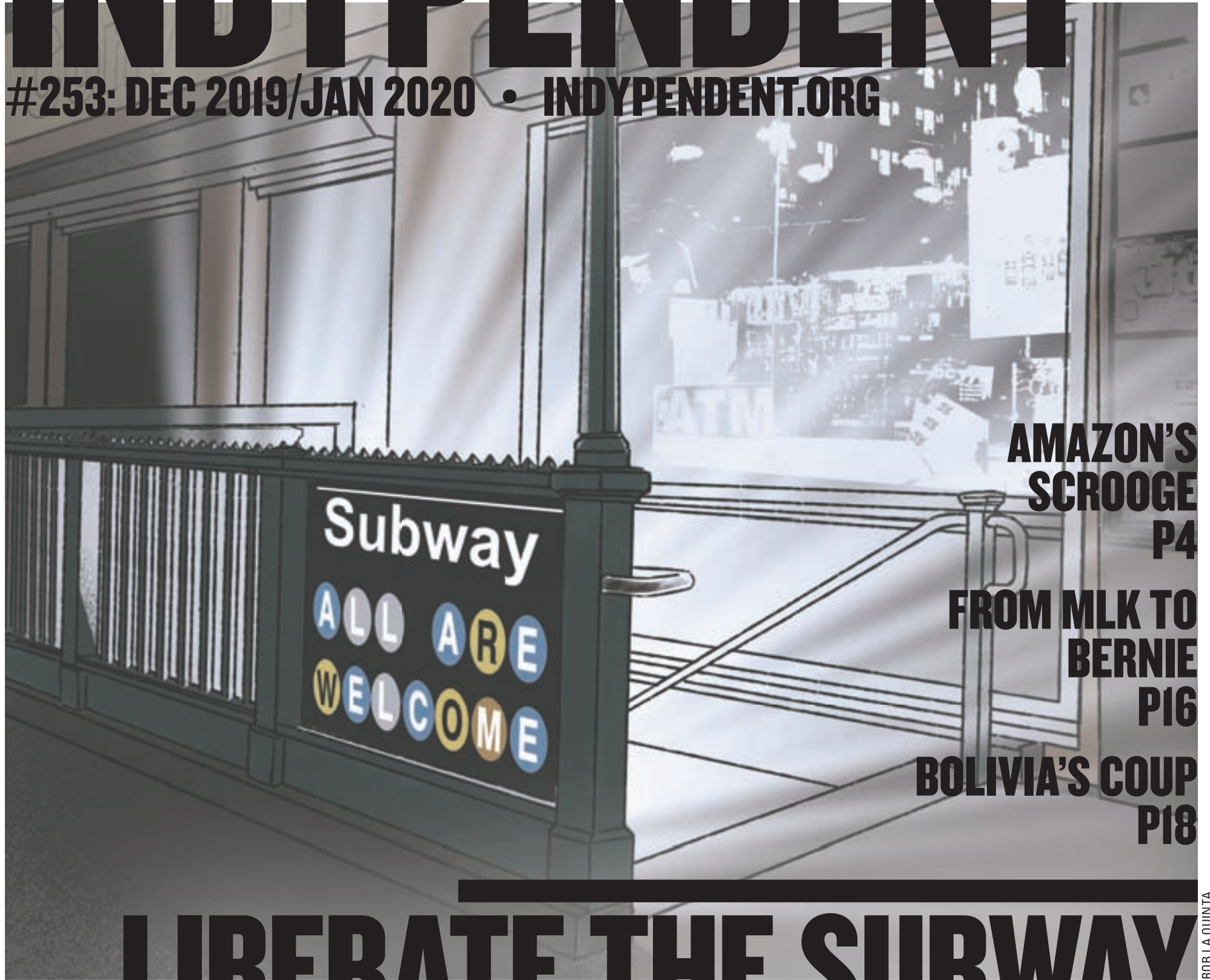


THE

= BEST ALBUMS OF 2019 — P 21 =

THE INDYPENDENT

#253: DEC 2019/JAN 2020 • INDYPENDENT.ORG



AMAZON'S SCROOGE
P4

FROM MLK TO BERNIE
P16

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LIBERATE THE SUBWAY

ROB LA QUINTA

EVERYONE RIDES FOR FREE. NO MORE NEW COPS. HOW IT CAN BE DONE. P10-13



FORESIGHT IS 2020

WE NEED YOUR HELP. This is going to be a crucial year for the country and the city — help keep *The Independent's* voice for justice and change going strong into the next decade. **TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE CAUSE, SEE PAGES 8 & 9**

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SPECIAL MESSAGE

GAGE SKIDMORE/FLICKR

IMPEACH THE INDY!

The *Indypendent* is a terrible, terrible newspaper, way worse than the failing *New York Times*. It not only says mean things about me all the time, but every month it writes about greedy unions, lazy tenant groups, immigrant rights agitators, America-last socialists, and professional protesters. They can't write a kind word for our country's hard-working CEOs? It's beautiful oil and gas companies, impeccable police and gorgeous landlords like me? Sad!

I could put this paper out of business today, but why should I bother? I've declared bankruptcy four times, so I know if you don't have the money to pay your bills, you're in serious trouble.

The Indy doesn't have millions of dollars like my friends at *Breitbart* and *Fox* who are telling the world how great I am. It relies on contributions from readers like you to cover their budget just like Bernie trying to run for president on \$27 donations — Pathetic!!

They've crawled along for 19 years, but not anymore.

This year, readers like you who know I'm going to win the most awesome re-election victory ever won't send them money. Then, they will be gone. Poof! No more *Indy*. Won't be able to cover its rent or keep the lights on or pay its measly staff. No more saying terrible, terrible things about me.

Now I'm not one to gloat. In fact, people tell me all the time how humble I am. But if *The Indy* is forgotten by its friends, if it's severely hobbled by lack of reader support or even went out of business, I say that's a wonderful thing — like impeachment but with real consequences.

Anyhow, who needs their "facts"? Facts are stupid. And what the hell is social justice? Solidarity? Why should anyone want to write about that? Here's a real news story: My steaks are delicious! The most succulent cuts of flash frozen Angus Beef you'll find anywhere. Why don't they write an article about that?

If you want real news, follow me on Twitter! Don't waste time with these losers. Think about it this way:

For \$100 you can help *The Indy* print 1,000 copies or buy another one of those very, very ugly news boxes they put out on street corners. For the same amount you can purchase a pair of brass Keep America Great Christmas Ornaments finished in 24-karat gold. Give \$50 and you will sponsor 500 copies of *The Indy*. Or, you can purchase a gift set of my cologne, Success By Trump.

So what do you say folks? Inhale my musky essence, gaze upon my shiny holiday bric-a-brac or support this fake news rag? I trust your decision will be in line with the winning spirit of Christmas.

Your Totally Awesome President,

Donald J. Trump

FOR DISSENTING VIEWS (YES, THEY ARE STILL ALLOWED, AT LEAST FOR NOW) ON WHETHER TO SUPPORT THE INDY DURING ITS ANNUAL YEAR-END FUND DRIVE, SEE PAGE 8 & 9.

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ALSO ON THE RADIO AT

WBAI-99.5 FM, MONDAYS 6:00-6:30PM

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



TED ROEDER

DEC/JAN

THRU DEC 21

11AM–6PM • FREE
MARKET: ARC HOLIDAY RECORD SALE

The ARC is a nonprofit music library dedicated to collecting, preserving and providing information about popular music from around the world. For a few weeks a year, it becomes the largest record store in NYC with thousands of LPs, CDs, cassettes, videos — anything and everything musical for sale.

ARCHIVE OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

54 White St., Mnhtn

THRU JAN 15

TUE, THU–SUN 12PM–6PM • FREE
EXHIBITION: NO NEW JAILS NYC — THE ART & DESIGN OF A MOVEMENT

Design, art, movement, dance and cultural work have been critical to No New Jails NYC's mission of imagining safety without prisons or police. Artists, filmmakers, poets and many more people have contributed their work to its campaign.

ABC NO RIO IN EXILE AT THE MUSEUM OF RECLAIMED URBAN SPACE

155 Avenue C, Mnhtn

FRI DEC 20

7PM • \$20
MUSIC: THE SLACKERS, PIE-TASTERS, AND MEPHISKAPHELES
NYC ska kingpins the Slackers' annual holiday party.
WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St., Mnhtn

SAT DEC 28

9PM • \$25–\$30
MUSIC: COMBO CHIMBITA, SUN RA ARKESTRA
The longstanding Afro-futurist outfit opens for an up-and-coming tropical-futurist quintet.
KNITTING FACTORY BROOKLYN
361 Metropolitan Ave., Bklyn

TUE DEC 31

9PM–12AM • FREE
SOLIDARITY: NOISE DEMO
Remind folks locked up that they are not alone. NYC Anarchist Black Cross, in response to an international call for noise demonstrations outside of prisons, is asking folks to join them outside of the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in

lower Manhattan. Bring noisemakers, air horns, drums, anything that is loud.

METROPOLITAN CORRECTIONAL CENTER

150 Park Row, Mnhtn

TUE DEC 31

6PM–4AM • \$30–\$50
PARTY: NEW YEAR'S ROARING '20S REMIX PARTY
Ring in the new year with Rude Mechanical Orchestra and pals. Proceeds go to the upstarts with the Sunrise Movement, fighting to save this planet with a Green New Deal.

STARR BAR

214 Starr St., Bklyn

WED JAN 1

2PM–12AM • \$20
LIT: THE 46TH ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON
There are three things to consider when the New Year's Day Poetry Marathon sweeps you into its gracefully uncouth embrace — what it is, what it was and who you will be when it's over. An untamed gathering of over 150 poets, performers and artists revealing not just that a better life could exist, but that it already does — sexy and wise, rancorous and sweet, big-hearted and mad as hell, an avenging engine of resistance and an eager vehicle of the nascent year.

POETRY PROJECT AT ST. MARK'S CHURCH

131 E. 10th St., Mnhtn

THU JAN 2

9PM • \$32.50–\$80
MUSIC: BIG DADDY KANE
One of hip-hop's most lyrical, diverse, innovative, trendsetting emcees. A baritone-voiced stylist-dresser with a rapid-fire metaphoric battle-rap approach, Kane was the first rapper to ever hold not one but two sold out shows at the Apollo Theater for women only.

SONY HALL

235 W. 46th St., Mnhtn

JAN 10–JAN 11

FRI & SAT 7PM • \$25–\$30
MUSIC: SACRIFICE
The Japanese thrash metal legends first and only U.S. appearance.
MARKET HOTEL
1140 Myrtle Ave., Bklyn

FRI JAN 17

7PM–9:30PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: **AMONG THE BOAT PEOPLE: A MEMOIR OF VIETNAM**

Nhi Chung and four other women writers read from Chung's memoir, a story of Chung growing up in Saigon before and after the Communist takeover, her hazardous escape by boat and her life in the U.S., working with Amerasian refugees (Vietnamese mothers and American GI fathers) who suffered discrimination and alienation.

BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE, CAFE & ACTIVIST CENTER

172 Allen St., Mnhtn

JAN 17–JAN 18

FRI 7:30PM, SAT 6PM • \$30–\$45
FESTIVAL: ZLATNE USTE GOLDEN FESTIVAL
Music from the Balkans and beyond. A rowdy good time. Come dance.
THE GRAND PROSPECT HALL
263 Prospect Ave., Bklyn

SAT JAN 18

8PM–10:30PM • \$12–\$20
MUSIC: TRANS-ATLANTIC HOOT
Based in Leeds, U.K., Skinner & Twitch perform folk, flamenco and theater-style songs with driving rhythms, intense harmonies and inspiring lyrics. They will share the program with three eclectic NYC musicians — Mike Lee, Vincent Cross and Steve Sufet — for an evening of acoustic music at its finest.
PEOPLES' VOICE CAFE, COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NY
40 E. 35th St., Mnhtn

SAT JAN 25

10AM–5:30PM • FREE
CONFERENCE: THE CHINA QUESTION: TOWARD A LEFT PERSPECTIVE
Amid an escalating trade conflict, activists in the U.S. and China must tackle a range of pressing social, political and ecological issues.
VERSO LOFT
20 Jay St., Suite 1010, Bklyn

TELL YOUR PALS:

I saw the best minds of my generation... reading poems on New Year's day at St. Mark's.

IN THIS ISSUE

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Amazon warehouse employees have to work faster than ever to keep up with demand.

THE NEWS IN BRIEF, P5

NYC's declining eviction rates, Cuomo's phony campaign finance scheme, CUNY adjuncts get a big raise, hemp industry gets lit.

BUSHWICK HIGHRISES? P6

Plans to upzone the rapidly gentrifying Brooklyn neighborhood have locals outraged.

STAY WARM & TOASTY, P7

Keep temperatures high and your home energy bills low this winter.

WORD ON THE STREET, P8

A look at the people power that spreads this newspaper far and wide.

BROKEN WINDOWS UNDERGROUND, P10

With so many subway cops behaving badly, we ask why are there so many down there to begin with?

WHAT IF THE SUBWAY WERE FREE?, P12

Instead of busting churro ladies and beating up kids, we can tax the rich.

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Michael Bloomberg wants to do to America what he tried to do to NYC — turn it into a racist mecca for the rich.

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The Sanders campaign is carrying forward Dr. King's vision of racial and economic justice.

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How a racist, far right-wing clique ousted Evo Morales and seized control of Bolivia.

NAZI HIPSTERS, P19

Europe's identitarians: they're young, they're fashionable, they're proto-fascists.

BEATING BACK HITLER'S HOARDS, P20

Vasily Grossman's epic novel of the Battle of Stalingrad is published in U.S. for first time.

THE YEAR'S BEST MUSIC, P21

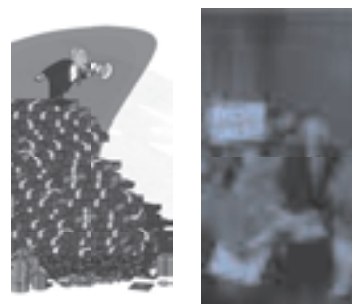
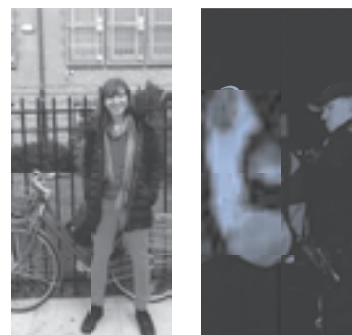
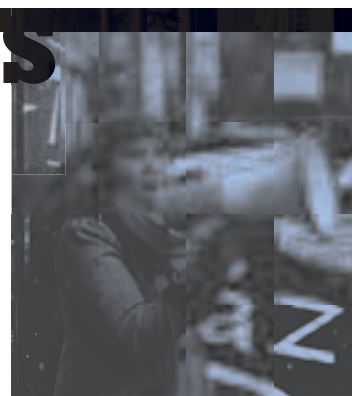
Check out the upstarts and boundary-pushers who made our list.

SHIFTING THE LENS, P22

Lewis Wallace was fired from NPR for lacking objectivity. Who decides what that is exactly?

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P23

Indy advice columnist Rev. Billy on finding your inner power and spanking your ex.





SUE BRISK

AMAZON'S SCROOGE

WAREHOUSE WORKERS ENDURE HOLIDAY SEASON SPEEDUP, LONG HOURS

BY PETER RUGH

WORKER DEMANDS:

A Cyber-Monday protest outside Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos's \$80 million home.

Awh, the holiday season. The lights, the snow, the eggnog... Better make it a double for workers at Amazon's "fulfillment centers" across the globe. They're forced to work long hours with scant breaks and the seasonal shopping frenzy that has ensued means they have to work even faster for their boss, CEO Jeff Bezos, the second richest man on Earth and perhaps its biggest Scrooge.

"It's not okay for people to be treated like this," said Hiba Aly, a former employee at an Amazon warehouse in Staten Island, speaking at a rally outside of Bezos' \$80 million Park Row penthouse on Dec. 2. "People should not be quiet about this. Jeff Bezos is a freaking billionaire."

The protest, at which hundreds of petitions calling on Bezos and company to improve working conditions were dropped off at his swanky residence, was put together as part of a broader pushback against Amazon, its unethical business practices and the threat it poses to local democracies. Organizations focused

Continued on page 17

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PSC/FACEBOOK

BRIEFING ROOM

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

EVICCTIONS DROP UNDER NEW RENT LAWS

The number of eviction cases filed in New York City plummeted after new tenant protection laws went into effect last June, the *Wall Street Journal* reported Nov. 26. Based on Housing Court data it analyzed, the number of new eviction cases for nonpayment of rent in the roughly four months after Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the law June 14 was more than 35,000 less than those filed during the same period in 2018 — a drop of 46 percent. Massimo D'Angelo, a lawyer who represents large landlords, described the effects as “like an earthquake in Housing Court.” “The incentive for landlords to get rid of tenants is gone,” said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D-Manhattan). The new law, the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, eliminated owners’ ability to deregulate vacant apartments once the rent got high enough. Judith Goldiner of the Legal Aid Society also credited the city’s program that helps provide lawyers for low-income tenants facing eviction.

HISTORIC GAINS FOR CUNY ADJUNCTS IN NEW CONTRACT

City University of New York faculty and staff overwhelmingly ratified a 5¼-year contract that will give adjunct professors massive raises, the Professional Staff Congress union announced Dec. 11. The deal, retroactive to December 2017, will increase salaries across the board by 2 percent a year and raise starting pay for adjuncts by up to 71 percent, from the current minimum of \$3,222 for a three-credit course to \$5,500 in 2022. In what the PSC called its highest turnout ever in a ratification vote, 86 percent of the 16,000 members who cast ballots voted yes. The main dissent came from graduate assistants, who voted no by a 3-to-1 margin. Claire Cahen, a graduate student and adjunct who was part of a group demanding a strike if adjuncts didn’t get a \$7,000 minimum, told *LaborPress* in October that the deal “would still put adjuncts below the poverty line.” “Ratification does not mean that this contract resolves every labor issue PSC members face at CUNY or that it alone can fix CUNY’s austerity

budget,” union President Barbara Bowen wrote in a message to members announcing the agreement.

NY TARGETS THIRD PARTIES

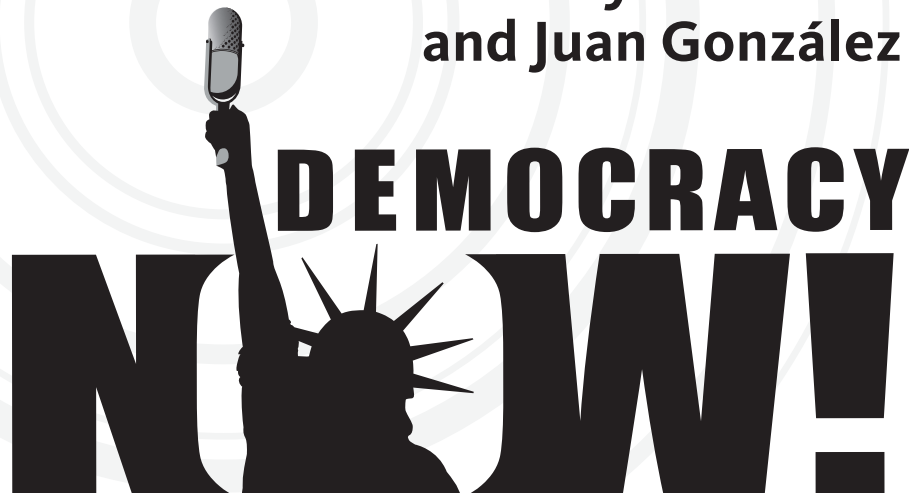
A proposal announced Nov. 25 by a state campaign-finance commission would likely knock all of New York’s third parties except the Conservatives off the 2022 state ballot. The panel, appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, recommended raising the number of votes parties need to keep their lines on the ballot from 50,000 in the previous gubernatorial election to 2 percent of the total votes in the 2020 presidential election, likely at least 130,000. Those that failed to garner that many would have to mount petition campaigns for every candidate they run. The move is widely seen as Cuomo’s revenge on the Working Families Party, which endorsed his 2018 primary opponent Cynthia Nixon as well as challengers to Democratic state Senators whose alliance with Republicans had enabled the governor to block or weaken bills such as strengthening rent regulations or legalizing medical marijuana. The proposal will become law unless the state legislature holds a special session to reject it.

HEMP, HEMP HOORAY

New York State will begin regulating hemp-extract manufacturing under a bill signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo Dec. 9. The measure requires growers, processors, and retailers to get state licenses, and sets guidelines for testing and labeling products. However, it does not specify whether cannabidiol (CBD), the most widely used extract, can be legally added to food or beverages. Hemp, the non-psychoactive breed of cannabis, was removed from the federal Controlled Substances Act’s prohibitions last year, and New York now has more than 400 licensed farmers and about 100 extract processors.

CUNY CONTRACT: Members of the Professional Staff Congress rally for higher pay for part-time faculty members at the City University of New York.

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



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Take 50% OFF all Haymarket Books through Sunday, January 5th! Plus get a FREE Ebook with every book purchase and FREE shipping on orders over \$25.

The Combahee River Collective, a trailblazing group of radical Black feminists, was one of the most important organizations to develop out of the antiracist and women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and ’70s. In this collection of interviews edited by Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, founding members of the organization and contemporary activists reflect on the legacy of its contributions to Black feminism and its impact on today’s struggles.



Featuring
Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith
Demita Frazier, Alicia Garza
and Barbara Ransby

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AWEN FILMS

HIGH RISES IN BUSHWICK?

CITY'S REZONING SCHEME IGNORES PREVIOUS COMMUNITY PLANS

BY CHELSEY SANCHEZ

Time stops at Pati Rodriguez's childhood home in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood. Three generations of her family — her parents, her and her sister, her daughter and her nephew — drift through four floors of the house, where the crown molding is carved with floral motifs and the stairs squeak heartily when stepped upon. Their residence is a rare case of New Yorker homeownership, and a remnant of the Bushwick that is becoming extinct.

Outside, time tumbles into the sort of future where cartoonish murals unfurl onto brick walls like grunge harbingers of inescapable change. Blocks away, on Jefferson Avenue, or what Rodriguez calls the “ground zero for gentrification in Bushwick,” warehouses melt into noodle shops or yoga studios or vintage stores. Her childhood friends, some of whom have long moved to more affordable pastures in places like Pennsylvania or Florida, have been replaced by young professionals, the kind who wear Carhartt to the office rather than a construction site.

“Obviously, if I didn't have this house, I would've been displaced,” Rodriguez says.

The kind of home that Rodriguez and her family have staked out for themselves in the heart of a changing Bushwick is what she and other organizers from *Mi Casa No Es Su Casa* are fighting for. The political art collective formed in 2015, creating Christmas light signs that illuminated messages like “GENTRIFICATION IN PROCESS” and “NOT 4 SALE.” One of these signs is fastened to the wall near Rodriguez's front door.

“A lot of the celebration of gentrification happened when a lot of those murals went up, which was kind of also why *Mi Casa* used art in the first place, to fight back, because art was being weaponized against the communities here,” says Rodriguez. She has lived in the area since she was 8 years old. Her parents immigrated to Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood from Ecuador when she was an infant.

In many ways, Bushwick is the perfect poster child for gentrification in New York City. Data from the real-estate site Trulia found that the price of living there increased more than any other neighborhood in the city from 2008 to 2018. Data compiled by the city supports that finding: From 2000 to 2016, rent in Bushwick increased by 60 percent, nearly twice as much as in Brooklyn (38 percent) and the city overall (32 percent).

The city's supposed salve for this crisis is a proposal dubbed the Bushwick Neighborhood Plan, which dangles promises of affordable housing and economic development. It builds off the Bushwick Community Plan, a 2014 initiative that involved local City Councilmembers Antonio

Reynoso and Rafael Espinal, as well as a steering committee made up of community board members, Bushwick residents, and representatives from various local organizations.

The Bushwick Neighborhood Plan, as presented by the Department of City Planning in “draft scope” form in June, would rezone 300 blocks to allow buildings as high as 16 stories along busy thoroughfares like Broadway and Myrtle Avenue, where the original plan called for lower density. Reynoso and Espinal have endorsed it.

If the rezoning is approved, the DCP projects an increase of nearly 18,000 new residents and 6,000 jobs in Bushwick over the next decade. DCP also estimates the creation of about 6,000 new residential units, with about 2,000 of those slated as “affordable.”

Mi Casa responded to the rezoning proposal by disrupting DCP meetings, holding rallies and town halls, projecting guerilla art onto city buildings, and collecting over 800 signatures on an online petition that calls for the proposal to be scrapped in favor of “a people-led plan.”

“We already knew the rezoning process in and of itself—it takes away power from the community,” Rodriguez says. “These politicians come in saying a plan with DCP will give more affordable housing, but affordable to who? It's not affordable to those who already live here. So, who do they want to build all these buildings for?”

“The definitions of ‘affordability’ allow those new units that are called affordable to go up to two times the average rent in New York City,” says Tom Angotti, professor emeritus of Urban Policy and Planning at Hunter College and the Graduate Center. “The way it's calculated, I call it a Trojan horse. It's a way to sell the rezoning to people who are concerned about gentrification and displacement.”

Upzoning that increases the potential for development very often “puts gentrification on steroids,” he adds. “It can multiply the effects of this more gradual process of gentrification and displacement that occurs all the time, always has occurred. And the rezoning can make it much more dramatic.”

It is customary for the City Council to defer to local members on issues of land use in their districts. While Reynoso and Espinal seem to be on track to vote “yes” on the plan, Reynoso has recently indicated a willingness to reconsider. In November, when members from *Mi Casa* interrupted a public forum that the two attended, according to City Limits, Reynoso said, “Right now, I want to do exactly what the community wants, the city will not do it. They are going to just shut [the rezoning] down. And I am OK with that too, but I am going to do what the community wants, and if you don't play ball with them — they are just going to walk away.”

For Cynthia Tobar, founder of the oral-history project “Cities for People, Not for Profit,” the new plan and the way it was developed are too flawed for any compromises to help.

“I have a very hard time wrapping my mind around negotiating and compromising on a plan that didn't even take the community's intentions to heart from the very beginning, anyway,” Tobar says. “It's a community plan made by people who aren't representative of the community.” Recommendations made in the original Bushwick Com-

munity Plan were largely ignored or adjusted, she adds.

Tobar owns her house in Bushwick, but the creeping gentrification has encroached on her too. “The moment I was in my home for about a year or two, I started getting all these mailings,” she says, from real-estate developers and speculators attempting to purchase her house. Over the past three years, they've begun calling her cell phone.

“They call you at all sorts of times throughout the day, asking you whether you want to sell your home,” she says. “And, you're like, ‘No! Stop calling me!’”

The Bushwick Neighborhood Plan will next go through the lengthy Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), in which local community boards make recommendations and the City Council has final approval. *Mi Casa* and other Bushwick residents are revving up for a fight.

“People who are on the frontlines of this fight are usually people who are not getting paid, who are working class, too. And they're fighting just out of necessity,” Rodriguez says. “Because that's it. We've got nothing else to lose.”

ARTS AND ACTION: Members of *Mi Casa No Es Su Casa* urge their local city councilmembers to reject a plan to rezone a 300-block area of Bushwick.

THE BATTLE FOR NEW YORK

A series of mini-documentaries on the city's housing crisis and the people at the center of the struggle.

Ep. 6 - Battle for Bushwick

A grassroots collective deploys art and direct actions to fight the City's proposed rezoning plan for Bushwick.



WATCH NOW

independent.org/section/video/the-battle-for-new-york

HOUSING



GARY MARTIN

HOME HEATING TIPS

HOW TO STAY WARM THIS WINTER WHILE USING LESS ENERGY

BY JENNY BLAIR

It's cold out, and sometimes it's cold inside, too. You know you should wear layers, block drafts, service the boiler, yadda, yadda, yadda. But how else can you keep warm this winter?

First, if you're a renter, know your rights. In New York City, landlords must provide hot water year-round and heat during "heat season," October 1 through May 31. When it's below 55 degrees outside, the indoor temperature has to be at least 68 degrees between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. At night, no matter the temperature outdoors, indoor temperatures must be at least 62 degrees. Tenants can report heat and hot water violations to 311.

Need help paying heating bills? The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) assists some low-income people with utilities, as well as helping with emergency heating situations. Eligible homeowners can also apply to the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement program. Call 311 or 800-692-0557 to learn more. The website needhelppayingbills.com has information about other assistance options. Search for New York under "State & local aid programs."

Meanwhile, whatever your situation, here are some tips for keeping warm that you might not have already heard a thousand times.

BATHS Do you take them? If so, when you're done, let it cool before you drain it. You might as well harvest what's left of that heat.

REFLECTORS Aluminum foil attached shiny-side-out to the wall behind a pipe or radiator can help reflect heat back into the room.

SHADES During the day, especially if it's sunny, open those curtains or shades and let in all that free solar energy. Once the sun goes down, close them to trap heat inside. Some shades are better insulators than others, so if it's in your budget, consider investing in good ones or making some out of, say, an army blanket. You can also hang a blanket on a spring rod or pin

a piece of thick cloth invisibly to the backs of your existing curtains.

INSULATE WINDOWS Window insulator kits are available at hardware stores. Common Sense Home suggests duct-taping a plastic shower curtain to a window frame. Another

option: putting bubble wrap over at least some of your windows, then covering the whole thing with clear plastic. Seal around the edges with tape or silicone. It's ugly, but it can help.

LAP RUGS Cold thighs feel better covered up. Put a throw on your lap. When you're out and about, if you're so inclined, there are quilted winter skirts that can feel toasty worn over pants.

RUGS Unroll one or three. A lot of heat escapes through floors.

RADIATORS Let them breathe! Don't put furniture in front of them.

CEILING FANS If you have the kind that can run in reverse, it can push warm air accumulating near the ceiling back down again.

CRACKS Plug them relentlessly. Door sweeps are cheap, or stick a snaky draft catcher along the bottom of the door. Window edges are notoriously drafty.

WALLS A cold wall is ushering heat out of the room. Hanging tapestries or blankets on the walls can cut down on that heat loss.

HUMIDIFICATION Humid air feels warmer. Consider leaving the bathroom door open as you shower, or use a (clean!) humidifier. The Mayo Clinic recommends 30 percent to 50 percent humidity levels for optimal health.

COOKIES Bake, cook and let that heat-leaking oven or range make your house a little toastier. Note, though, that it can be dangerous to leave the oven door open.

GREENHOUSE The Brooklyn Botanic Garden offers free admission Tuesday through Friday during December, January and February. Their Aquatic House gives you the experience of tropical heat sinking into your bones.

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND

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WORD ON THE STREET

MEET SOME OF THE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE HELPING THE INDY GROW AND FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

The *Indy* has placed scores of outdoor news boxes around the city over the past three years and our monthly circulation has climbed to over 40,000 papers a month. This would not be possible without a network of neighborhood-based volunteers who maintain our boxes and find new venues for the paper. Here are some of their stories

To find out how you can help, email contact@indy-independent.org or call 212-904-1282. Or, grab a batch from your nearest Indy street box and start sharing the paper with friends, neighbors and co-workers.

AMANDA VENDER Jackson Heights

I'm an Adopt-a-Box volunteer because it's a simple way I can contribute to independent journalism in my community where I work as a public school teacher. The boxes in my neighborhood are located in areas I often pass by: the library and the post office. I check them and make sure they look attractive and clean, and that they're filled only with Indys. If there's an issue of special importance to my community such as the election campaigns of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez or Tiffany Cabán, I help get extra bundles out in the neighborhood.

Like so much of New York City, mine is a neighborhood of working people and many immigrants. The *Indy* is the paper that speaks to our issues without corporate influence. The *Indy* validates the experiences of working people and contributes to building a grassroots movement for social justice.

If you walk or bike in your neighborhood, please consider becoming an Adopt-a-Box volunteer so that more people have free access to the *Indy*.

SAUL NIEVES Sunset Park

I was active in the Puerto Rican left before I moved to New York in 1978. Once here, myself and nine others started a neighborhood organization on the south side of Williamsburg. We published our own newspaper, *El Pitrre*. It was a 16-page monthly that covered local struggles. It also had a section in every issue on Puerto Rican history. We printed 3,000-4,000 copies per issue and would go through the neighborhood handing papers out to people on the main commercial strips. We also had people would come from El Barrio and the South Bronx and take papers back to their communities.

Before I retired, I was an organizer and political operative for the 32 BJ SEIU union for many years. About three years ago I saw a feature about the *Indy*'s Adopt-a-Box program in the paper, I decided to get involved too. I watch over the box at the 45th Street R train stop. People want something to read in the morning when they are on the train and the *Indy* is the only paper in New York providing in-depth information you won't see in the mainstream media about struggles that people are going through.

I also take 130 papers every month to the 32 BJ headquarters in Chelsea. I go from department to department and give copies out one at a time to staffers

at their desks. If I leave a paper out and someone else takes it, they will ask me the next time, "Where was my paper?"

ANN SCHNEIDER Fort Greene

I used to subscribe to the old (U.S.) *Guardian* newspaper, a radical newsweekly that folded in the early 1990s. It taught me a whole lot about the world. These

days, I consider *The Independent* to be essential reading. I went to law school because I wanted to work for social justice. But there's only so much you can do as a lawyer. You have to build a mass movement.

I have lived in Fort Greene for about 30 years, long before it was described as a "good neighborhood." Now I work on Wall Street. Not in the financial industry. Rather in a legal services office. I enjoy seeing "my" box empty out gradually every month as readers take the paper. It's nice to know capitalism has its discontents!

I find other ways to get the paper out as well. I usually bring copies to National Lawyers Guild meetings where they are very well-received and to meetings of feminist groups I am active in. I also make a point of dropping off a number of copies in the jury room of the Kings County Supreme Court building on days when hundreds of people are called in for questioning to see if they would qualify to serve on a jury. There are a lot of bored and unhappy people there, so why not give them a chance to read a free paper for free people!

NORM SCOTT The Rockaways

I grew up in East New York, Brooklyn, and became an elementary public school teacher in 1967 solely due to the draft deferment but ended up hooked on teaching. I became politicized by what I saw happening educationally and politically in the school district in Williamsburg which was a poor neighborhood. The kids were getting screwed by the way the school system was being run. I supported the teachers union strikes in my first two years but in following years thought the union should fight harder for the schools. I became active in several opposition caucuses inside the union to try and move it in a more progressive direction. In 1997, I started a newspaper called *Education Notes* that provided news and critical analysis about what was happening in the schools as well as the union. At one point we were distributing as many as 20,000 copies per issue to teachers at their schools.

People's inboxes are bombarded with emails. A hard copy newspaper is still the best way to reach people. I began following the *Indy* more closely in 2009-2010 when it covered Bloomberg's closing of dozens of public schools in a way that no other publication did. The *Indy*'s non-sectarian, reality-based leftism is something I feel comfortable with.

I enjoy helping the paper spread its roots to new places, especially public libraries where most librarians I've talked to welcome the paper. In the past year, I've started leaving stacks of the *Indy* at three libraries in the Rockaways and the library in Broad Channel. I've also gotten the *Indy* into the new library in Hunters Point, a couple of libraries on the east side of Manhattan and the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. I've also handed it out at the UFT delegate assembly. If more people become involved, I think we could get the *Indy* into almost every public library in the city.

THE INDYPENDENT

***The Independent* is an absolutely unique voice in New York City — providing bold, original reporting and analysis of struggles for justice here in the City and around the world.**

More than “a free paper for free people,” *The Indy* is a community of tens of thousands of readers who pick up the paper every month from our red-and-white street boxes, at any one of more than 70 public libraries where the paper is carried, at independent bookstores, cafes, laundromats, social movement centers, or read it online at independent.org.

Now imagine a New York where there is no *Indy*.

It's a scary thought, but we need to raise \$40,000 in our annual year-end fund drive. Otherwise, we will have to start 2020 by cutting back on everything we're doing at just the moment when fiercely independent journalism is needed more than ever.

Our readers are our single largest source of financial support. We can't do this without you. When you make a gift, **YOU** refill those street boxes. **YOU** strengthen this community and affirm your belief in its social justice goals and values. **YOU** help bring those values to other New Yorkers across the city.

To keep the *Indy* going strong, please give today. Whether you can give \$27, \$50, \$100, \$250, \$1000 or more, it all helps.

In Solidarity,
THE INDYPENDENT STAFF & VOLUNTEERS



With a gift of \$50 or more or a recurring monthly donation of \$5 or more, you will be eligible to receive our beautiful, first-ever *Indy* tote bag. Just go to independent.org/donate to contribute!

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SUE BRISK

POLICE WON'T FIX THE SUBWAY

POLICING IS WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN'T OR WON'T FIX PROBLEMS EQUITABLY

BY ANDY BATTLE

The subway. Fares go up but service gets worse. Trains get dirtier and more crowded. Platforms and car seats double as homeless shelters, hopelessly unequipped for the task. The solution, according to Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the MTA, is more police.

Can police lower the fare, making it possible for people who need the system to use it? Can police run more trains, more buses, so that it doesn't take hours to reach our destinations? Can the police give that man a coat, some food, a room to live in? Will police clean the puke off that bench?

It has become clear what police do. They intimidate, bully, harass. They target people of color for special abuse. They stare at riders with dull, detached eyes. They collect overtime. Their stretches of boredom are punctuated by outbursts of aggression, of brutality. A teenager is tased over a \$2.75 fare. A homeless man is accosted, thrown out of the station. It's 30 degrees outside. Where is he supposed to go?

The combative atmosphere of late isn't new. Broken windows, quality of life, zero tolerance — whatever you want to call the idea that police need to step in, always and everywhere, to protect the status quo — was pioneered on the subways of New York. In 1994, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani hired William Bratton as police commissioner. Bratton had made his bones on the trains, where, as head of the then-separate Transit Police, he engineered a war against fare-beaters and the homeless. As commissioner, Bratton took the "quality of life" concept citywide, making the streets safe for the rich and the square. If large parts of New York now feel like a suburb, we can thank the twin forces of policing and real-estate development, along with their allies in the city's political class.

move out to the suburbs while trapping people of color in a deteriorating city.

To break its death spiral, New York needed to attract investment. It needed people with money. But rich people tend to be a bit — how can we put it? — defensive. They don't like it when the poor are assertive, are in your face, are even in sight. And they don't like paying the taxes required to alleviate poverty. For a political class that

WILL POLICE CLEAN THE PUKE OFF THAT BENCH?

needs the rich but can't or won't address what makes people poor, the next best thing is to make the poor disappear. This is where the police come in. Rather than address the underlying causes of the high crime rates of the 1980s, the city responded with the only public safety strategy it's ever willing to entertain — more policing. When the cops cart off people who might rattle a tourist's delicate nerves, they are guarding the golden goose, the secret to the city's so-called revival.

Today's New York feels richer than its counterpart of 30 years ago. Scratch the surface, though, and the veneer chips away. The flipside of the skyrocketing real-estate prices that "rescued" the city is the surge in homelessness all around us. Our public housing, once the best in the nation, is crumbling and decrepit. Schools are brutally segregated by race and class. One in 10 public school students is homeless. The formal unemployment rate is low, but what that doesn't tell you is that most of the jobs on offer stink, and many people have given up on looking for work altogether. The city looks rich to the uninitiated. But those who live here know.

Why are police the solution? Because policing is what you do when you can't or won't fix problems equitably. It is what you do when you want to protect the prerogatives

of the rich more than you want to address the needs of ordinary people. Policing is what you do when white supremacy is not that big a deal to you. Police don't solve problems — they just move them around. Out of sight, out of mind. Can they stay out of sight forever?

By the MTA's own admission, the \$250 million it plans to dole out for new cops on the subway over the next four years will cost more than it will recoup in lost fares. The Riders Alliance, which advocates for a more equitable transit system, estimates that all the money spent on new cops could instead increase midday and weekend service by 15 percent.

The MTA's plan seems irrational, but it's not. It's not about the money — it's about the principle. Want to get to work? You must pay. See your friends? You must pay. Want to get an education? You must pay. If you must pay, you must work. If you must work, you must accept what's on offer, no matter how ill-paid, stressful, humiliating. This schema protects the privileges of people who already have money, for whom this system works. The job of the cops is to guard this system, and they will use violence to do it. After all, it's a slippery slope. If you didn't have to pay for the subway, what else might you not have to pay for?

So what do we do now? Organize. We need fewer police, with fewer weapons and more curbs on their power. We need to replace cops with actual solutions to our problems — housing, health care, recreation, the chance to make a difference. We need a transit system that works for everyone, including the impoverished and the disabled. That means freezing the fare, then lowering it, then eliminating it.

How do we get there? The only counter to the power of money is the power of numbers. Imagine a riders' organization that anyone can join — that has real resources and real muscle. Imagine riders working together with transit workers — for a living wage and a well-oiled system. Together, we will be tough to stop. Together, we will no longer have to accept the rule of the police, the rule of the rich. We'll have the rule of the people — all of the people.

CRACKDOWN:
58 people were arrested during a Nov. 22 protest in Harlem against the NYPD's abusive policing of the subway.

EARTH RIOT

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in the new year
**LET THERE BE
HOPE AND SOLIDARITY**

1900
DECEMBER 20 @ 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM
MOVIE | Sliding Scale
Two boys are born the same day, January 1, 1900, on the same Italian estate—one the grandson of a noble peasant, the other the grandson of a weak-willed aristocrat. One will grow into a rabble-rousing Communist, leading his extended family through strikes and the upheaval of Mussolini's rise; the other will grow into an ineffectual fop who sits on his hands as the fascists take over.

**SEMINAR: RISING INEQUALITY
IN SOUTH ASIA**
JANUARY 7, 2020 @ 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
FREE | Professor: Sheetal Chhabria
Day 1 Colonial Famines, Caste, and Impoverishment
Day 2 The Rise and Fall of the Left in India's 20th Century
Day 3 Postcolonial Failures & Neocolonialism
Day 4 Privatization & the Present

DECEMBER 21 @ 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
**DREAM CATCHER POETICS: A
DREAM MANIFESTATION POETRY
WORKSHOP**
This workshop will honor dreams silenced and deferred. Participants will transfer the nightly dreams swinging above their heads into reality in the morning. Through the work of Carolyn Malachi and Langston Hughes we will reawaken our imagination and hone into realizing our dreams.
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FREE THE SUBWAY

SUBWAY FARES ARE A REGRESSIVE TAX ON NYC'S WORKING CLASS. MAKE THE RICH PAY FOR A MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM FREE TO ALL.

BY INDEPENDENT EDITORS

Imagine a transit system where there are no turnstiles, where the police presence is minimal because cops aren't lurking around to enforce fares. Picture a subway and bus network that is free, open and functional because those who profit most from it pay for it.

Lawmakers in Kansas City, Missouri took a step in just this direction earlier in December, passing a bill that directed the city's manager to set aside \$8 million a year to cover the fare of \$1.50 for every rider. It is expected to save frequent bus users in the city of 490,000 people about \$1,000 a year.

Tweeting his admiration, New York City Councilmember Brad Lander (D-Park Slope) called the step "visionary," adding in parentheses that it "might take NYC a while, but this really is where we all need to aim."

The push for free mass transit is part of a large democratic socialist (or social democratic) resurgence — Medicare for All, free public college, a Green New Deal — in which demands for free, universally available public goods are rising and finding receptive ears.

Here in New York, we already have an example of free public transit: the Staten Island Ferry. In 1997, then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani lifted the ferry's already minimal 50-cent charge as a gesture of gratitude to the city's only majority-white borough, whose voters had helped nudge him to a narrow victory four years earlier.

Then there is the new network of ferries that our current mayor has championed. Those aren't free, but are heavily subsidized. While riders pay \$2.75, the cost of a subway or bus trip, the Citizens Budget Commission found that the city is subsidizing the boats to the tune of \$10.73 a ride. It also warned that subsidies could stretch as high as \$24 per passenger along planned future routes.

For an example of public dollars being put to a bit more practical use, there's the Fair Fares program. It provides half-price MetroCards to New Yorkers living at or below the federal poverty line. Yet strict and arbitrary requirements during the initial rollout period, such as a mandate that beneficiaries must have a job, have meant that many riders have not been able to access the program. It's expanding this fall and winter to include public-housing residents and City University of New York students who are veterans.

Some Councilmembers want it to go even further. In November, Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo (D-Crown Heights) and 24 colleagues sent a letter to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) calling on it to expand antipoverty programs like Fair Fares rather than hiring more police.

"These programs aim to alleviate the economic barriers present for many New Yorkers," they wrote. That, they said, will ultimately "deter fare evasion."

Meanwhile, Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) of Brooklyn

has introduced a bill that would establish a \$1 billion federal grant program that would provide free or low-cost transit rides for those living below 300 percent of the poverty line (about \$37,000 a year for a single person), as well as those who are veterans, elderly or disabled.

But why not go all the way? Why not make the subway and buses free for all? What if there is no fare evasion to deter because there is no fare?

"We've had the subway for well over a century, and [New York] has grown up around it," says Daniel Pearlstein of the Riders Alliance, a straphanger advocacy group. "We're utterly dependent on it. That's clear. It's a bit like asking, 'What's the value of a water system? What's the value of a school system? What's the value of police and fire protection?' These are things we absolutely need, and we absolutely need to pay for them."

The question is who? And how much? Firefighters don't demand \$2.75 before they extinguish burning homes. Teachers don't collect \$2.75 from their pupils before they're admitted into their classrooms each morning. One way of looking at the MTA's fare is as a regressive tax that hits those who can least afford it the hardest. Rider swipes cover about 40 percent of the MTA's annual operating budget, which comes to nearly \$18 billion in 2020. Taxes and subsidies make up the bulk of the rest, and could make up much more. One-sixth of the authority's operating budget goes to pay off past debts owed to bondholders. Instead of giving money to Wall Street, the MTA could take money from it.

All budgets are a statement of priorities. Here are several other ways the MTA could reorder its priorities:

- Put a halt to boondoggles like the Second Avenue subway project, which cost a princely sum but are of little use to most commuters. Building the new Second Avenue line from 63rd Street to 96th Street cost more than \$4 billion. A planned extension to 125th Street by 2029 is projected to cost \$6 billion — and the digging hasn't even begun.
- Expand dedicated bus lanes, for a fraction of the cost of building new underground lines. This will make it easier to connect people across the outer boroughs, where a lack of mass-transit options is a chronic problem.
- Ensure that spending on vitally important capital programs such as updating the subway system's archaic signal system, doesn't spiral out of control.
- Scrap Gov. Andrew Cuomo's plan to hire an additional 500 subway police officers at a cost



of more than a billion dollars over the next 10 years, according to the conservative Empire Center. That's a lot of dough to spend on an affirmative action program for bullies.

The subway is New York's economic engine. The companies and individuals who benefit from it would grumble at paying more in taxes to support it, but without it their businesses can't function. A 2017 report by city Comptroller Scott Stringer — produced in a year when disinvestment from Albany had driven the subway to reach its lowest point of functionality since the early 1980s — estimated that mounting MTA delays were costing the city as much as \$389 million in lost productivity annually.

Subways and buses deliver workers to their employers day in and day out. Employers could contribute more, through a payroll tax. An employee payroll tax where everyone is paying in to the MTA, with high earners paying more and everyone having the freedom to take the subway, would also help cover the cost. Low-income workers would be putting in something, but their rides would be heavily subsidized by the city's well-heeled.

Then of course there's the real-estate industry. Wherever the subway goes, property values are higher.

A state Senate bill that would have levied an annual tax on second homes worth more than \$5 million in order to help fund the subway began to gather steam in Albany last March. It had been collecting dust since 2014, when Sen. Brad Hoylman (D-Manhattan) first introduced it. But the widely publicized \$238 million purchase of a pied-à-terre Manhattan penthouse by hedge-fund magnate Ken Griffin lent the bill momentum. The home was officially valued at \$9 million, so Griffin could expect to pay barely more than \$500,000 a year in property taxes.

Amid budget negotiations, Gov. Cuomo, who had previously opposed new taxes to raise funds for the MTA (while also neglecting to fully fund it), said the pied-à-terre tax was the only new money he and other lawmakers had agreed upon. The revenue stream would have allowed the city to raise an additional \$9 billion in bonds, he estimated. Comptroller Stringer predicted it would bring a minimum of \$650 million a year in transit investment. Then the real-estate lobby stepped in. Lawmakers buckled. By the end of March the tax had been whittled down to a one-time surcharge on the purchase of multimillion-dollar second homes.

The industry had flexed its muscle, but later that spring, it

was unable to stop the passage of sweeping housing-law reforms that expanded the state's rent regulations. Tenant activists repeatedly traveled to Albany by the busload to advocate for changes to the state's housing statutes that included measures to prevent landlords from converting affordable housing to market rate.

Gov. Cuomo appoints the majority of the MTA's board and dominates its affairs, to the detriment of straphangers. Breaking up the MTA and putting the city's subways and buses under local democratic control — with the necessary taxing authority also granted to the city — would be the fastest way to transform our mass transit system. But as that is not currently in the offing, the transit-justice movement can learn a lot from tenant advocates' success last spring, says Pearlstein.

"We need to make the challenges of our transit system visible enough that they get high enough on the agenda of the leaders in Albany that they make the crucial decisions about who pays and how much," he said, noting that transit activists had some success with this as they pushed for lawmakers to approve congestion-pricing legislation last year that is projected to direct an estimated \$5 billion a year toward the MTA's capital budget once it is implemented in 2021.

"Nobody thought congestion pricing could pass a few years back," Pearlstein says. "But it passed in significant part because riders got hurt. People who didn't believe they represented subway riders found out they represented lots of subway riders and they needed it fixed."

SHOULD THE SUBWAY BE FREE?

JESSICA Queens

"That's great if it could actually happen. I highly doubt it will though. It's a big business for the city. Why would they not try to capitalize on that? They should try to tax Wall Street for it, but I don't think that would happen."

KATARINA Bed-Stuy

"Free? That would be amazing but I would wonder where the money would come from. I'm all for taxing the rich to pay for public transport. It sounds like an interesting experiment. I don't know how it would go over but it would equalize the playing ground so all people can get from point A to point B."

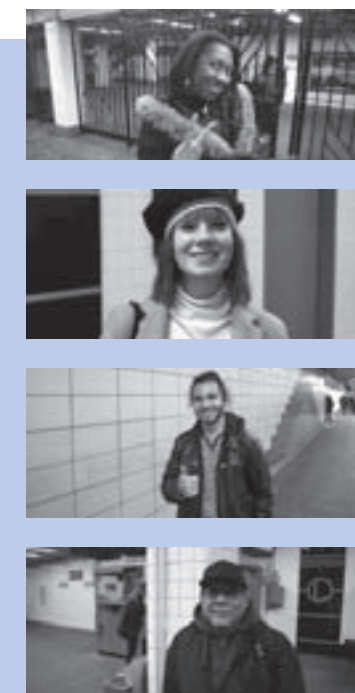
SIMON Midwood-Flatbush

"I think a price cut of at least 30–40 percent is fair. A lot of stuff is broken, a lot of stuff is molding, there are rats everywhere. If they can get money from fares they should take it. Free? Nah, but price cut, definitely."

WALTER Richmond Hill

"That'd be great. A lot of communities cannot afford it. Service might drop off if everyone's riding for free, but it'd be worth it."

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BLOOMBERG IS BACK

BUT ARE UNINSPIRING CENTRISTS LIKE HIM REALLY MORE ELECTABLE?

BY DANNY KATCH

Centrists are having a moment. After the initial months of the primary race were dominated by the proposals of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren for Medicare for All, a Green New Deal, and other transformative policies, a concerted push-back seems to be having an effect. Joe Biden maintains a solid national lead over Sanders, Pete Buttigieg has risen at Warren's expense after abruptly shifting his campaign into the center lane, and Michael Bloomberg has entered the race with a massive TV ad campaign pitching the billionaire as the ultimate can-do pragmatist.

Unfortunately, the goal in primary season is to accumulate votes, not candidates, and the entrance of Bloomberg, as well as Deval Patrick, into a field already crowded with other moderates is a sign of the continuing angst among party donors and insiders that they have yet to find a white knight (emphasis on white) who can rally voters away from dangerous left populism.

They have good reason to be nervous. Biden's popularity is an emperor's new clothes situation that can end the moment it becomes apparent that nobody actually favors him but were only trying to get behind the candidate they thought other people wanted. Buttigieg's main accomplishments are being the mayor of a small city whose Black residents don't like him and work for a global consulting firm that he says he can't discuss due to non-disclosure agreements. (I can't imagine Trump having anything to say about that.) And nobody should expect the uncharismatic and unpopular Bloomberg to do any better.

So expect complaints to continue about their lack of a dream moderate candidate, in part because those gripes are a useful distraction from the underlying problem that their primary message for the past four decades is out of step with these newly radical times.

Over the long rightward shift in American politics that started in the 1970s, Democrats' presidential candidates were generally chosen on the basis of "electability," which was code for moderate business-friendly politics that would attract wealthy donors and hopefully peel swing voters away from Republicans.

Electability still matters — Democratic voters consistently tell pollsters that their top priority is to find a candidate who will defeat Donald Trump — but the experience of 2016 has challenged the association of electability with centrist in two dramatic ways.

From one end of the spectrum, Bernie Sanders' stunning success as an insurgent primary candidate unearthed the broad desire for wealth redistribution and social democracy among Democratic voters — sentiments that have continued to make themselves felt through the widespread support for policies like the Green New Deal and the election of young socialist women of color into Congress.

From the other end, Trump's polarizing presidency has so successfully cleaved the populace into two camps that traditional assumptions about who can win elections in either party are now questionable at best. Most polls show that Biden, Warren and Sanders have similar numbers in head-to-head polls against Trump, which gives the lie to the notion that Buttigieg, Biden, and Amy Klobuchar are pushing moderation only because that's the best way to win the election. They're pushing back on Medicare and free public college for all not because those ideas can't win but because they can.

Because of the radicalizing left-wing climate inside

the Democratic Party, Biden and Buttigieg have put forward education, health care and climate change proposals that are more progressive than typical centrist candidates — which they use to fend off criticism from the left. But their core messaging is about discrediting the more radical proposals of their rivals with

right-wing talking points about the working class paying for rich kids to go to college and people losing their health coverage through a single payer system.

The electability argument is an attempt at self-fulfilling prophecy — it's not that you don't think radical policies can win it's that you don't want them to win and you argue they can't win to make it less likely they will.

This strategy isn't great for generating popular enthusiasm for moderates. While Sanders and Warren push for easy-to-understand and comprehensive social welfare programs that already exist in many countries, the so-called pragmatists counter with byzantine, means-tested contraptions with enough loopholes to create a dozen new corporate law firms. While the left pitches a vision of a better society for all, Buttigieg and Klobuchar tout themselves as uniquely positioned to appeal to a narrow slice of suburban swing voters.

Add to all this the fact that centrist logic seems to disfavor possibly more dynamic candidates like Kamala Harris and Corey Booker in hopes of winning the tiny racist swing voter bloc, and it's no surprise that moderates are having a hard time finding a candidate to feel inspired about.

But to win the Democratic nomination you don't have to be popular (see: Clinton, Hillary) if you can succeed in discrediting your opponents (see: Trump, Donald). Given that polling shows that attacks within the Democratic Party on Medicare for All might be succeeding in chipping away at the policy's majority support, the centrist strategy might be working after all.

Then there's the ways in which moderates benefit from the structure of the Democratic Party, and its place within an asymmetric two-party system that features only parties of the right and center.

For as much enthusiasm as there is among the base for Sanders and Warren, Democratic voters tell pollsters that they'll vote for any eventual nominee. Among the interesting findings from the recent Blue Wall Voices Project is that a whopping 92% of Democratic voters in the Midwest support a Green New Deal, but only 12% say they won't vote for a nominee who opposes it. For Medicare for All the corresponding numbers are 62% and 5%.

This desire to support anyone who opposes Trump is natural, but it contrasts with Wall Street party donors who are warning that they'll back the Republican if Warren ends up winning (and presumably push for military intervention if Sanders is the nominee). This is the double standard at the heart of a party that shames its left for not sufficiently condemning Ralph Nader and Jill Stein for treason, while prizing donors and swing voters who are willing to support the most bigoted and reactionary president in modern history.

None of this means that it's impossible for Sanders or Warren to win the nomination. But it does mean that if they do, the fight with centrists over Medicare for All, free college and a Green New Deal will only have begun.



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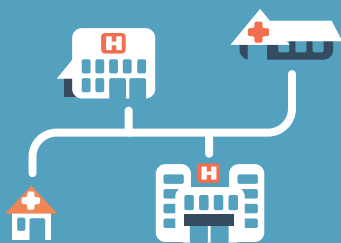
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How insurers undermine existing senior Medicare

Private insurers and hospital systems are advertising their Medicare Advantage plans like crazy. So is the government and so is Congress. 66 Senators signed a letter promoting Medicare Advantage plans. But Medicare Advantage is not Medicare; it's private insurance competing for Medicare dollars, demanding more money, inflating costs to taxpayers. Already 31% of seniors are in Advantage plans. Inevitably denials of care will escalate under Medicare Advantage privatization. With Medicare Advantage seniors could lose many of the protections real public Medicare has provided them.

The fight for Medicare for All right now (eg HR 1384) can protect seniors from losing public Medicare entirely. The choice is clear: an investor-based system now denying care and bankrupting millions or a popular, cost-effective, inclusive public financing system with a proven track record of only 3% overhead.

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BERNIE HAS A DREAM

THAT A MULTI-RACIAL WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT CAN TRANSFORM AMERICA

By Nicholas Powers

“Did you hear about Bernie,” he asked. Bernie? As in Bernie Sanders the presidential candidate? As in the man who just had a heart attack? After he went to the hospital, I blocked him from my mind and looked at America with the jaundiced air of a hospice nurse. Maybe Biden will sing the national anthem as we flee climate change?

“No...” I said. “Never heard of him.”

“Stop it,” my friend said. “Seriously, he’s back and going strong!” He giddily told me of the October 19 rally in Queens. “I heard about this amazing moment. Bernie had everyone look at each other and asked ‘will you fight for them?’”

I stopped pacing my apartment and listened to his voice; it overflowed with hope. I imagined strangers turning to each other, warm open smiles, seeing a new future right there in front of them. Bernie has that effect. He tells you what he has believed for nearly all his life and it lets you believe it to. Hope. Class struggle. Not me. Us. A Green New Deal.

My friends talk about Bernie as if they saw Jesus preaching in the park. A galvanizing faith jumps ear to ear like gospel. I know why we feel the “Bern.” A hunger exists to believe our humanity is stronger than hate, that we can repair the Earth before it is unlivable. The longer he talked, the more obvious it was that this was not just a political revolution, it was a spiritual movement.

PROPHETIC INTEGRATIONISM

It was dark, cold and quiet. New York before dawn is a ghost town. I left to pick up my son and played a video of the rally. The cellphone showed a massive gathering that lifted Bernie signs like ocean waves. “Let me ... let me begin,” he started but they cheered and cheered. Bernie smiled and said, “When I look at this YUGE crowd ... I have no doubt that the political revolution is going to sweep this county.”

I paused it and entered the bodega to get a coffee and sandwich; Muhammad the owner asked what I was listening to. Bernie, I told him. Bernie? Yeah, Bernie, the presidential candidate. He shrugged.

“Muhammad,” I took my coffee. “Did you vote in 2016?”

“Aww no, I don’t bother ... I just,” his mouth puckered. “I just work.”

“Muhammad, that’s how we got Trump,” I pointed at him and smiled angrily. “Ah ha!”

“Ah ha,” he pointed back.

I left and thought, Muhammad is exactly who Bernie wants to vote for him. And so are the Jamaican men unloading food into the deli. And so are the Caribbean nurses and Mexican day workers at the bus stop. And so are the Yemeni bodega owners. And so are the women going to schools. We wake up early for the city, to drive its trains, to clean it, to teach its children, to prep its food and make it run.

I waited at the bus stop and looked back at the bodega. During Obama’s campaigns his sunrise logo was on the window. No Bernie logo. I get it. Bernie, the son of Jewish immigrants whose extended family was murdered by the Nazis, is “white.” He is a senator from a very white state and comes up through the white left. The racial gap prevents some from realizing that he picks up where the Civil Rights Movement ended. And if that was known. And if that was felt. Maybe the political revolution could have a chance.

The bus was late. I called up Jesse Jackson’s 1988 Democratic Convention speech to play alongside Bernie’s 2019 rally. Here were two men, separated by 31 years but connected by the same “dream” that drove Martin Luther King, Jr. to lead a movement against segregation, the Vietnam War and poverty. It is not enough to integrate America. America must be transformed into the “beloved community” MLK spoke of toward the end of his life. Not just for racial minorities. Not just for gays. Not just for women. But for the poor. And workers.

I toggled between Sanders and Jackson. “For 45 years,” Bernie said. “There has been a class war waged against the working families of this country by the billionaire class and corporate elite.” I played Jackson’s speech. “What’s the moral challenge of our day? We have public accommodations. We have the right to vote. We have open housing. What’s the fundamental challenge? Economic violence.”

The bus came and I got on. So did my neighbors, exhausted parents with their exhausted kids, workers with paint-splattered pants, sleepy security guards with backpacks. All slumped in the seats. Here was the daily grind. We lost a bit of ourselves every day. We lost things we could never get back.

I stopped the videos. The bright fluorescents cast our reflections on the windows. It was dark outside. And cold. We were too tired to look up and see what the future was. I played Bernie again.

“We’re going to bring our people together,” he said.

“Black and white, Latino, Asian American and Native American ... gay or straight, male or female, young or old.” The crowd cheered and cheered. On the bus, faces blinked in and out of sleep. Everyone was dreaming their own dreams. He was trying to get us to see his.

THE FAITH OF A MUSTARD SEED

“Harris ended her campaign,” I texted my co-parent.

“Yea Cop-mala Harris is out,” she replied. I knew we were both smiling. Neither of us were feeling her. Neither of us knew anyone who did. Harris, like Cory Booker, like Julian Castro and like Deval Patrick, seemed like an Obama clone 3-D printed in some identity politician factory deep in the bowels of the Democratic Party.

The great winnowing has begun. Who’s next? Buttigieg? Booker? Klobuchar? With each one that falls to the wayside, it’s easier to believe that Bernie can win. Maybe. Just maybe. I wanted to text her these thoughts but our son slept in the carrier on my chest. He was going to day care. I was going to work.

So what if Bernie won? What would that mean? I would feel seen as a worker. I need that. Every day in ways small and great, I’m addressed as a man, as a man of color, as straight, as a consumer, as almost anything except what I spend most of my days and nights doing: working. In the morning and in the evening, every single person in my life works. We work and work and work and are too tired to see the future. We need better.

My son sighed in his sleep, as if blowing a dream out. I kissed the top of his head. Funny, how life-changing events start so small. It’s like the Biblical parable of the mustard seed, in which a tiny thing takes root and grows. It needs rich soil. Maybe all of us tired, run-down and running around workers in New York, in America, in the world are that soil?

Bernie thinks so. He planted his heart like a mustard seed in the people. And it grows. Like a baby. Like a tree. Like faith.

HEAL THE SICK:

Bernie Sanders appears with members of National Nurses United, the largest nurses union in the country. NNU endorsed Sanders in mid-November.

AMAZON

Continued from page 4

on labor, immigrant rights and combating gentrification have banded together in the form of Athena For All, a new national coalition taking aim at the retail giant.

The task is daunting.

Once a humble online bookseller, the company now hawks virtually everything you can think of from automobiles to Auschwitz-themed Christmas ornaments and other white supremacist paraphernalia. Despite a stock market valuation hovering at or near \$1 trillion and \$11 billion in profits last year, it paid zilch in federal income taxes.

That's not all it took in from the government. Despite protests from the company this fall after losing a multi-billion Pentagon contract bid to Microsoft, Amazon Web Services is raking in millions from the Department of Homeland Security, hosting databases that are used to track down immigrants as part of the Trump administration's ongoing war on undocumented Americans. This includes a DHS biometric database complete with fingerprints, iris scans and photographs of faces, giving rise to fears that facial recognition software Amazon is developing could be put to nefarious purposes by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A dystopian techno future is already underway over

at Amazon's Staten Island warehouse, where 4,000 employees are required to labor 10–12-hour shifts, their every footstep is tracked and they must keep up with strict quotas.

One worker, employed as a stower at the warehouse, reported handling 2,000 units of goods-for-shipping a day, four items per minute.

"The quota system pushes you to really not work at a pace that's normal, but at a pace where you're almost running for the entire 10 hours," the worker, one of 145 Amazon workers interviewed by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, said. "You're constantly turning, bending, running."

The majority of the stower's co-workers reported similar conditions.

Injuries occur at the company's Staten Island fulfillment center at rates three times higher than the industry average, an examination by Make the Road and New York Communities for Change of Amazon's own reports to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration found, with injured employees missing an average of 64 days of work.

The introduction of robotics technology at the Staten Island facility has actually made the job more difficult, Zachary Lerner, a labor organizer with Communities for Change, told Indy Radio News.

"Automation has led to the work becoming even hard-

er, leading to people facing even more injuries than they did before," he said.

What activists like Hiba Aly and member-groups of the wider Athena coalition are banking on is that a coordinated grassroots push against the multinational corporation will keep it in check and force reform.

It's worked before. Grassroots campaigns have led to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage at Amazon, blocked efforts to stack the Seattle City Council in its favor this fall, and halted attempts by the company to build an "HQ2" in Queens with \$3 billion taxpayer money earlier this year. Now that community groups challenging Amazon across the country have banded together, perhaps Athena has a chance at bringing Goliath to its knees.

Olivia Riggio contributed reporting to this article.

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UNDERSTANDING BOLIVIA'S COUP

WHY EVO MORALES'S INDIGENOUS-LED GOVERNMENT FELL AND WHAT COMES NEXT

BY GABRIEL HETLAND

If there was any doubt before, the recent horrifying events in Bolivia should have laid those doubts to rest: It was a coup. But there should have been no doubt to begin with. While it is true that the events preceding President Evo Morales's ouster were complex and multifaceted, there is no disputing that the military demanded Morales step down. The fact that the military head used the word "suggest" is irrelevant. As Bernie Sanders said when asked about this issue, "[A]t the end of the day it was the military who intervened...and asked [Morales] to leave. When the military intervenes...that's called a 'coup.'"

LEAD-UP TO MORALES'S OUSTER

The most immediately relevant time period to understand events preceding Morales's resignation is from 2016 to the present. Focusing on this period helps with understanding the virulent opposition Morales faced in the weeks before he was forced out. Urban middle classes initially led these protests, with far-right upper-class forces subsequently seizing control and directing them. This opposition focused on two charges. The first is that Morales should not have run in the 2019 election, because Bolivia's constitution permits re-election only once, and because Morales — narrowly — lost a 2016 referendum on indefinite presidential election.

A 2017 electoral court decision overturned the referendum result, which allowed Morales to run this year, but also generated widespread dissent, particularly from urban middle classes. This combined with the second charge — that Morales stole the October 20 election — and resulted in large protests against Morales in the weeks after the election. The Organization of American States led the charge of fraud. After weeks of questioning the official results that gave Morales a first-round victory, on November 10 the OAS issued a report stating that it could not certify the results of the vote as accurate. A report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research makes a convincing case that the OAS acted in a biased manner and failed to present evidence of actual fraud. This means that Evo Morales won the October 20 election in the first round. Irrespective of any valid criticisms one can make of Morales or his party, Movement for Socialism (MAS), this fact is crucial to remember.

Many Bolivians, however, were convinced there was fraud and took to the streets, first to demand the annulment of the election, and then for Morales to resign. Luis Fernando Camacho, a conservative businessman and leader

of the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, led the call for Morales's resignation. By eclipsing the centrist Carlos Mesa, who finished second in the October 20 election, Camacho also pushed the protests to the right. All this lies behind the final events that led to Morales's downfall: Police mutinies on November 8 and 9 and the military's November 10 "suggestion" that Morales resign, which he quickly did.

A longer-term perspective on Morales's downfall would also take account of the decomposition of popular movements that took place in the wake of the 2011 TIPNIS conflict, which pitted Morales and the MAS against Indigenous and other movements opposed to the building of a road through the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory. This conflict had two important long-term consequences. The first was the growth of vociferous opposition to Morales and the MAS from some on the left, with Morales's former UN Ambassador Pablo Solón among the most high-profile leftists to publicly split with Morales over TIPNIS, and in particular over state repression of Indigenous-led protests that resulted in the deaths of protesters. The second, equally significant effect of the TIPNIS conflict was the splits among and even within popular-sector organizations that had previously been aligned with the government. MAS played a key, and very disturbing, role in dividing organizations that opposed Morales over TIPNIS. This led to a weakening of popular-class organizational and mobilizational capacity, a factor some analysts suggest explains the relative slowness with which some social movements came to Morales' defense after the November 10 coup.

This doesn't mean the events were not a coup. The critical fact is that the military forced Morales to step down. The implications of this fact are not incidental, but fundamental, to the horror now unfolding in Bolivia. It is also important to recognize that while some leftist and popular-sector organizations participated in recent opposition against Morales, this movement was primarily middle class. By the end it was decisively led by the right, which is the clear "winner" of the coup against Morales.

WHAT NOW?

Bolivia is undergoing the consolidation of a far-right regime of terror. This regime can be seen as a dictatorship-in-embryo due to the systematic violation of political and human rights. Since Morales resigned, the following horrifying events have occurred: State security forces have killed peaceful protesters. The "acting" president, Jeanine Áñez, issued a decree exempting armed forces personnel from prosecution for the use of force. Áñez stated that Morales's MAS may not be allowed to participate in future elections, despite MAS being by far Bolivia's largest political force. The acting minister of government said that MAS senators will be detained for "subversion and sedition." And there is a rising wave of anti-Indigenous racism. Multiple groups have publicly burned the Indigenous wiphala flag, and on-line video shows police in Santa Cruz cutting the wiphala, which became an official national symbol under Morales,

from their uniforms.

The manner in which Áñez assumed the presidency is deeply concerning for two reasons. First, it could not have occurred without the forced resignations of Morales, his vice president Álvaro García Linera, and the presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. These resignations were in no way voluntary: They happened in the context of the kidnapping of MAS officials' relatives and burning of their houses. With those above her gone, Áñez staked her claim to the president's office, despite the fact that as vice president of the Senate, she had no constitutional authority to take on this role.

Second, Áñez was sworn in as president in a nearly empty Senate lacking quorum, with MAS senators, who control two-thirds of seats, boycotting partly due to fears for their safety. Áñez was sworn in with an oversized Bible, and stated, "the Bible has returned to the palace." On November 10, Áñez's mentor, Luis Fernando Camacho, entered the vacant presidential palace and kissed a Bible atop a Bolivian flag. A pastor with Camacho said, "Pachamama will never return to the palace." Camacho and Áñez are both fervently Christian and highly racist. It is no coincidence that their rise has seen an unprecedented increase in anti-Indigenous racism across the country, marked in the weeks before Morales fell, and even more widespread ever since.

Áñez's party received just four percent of the vote in the October 20 election. On top of the extremely questionable sequence of events that led Áñez to the presidency, this shows her illegitimacy and lack of any mandate. Yet Áñez and her associates have shown themselves to be unbothered by such scruples. Even more concerning than the circumstances of her rise to power is the manner in which Áñez has governed. She has assembled a cabinet that initially included no Indigenous ministers. She has thoroughly reoriented Bolivia's foreign policy, breaking relations with Venezuela and Cuba and talking of leaving the Union of South American Nations and the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas. And she has unleashed the full force of the police and reconstituted military — she appointed new top brass — against the rising wave of protest elicited by her and her associates' actions.

Images of the wiphala burning sparked massive Indigenous marches across the country. These and other marches — calling for Áñez's resignation, new elections, the military's return to the barracks and freeing detained protesters, among other things — have been met with fierce repression, with police and military forces using tear gas and live bullets.

Bolivia's political situation is also moving in a terrifying direction. MAS supporters and leaders face increased repression and a closing of political space. Áñez's minister of government, Arturo Murillo, called an ex-minister of Morales "an animal" whom he would "hunt down." Murillo also said he has "a list" of MAS senators and deputies he plans to detain for "sedition and subversion." This comes after MAS senators were prevented by the police from accessing the Senate, and physically roughed up in the process. Áñez has also stated that MAS may not be allowed

RAINBOW NATION: Indigenous supporters of Evo Morales march with wiphalas flying. With its patchwork of colors, the wiphala is a symbol of Bolivia's plurinational diversity.

Continued on page 23

HIP, WHITE & RACIST

MEET THE IDENTITARIAN FAR RIGHT

BY MARESI STARZMANN

It is spring 2018. High up on the Col de l'Echelle, a snow-covered mountain pass in the Alps between Italy and France that is frequently used by undocumented immigrants, 100 members of identitarian groups from across Europe are about to carry out a political publicity stunt. Clad in light-blue down jackets with "Defend Europe" logos on the back, they form a human chain along a plastic mesh fence — a symbolic border meant to deter African migrants from traveling north. They unfurl a banner the size of a basketball court reading "Closed border — You will not make Europe home! — No way — Back to your homeland!"

An expensively produced YouTube video about the action by Brittany Pettibone, an American far-right vlogger and conspiracy theorist, has received more than 36,000 views. The tech-savvy identitarians deploy digital communication in highly effective ways to attract an online following.

Pettibone is the fiancée of Martin Sellner, a former neo-Nazi who now leads the Identitarian Movement in Austria. With his sharp haircut and dark-rimmed glasses, he could be a poster boy for what *Breitbart* calls "hipster right wingers." Predominantly young, white, and male (only about 20 percent of their members are women), identitarians deliberately distance themselves from more traditional right-wing extremists like white-power skinheads. They want to look conservative rather than fascist, insisting that theirs is a healthy patriotism, not worn racism in new clothing.

GENERATION IDENTITY

Tracing its history to the French New Right of the 1960s, identitarianism first emerged in France in 2012 with the founding of Generation Identity, an offspring of the white-nationalist Bloc Identitaire. The ideology spread quickly across Europe, gaining momentum with the 2015 refugee crisis. Today, this new New Right unites different groups in what is framed as a struggle over European identity. They march under a logo of the Greek letter lambda encased in a circle, a reference to the ancient Lacedaemonians, or Spartans. Like the Greeks fighting the Persians, it insinuates, Europeans must defend themselves against mass immigration from Muslim countries.

Despite the identitarians' foregrounding of a "pan-European" white identity, they have ideological cross-overs with the American "alt-right." Identity Evropa is a U.S.-based identitarian group that rebranded itself earlier this year after the leftist media collective Unicorn Riot leaked member chat logs full of racist and anti-Semitic statements. In its current iteration as the American Identity Movement, the group has largely discontinued its use of classical Greek imagery in favor of a more straightforward Americana aesthetic. Their central idea remains the same, however. The leaflets the organization distributes on U.S. college campuses read "Keep Your Diversity, We Want Identity."

Both identitarians and the U.S. alt-right also reject multiculturalism. Drawing on demographic projections that predict white people's share of the U.S. and European population will decline over the next few decades as a result of low birth rates, ageing, and immigration, they stoke fears of a "great replacement." That idea first entered the mainstream media after the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017. Neo-Nazis and white supremacists led the deadly march with the chant "You will not replace us!" (occasionally altering it to "Jews will not replace us!")

Despite their pro-white ideology, identitarians insist they do not promote hate for other races, but favor

"ethno-pluralism" — diversity in isolation rather than EU-style unity in diversity. They use "cultural purity," a euphemism for the Nazis' cultural racism, as a rationale to advocate for zero-tolerance immigration policies and the forced return of immigrants.

When Mario Müller, head of the German Identitarian Movement, espouses the ethno-nationalist vision that "Germany should remain the country of Germans." His organization claims to speak for white people "connected by over 1,000 years of German and European history."

CAREFULLY CRAFTED LANGUAGE

This language is carefully crafted: By eschewing openly extremist labels, identitarians do not simply seek to appeal to mainstream conservatives. Their goal is to win cultural power and use it to advance their ideas and values. In propagating the belief that white or native European identity is under attack, they are appropriating identity politics as a political tool from people who are racial minorities in the U.S. and Europe.

The Internet is their main political space. While their groups have relatively small memberships (estimated at 300 in Germany and about 30 to 40 core members plus 200 sympathizers in Austria, with no reliable numbers available for the U.S.), social-media algorithms work in their favor. The identitarian presence across online platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram makes these groups look bigger than they are.

As Sellner put it in his fiancée's video, what makes their actions successful is that "people are talking about us." Identitarians consistently deploy white identity in a larger narrative of victimization. At the heart of this is a dystopian vision of the reverse colonization of whites by people of color, and sometimes even of "white genocide." People like Sellner consider themselves "political Robin Hoods," who fight against an imagined takeover of Europe by migrants.

The killers in the mass shootings at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, last March and at a shopping mall near the Mexican border in El Paso, Texas, in August both referred to the "great replacement" in their manifestos. European authorities discovered evidence of an extensive email exchange between the Christchurch shooter and Sellner, who suggested the two of them meet for coffee or beer sometime. The killer also donated 1,500 euros (about \$1,670) to the Austrian activist.

Several European governments now consider the identitarians a threat to democracy. Last year, Austrian prosecutors pressed criminal charges against 17 members of Sellner's group for inciting hate, while three French activists were handed jail time after the stunt in the Alps. Most significantly, the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has recently ruled the country's Identitarian Movement anti-democratic and subject to surveillance by the state, under laws intended to prevent the resurgence of Nazism.

This is an open confession that identitarian storytelling has a dangerous appeal beyond the use of sleek logos and smart branding. By propagating the belief that white or native European identity is under attack, identitarians have managed to appropriate identity politics as a political tool from racialized peoples. Identitarian identity politics is as crude as it is contradictory, however. It sidelines both the history of Euro-American colonialism with its uneven economic and social developments and issues of class. Yet, it is precisely by erasing the legacy of white Europe as one of the root causes for migration that identitarianism has emerged as a seemingly new, deceptively cohesive ideology.



ESTEBAN GUERRA



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BOOKS

WHEN THE NAZIS GOT CRUSHED

Stalingrad

BY VASILY GROSSMAN,
 TRANS. BY ELIZABETH & ROBERT CHANDLER
 NEW YORK REVIEW BOOKS, 2019

By Steven Wishnia

After the 2016 election, my idea of optimistic reading was a history of the Battle of Stalingrad — the turning point of World War II, five extraordinarily bloody months in 1942–43 that blocked the Nazis from crossing the Volga River and from there into Asia, at a time when they and their allies already occupied almost all of continental Europe. Much of this history was based on the reporting of Vasily Grossman, a Russian-Jewish novelist who covered the war for the Red Army newspaper and was among the first journalists to write about the Holocaust. After the war, he wrote two epic novels about the battle, *Stalingrad* and *Life and Fate*.

Stalingrad, published in the United States for the first time this June, takes place during the summer of 1942, with the Nazi eastward advance looming, and the first months of the battle. It's a sprawling, 960-page saga with hundreds of characters. The most central, however, are the Shaposhnikov family: matriarch Alexandra Vladimirovna Shaposhnikova; her son-in-law, Jewish physicist Viktor Shtrum; and three generations of children, exes and lovers, some evacuated from Moscow to east of the Volga, some in Stalingrad, a few freed from the gulag, and several in the war. Shtrum's mother is a spectral presence: She, like Grossman's mother, met an unknown but near-certain fate after the Nazis occupied her home city.

Grossman hoped to write a *War and Peace* for the 20th century, depicting the panorama of lives during the battle — from soldiers clustered in dugouts to children complaining and adults bickering in a dim, crowded underground bomb shelter, from German soldiers plundering peasants' cottages to a ragtag crew of inexperienced coal miners laboring to fuel the tank factories of Stalingrad. He describes plumes of green water shooting up from the Volga as the Nazis bomb a boat full of refugee children; the red dust of pulverized bricks; the rare joys of ham, tomatoes, and vodka; and the last missive of a concussed company commander: "Not one of the fuckers will pass."

Stalingrad is stronger on evoking history and you-are-there feeling than on long-term character development, but that's probably inevitable in a novel of this scope. In the battle that ends the book, more than two-thirds of the Soviet troops defending the city center were killed.

Grossman's reporting informs the story, but journalism and fiction are two different sides of storytelling, each partial truths.

Reporting brings the realistic details, but the novelist's imagination creates the personal intimacy that journalism can't. Writing during the Stalinist era, he also had to grapple with another dualism, the ideology that there are "two truths" and that the sordid soldiers-with-lice truth of reality should be buried in the name of the heroic truth of communist aspirations.

Committed to both reality and the socialist vision of justice, Grossman tried to avoid making that choice. "Only in Stalingrad," he writes, "did Pyotr Semyonovich Vavilov come to understand what war truly meant. A huge city had been killed." Vavilov, a collective farmer doing sentry duty in the bombed-out ruins, muses on the "unimaginable amount of work and material" it had taken to build a city of brick and glass, steel and stone, pipelines and cables, now destroyed "in some monstrous act of desecration."

If "socialist realism" were an accurate description and not just a Stalinist art-must-be-a-weapon directive, Vasily Grossman could be said to have written a classic of the genre: a realistic novel in which ordinary people are the protagonists and heroes — an antitank gunner nervously taking aim, the crew trying to keep the Stalingrad power plant running, the drunken children's home assistant who got a traumatized-to-muteness orphan to talk.

"For Hitler, strength was a matter of violence — one man's ability to exercise violence over another," Grossman philosophizes, taking over the narrative voice from Vavilov. "To Vavilov and millions like him — it was a matter of the power of living breath over dead stone. What we call the soul of the people is determined by a shared understanding of strength, labor, justice and the common good."

As it was, when a significantly censored version of *Stalingrad* was published in the Soviet Union in 1952, the Stalin regime's literary mouthpieces denounced Grossman for emphasizing the heroism of soldiers and ordinary people instead of the role of the Communist Party leadership. *Life and Fate*, written in the late '50s and considered his masterpiece, wouldn't even get that far. The KGB seized Grossman's manuscript after he submitted it to a publisher, and it did not appear in print until a microfilmed copy was smuggled abroad, more than a decade after his death in 1964.

Yet decades after that, the rise of a personality-cult tyrant in the U.S. indirectly led me to discover Grossman's work.



RIA NOVOSTI ARCHIVE

THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2019

By Independent Staff

CHRISTIAN SCOTT ATUNDE ADJUAH — *Ancestral Recall*

Here the visionary trumpeter takes his concept of “stretch music” — an approach to jazz that embraces its traditions but widens its scope — farther than it has ever gone before. Scott expands the future prospects of jazz using the contemporary tools at his disposal. Electronic dance loops weave through complex polyrhythms beaten on African drums, while Scott, the grandson of legendary Mardi Gras chieftain, Big Chief Donald Harrison, Sr., lets his instrument soar. The result is a melding of African and Native American musical traditions, which are rooted in rhythm, with those of the colonizer and oppressor, which are built on harmony. In other words, exactly where jazz originally sprang from in New Orleans a century ago. Poet Saul Williams, who occasionally lends his voice to the project, sums up what Scott is going for (and accomplishes) best: “Earth as my hard drive, sky as my witness.”

BRITTANY HOWARD — *Jaime*

An autobiographical record named after Howard’s sister who died at age 13, *Jaime*, oozes with sorrow, soul and outrage at injustice. Howard writes from a place of contradictions, she’s proud of her Southern identity, but as the queer daughter of a black father and a white mother, she’s well aware of the South’s ugly side. “Who slashed my dad’s tires and put a goat head in the back?” she sings, recounting childhood trauma. The struggle and anguish that Howard works through on this record — with tenderness, intensity and jagged-edged vocals that pierce you with their highs and ground you with their lows — lends depth to lyrics that might otherwise ring as hollow platitudes. “I dedicate my spirit in the service of what is good and fair and righteous every day I am alive,” she tells us, as if reciting a prayer over the pounding funk beat accompanying her on “13th Century Metal.” That’s certainly true here with this gothic-pop gem.

LIZZO — *Cuz I Love You*

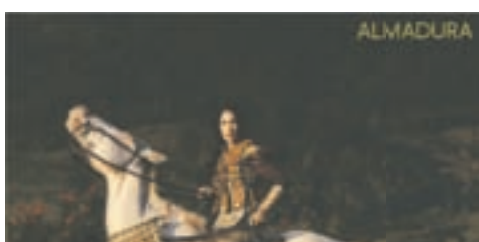
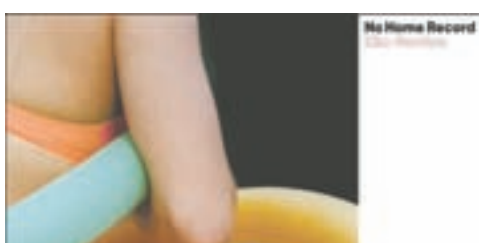
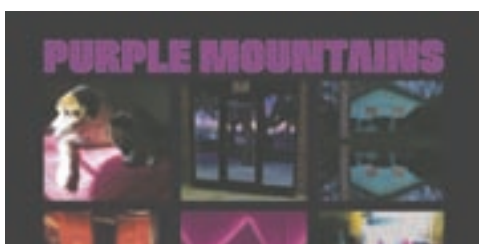
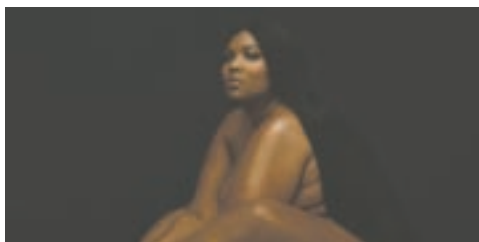
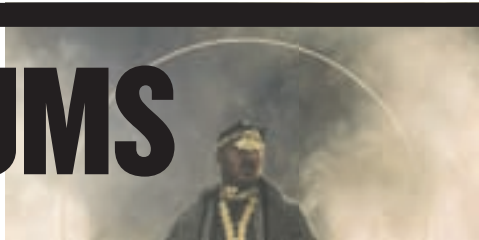
There was no more powerful sound in 2019 than when Lizzo, her voice reaching a fever pitch, cuts through a pregnant pause on the title track of her third studio album, lets out an anguished gasp and belts, “I’m crying cuz I love you.” Comparisons to Aretha Franklin are well deserved. So much whiny ambient music came out this year, as if life in Trump’s America had finally beaten the music world frail. This album is a welcome tribute to love, struggle, perseverance and pride in oneself. It’s also a ton of fun.

PURPLE MOUNTAINS — *Purple Mountains*

With his first music project since 2008, David Berman returned with an intimate existential meditation that uses pleasantly straight forward indie rock as a vehicle for his poetry. Berman’s lyrics are straight forward too. Scenes of everyday life are coupled with ruminations on heartache. Yet, like the record’s steady rhythm, Berman remains upbeat — exemplified by “Maybe I’m the Only One for Me,” the album’s closer, where he seems to come to terms with his loneliness and even draw strength from it. By singing honestly and openly about his own experiences, Berman’s music might help others struggling with depression, even if he took his own life shortly after *Purple Mountains*’ release. The former Silver Jews frontman went on sabbatical at the end of the last decade, partly out of a sense that nothing he could accomplish would eclipse the work of his father, Richard Berman, a ruthless lobbyist nicknamed Dr. Evil. Not so. “Songs build little rooms in time,” as Berman puts it on this record. Surely the beauty he has created will out last his father’s destructive deeds.

KING PRINCESS — *Cheap Queen*

With last year’s breakout single “1950,” King Princess has risen to near-icon status for a queer community eager to hear their experiences reflected in song. As her stage name suggests, Mikaela Straus revels in warping and meshing social constructs of sex



and gender (she posed for Playboy in October as both a football player and a cheerleader) but her debut album isn’t explicitly a “queer record.” Straus has put out a masterful pop album through which she navigates heartache and the public scrutiny that come with fame, as well as with living openly in a straight, cisgender society. Straus’s queerness is laced through her music but we can all identify with her themes. Heartache is heartache.

KIM GORDON — *No Home Record*

The audio equivalent of a J.G. Ballard novel. Dark, futuristic and surreal. Gordon’s lyrics are sparse and leave gaps for you to fill in a deeper, often dystopian subtext. The former Sonic Youth frontwoman’s no wave roots are on display as ever. Yet it’s fascinating to listen while, without losing cohesiveness, the album veers through techno, trip-hop and trap territory.

BILLIE EILISH — *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*

Despite the question the title of the 17-year-old’s breakout album poses, Eilish’s voice — wispily alternating between cynicism and coy innocence, delivered too-close-for-comfort, as if she is physically crawling into your brain — will keep you up at night while the record’s pounding bass will keep you dancing. Eilish proudly embraces her inner freak. It can be unsettling. But these are unsettling times and we’ve all got to stay awake and we might as well get freaky.

ILE — *Almadura*

“Armadura” means armor, but in Puerto Rican-flavored Spanish it can come out “alma dura,” or strong soul. Composed and produced in the wake of Hurricane Maria and released just in time to serve as a soundtrack to the protests that dislodged a corrupt governor from power this summer, iLe puts the full force of her soul on this record and she’s ready for battle, tackling the history of imperialism in her native land and the injustice it has suffered under the Trump administration. The singer appears on the album’s cover mounted on a pale stallion, wearing armor straight from Spanish colonial times, when the Africa-spawned bomba rhythms that infuse this record were banned for fear slaves might use them to drown out the sounds of impending revolt. Blast at full volume.

PRIESTS — *The Seduction of Kansas*

The D.C.-based rock-and-roll agitators’ second record draws its inspiration from journalist Thomas Frank’s 2004 book *What’s the Matter With Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* to explore the creep of authoritarianism into modern culture. The album tackles the banality of evil with energy and wit. Critical theory has never sounded so fun and loud.

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS — *Ghosteen*

This album might give those who can recall walking out of Birthday Party performances in the early ’80s with Nick Cave’s blood on them pause as they consider how far the singer-songwriter has traveled from his early days fronting the avant-garde punk outfit to his current incarnation as the crooner of tender ballads. But sadness is the other side of rage. A dark urgency runs through Cave’s 40-year career. With *Ghosteen*, his first record fully written and recorded since the 2015 death of his teenage son, Arthur, Cave delves into grief with warm synths and bass lines that are both trance-inducing and unsettling. He draws on snippets of memory, poetry and ancient myth to take us from the brink of madness to hope: “I’m just waiting now for peace to come,” he sings in a falsetto as the album draws to a close. In this mad, violent world of ours, Cave invites us to ask ourselves how we might prepare for peace.

JOURNALISM & OBJECTIVITY

NEW BOOK EXPLORES HISTORY OF AN 'UNSTABLE IDEAL THAT UPHOLDS THE STATUS QUO'

By Renée Feltz

Just days after President Trump's inauguration in 2017, one of the only trans people working as a national broadcast journalist reflected on how the media should respond. Amid Trump's claims of "fake news," Lewis Wallace wrote a blog post headlined: "Objectivity is dead, and I'm ok with it." He argued, "we should own the fact that to tell the stories and promote the voices of marginalized and targeted people is not a neutral stance from the sidelines, but an important front in a lively battle against the narrow-mindedness, tyranny, and institutional oppression that puts all of our freedoms at risk."

When Wallace was fired for refusing to delete his post, he dove into researching how the doctrine of objectivity has long been used to silence marginalized writers. He explores this overlooked history in his new book and podcast series, *"The View From Somewhere: Undoing the Myth of Journalistic Objectivity."*

During a recent talk at Barnard University, Wallace also looked forward: "What reality are we shaping by not calling Trump a white supremacist?" he asked. "What journalism do we need to bring us closer to liberation?" He later spoke with *The Independent*. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

THE INDEPENDENT: Describe that moment in 2017 when your bosses at American Public Media's Marketplace, which airs on NPR, accused you of crossing the line between journalism and activism.

LEWIS WALLACE: I had written a post on my personal blog about the myth of objectivity that was, in a way, a counter-intuitive take on all of the stuff going on in that moment around "fake news and alternative facts." There was a lot of pandering and fear about what how the media was going to respond to the Trump administration and to this political moment. I also felt a fair amount of that fear. But it came from a place of not being surprised, per se, about the rising tide of white supremacy and transphobia. So, when I wrote the blog post it was from a place of hoping to engage other journalists in a conversation about what journalism could do to push back on the falsehoods of white supremacy. I was very surprised when I was called in by my boss at Marketplace and asked to take it down. It was a meta moment because it was 'journalism about journalism' that I got in trouble for. I knew those conversations were going on among a lot of journalists behind closed doors and I was surprised that it was considered such a transgression to have the conversation publicly.

This led you to look into the history of the doctrine of objective journalism, which developed in part so newspapers could reach a broader audience and sell more copies. What else did you find?

Partisan activism and journalism have always intertwined in the United States. Through the 1830s and 1840s there was really no source of "impartial journalism" and yet somehow our political systems functioned. Then in the late 1800s and early 1900s we saw the rise of important sources of news from the black press, when people like Timothy Thomas Fortune and Ida B. Wells,

who I write about in the book, were activist journalists for the humanity of black people. It wasn't until the early to mid-1900s that what we now think of as objectivity was really codified for journalism, and it was almost immediately deployed as a weapon against labor organizers and marginalized and oppressed people. So, I ultimately argue that objectivity is an unstable ideal and one that upholds the status quo, white supremacy and racism, and that it is not the right frame for journalism anymore, if it ever was.

I was fascinated by your research into journalist Marvel



LYNNE FOSTER

Cooke, who tried to organize her newsroom and had her objectivity questioned.

Marvel Cooke is one example of a black woman journalist who was pushed out of the journalism industry. She worked for the black press, originally for *The Crisis*, the NAACP magazine run by W.E.B. Du Bois, and then for *New York Amsterdam News*, and there she organized the first ever chapter of the Newspaper Guild, and a successful walkout for better wages. For a decade and a half she did a lot of reporting on labor. Then the paper where she published her most influential work, the *Daily Compass*, was shuttered in the late 1940s, and she and various co-workers were called before the McCarthy hearings. She was pushed out of journalism at that point, and unable to find work in the field from then on. She lived another 50 years and did amazing activism. One of my goals for the book is to resurrect stories like hers that have been overlooked.

Another fascinating story you tell is about how David Brock cloaked himself in objectivity while attacking Anita Hill.

You can't make this stuff up. David Brock was a right-wing journalist activist in the early '90s tradition he helped create: a fake investigative reporter who acts like a muckraker and publishes scandalous stories that are just a series of drummed-up accusations. He was hired by wealthy right-wing activists to spread sexist and racist rumors about Anita Hill that contributed to the overall environment of doubting her very credible accusations against Clarence Thomas. Even after the hearings he published a book called, ironically, *The Real Anita Hill*. He later basically confessed to fabricating aspects of it, and only talking to people who confirmed these terrible twisted images of her. It shows how the guise and claim of objectivity is so dangerous in the hands of a bad actor. We need different frames for talking about what media to trust. Claiming you are an objective journalist does not mean you're doing good and fair work in the world.

You propose not to throw out objectivity in journalism, but to preserve some basic tenets. What do you keep?

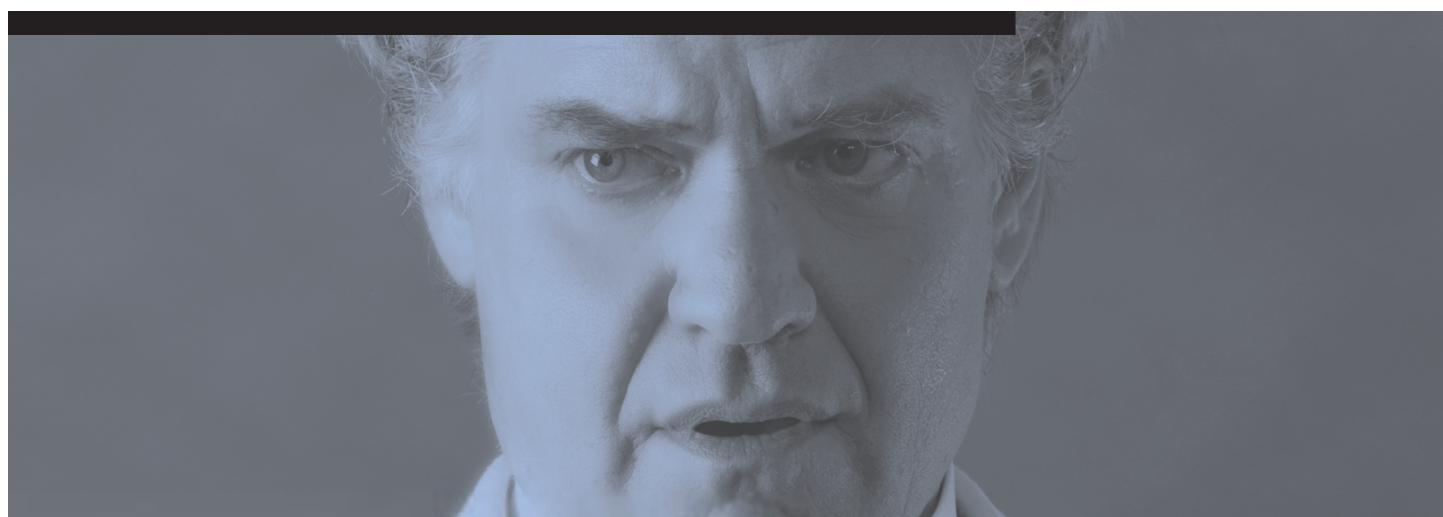
Objectivity as this broad framework for understanding journalism needs to go. Seeking one objective picture of the world is not a realistic way to frame our job at this time. But there are elements of journalistic ethics that we should absolutely continue to hang on to and also deepen and add more nuance to by looking at ethics through the lens of oppression and power.

I argue for journalism that is curious, rigorous and independent in the sense of not being associated with corporations or political parties, although I'm not opposed to partisan journalism. That said, I also argue for journalism that is openly activist in favor of social justice and liberation and marginalized people. There is a lot of that type of journalism throughout U.S. history. The issue is it has been sidelined and undervalued.

Are you still able to get work as a professional journalist? Or are you a pariah for having so publicly flaunted your disregard for traditional notions of objectivity?

There are a number of places I can't work because of all this. That said, a lot of outlets will hire and work with people like me, many of them are non-profit.

I am very focused on covering the Southern U.S. and doing activism for stronger journalism there through the organization I founded, Press On. Much of my work has shifted to training and advocacy. We are trying to make more space for journalists who are activists to continue doing the work and not be blacklisted. I see some changes in that regard. Not enough that I recommend young journalists get on Twitter and say whatever you want, because you can lose work that way. But we are in a political moment where we need to stand up for our communities, against the violence and dehumanization that we're witnessing. If it is between that and some journalism gigs for me, I choose standing up. Certainly, there are sacrifices because our industry is still really messed up.



JONQUILITY

TRUMP DEPRESSION HOTLINE

Dear Billy,
I've given up booze. (Not for the first time.) It's especially hard quitting the stuff during the holidays. I've been attending meetings. The thing that always trips me up is the higher power we're supposed to put our faith in. I'm an atheist. I don't believe in a higher power but I'm trying to keep an open mind. Do you have a higher power? You're always shouting, 'Earthalujah.' Is that where it's at? How do I get to that place?

— RAYMOND, Astoria

Raymond we all have higher powers. It might be sex, or data, or lawsuits. You just don't want booze to have power over you. OK.

Your higher power is an actual relationship. She can be a mural of an angel on a corrugated warehouse door in Welling Court, Queens. The question is, do the two of you talk? You should thank her for another 24 hours of sobriety, and you gotta believe that she's alive as you're saying this and listen to her reply. Be patient. Stand there. "Good job, 24 hours, did you enjoy it?" she asks.

You see, even the rocks and sea-water and clouds are alive, vibrating with messages. All living beings are talking and listening. I walk in the trees at Prospect Park and talk to them and I listen to them. They are still getting over Sandy. I walk on the sand at Coney Island and talk to the gulls. Gulls are good talkers. We have very New York talks. They're like shouting matches in a bodega.

The Earth survived all those mass extinctions, re-inventing life each time. She's survived all those extinctions and she can help us survive our alcoholism, opioids and Donald Trump. Earthalujah!

• • •

Dear Reverend,
I love my ex-husband but we seem to have different approaches to parenting. It's especially clear around Christmas time but happens year-round. He makes more money than I do and is always buying our teenagers expensive gifts like video games and flashy clothes. Even if I could afford it, I

wouldn't buy my kids those things. My idea of a gift is a good book or a trip to a museum. When it's my birthday, I ask my kids to recite me poems. They think I'm old fashioned but I don't want them growing up brats. It's hard enough combatting all the rampant commercialism out there without my former spouse buying into it. Is there anything you'd recommend I say to him to make him stop?

— MARIANNE, Montclair

Dear Marianne,
Put the emergency on your ex. As much as 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come directly from household consumption, with the U.S. population out gassing everyone else in the world. Your former hubby appears to be a big gas blast.

Don't be polite with him, Marianne. In your letter, you seem hesitant. He wants "expensive gifts like video games and flashy clothes" for the kids. Confront him with a "My love, your gifts are drowning us, burning us..." Mr. Ex might laugh at you. Spank him with organic sex toys until he pleads, "Yes, the Earth is my Mistress! I obey! I obey!"

This split family phenomenon, those for and those against the Earth, will be more common as we careen toward apocalypse. Many mothers and fathers will insist that holiday giving take the form of fossil fuel-based consumerism — our old American religion. As with police, advertisers, militarists and jurists, these people need deep deprogramming.

If Mr. Christmas is flying through the sky in a sleigh pulled by endangered species, destroy the video games and flashy clothes in front of him with the kids watching. This would be the greatest gift of all, Marianne. Ms. Grinch says NO MORE! to the fossil-fuel Christmas!

— Happy Winter Solstice from Rev,
& the Stop Shopping Choir

REVEREND BILLY & SAVITRI D'S CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING PERFORM AT JOE'S PUB AT THE PUBLIC THEATER ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS UNTIL DEC. 22.

BOLIVIA

Continues from Page 18

to run in future elections and promised to prosecute Morales if he returns to Bolivia. There have also been official statements threatening "seditious" journalists.

It is unclear what, if anything, can stop Bolivia's descent into a full-blown far-right military dictatorship. There are, however, some important developments to keep track of. There is the growing condemnation of Añez by international human rights

organizations and progressive politicians. Prominent Democratic Party politicians have also spoken out, with Bernie Sanders doing so most forcefully, and Elizabeth Warren doing so as well, albeit in a more equivocal way. There have been some talks between MAS and sectors of the opposition over the possibility of scheduling new elections. However, the repression of MAS makes it unclear how far these talks will progress. Finally, there is the response of Bolivian social movements, which have been engaged in marches and blockades throughout the country. It is important

to note that these mobilizations include not just MAS supporters but also a broad swath of popular sectors that repudiate the right-wing seizure of the state. Actions by movements may pose a real threat to Añez's ability to govern. The state's ferocious response so far suggests this will be a long, uneven and deadly struggle.

This is a lightly edited version of an article that originally appeared at nacla.org.

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TALK: Syrian journalists and activists trace the roots and the evolution of the Syrian revolution.

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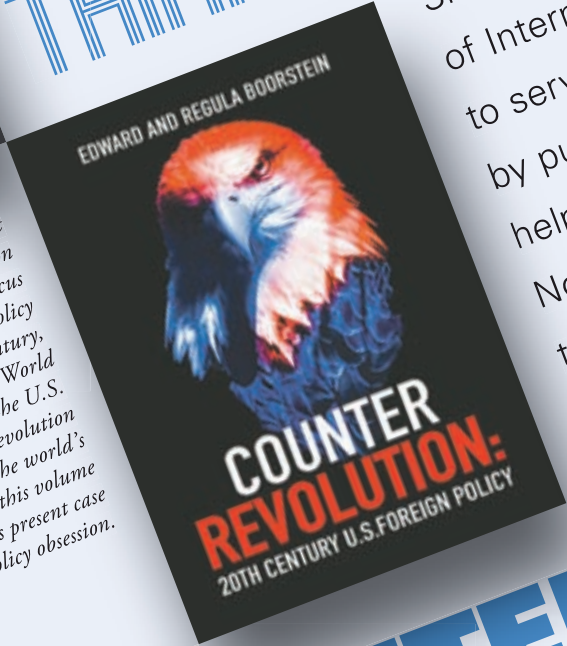
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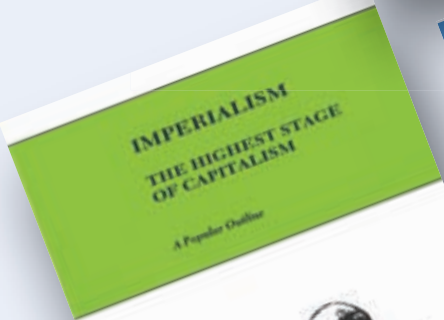
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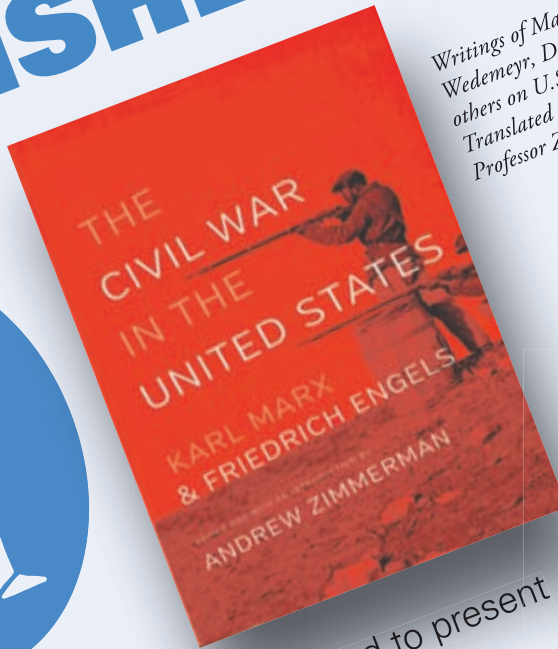


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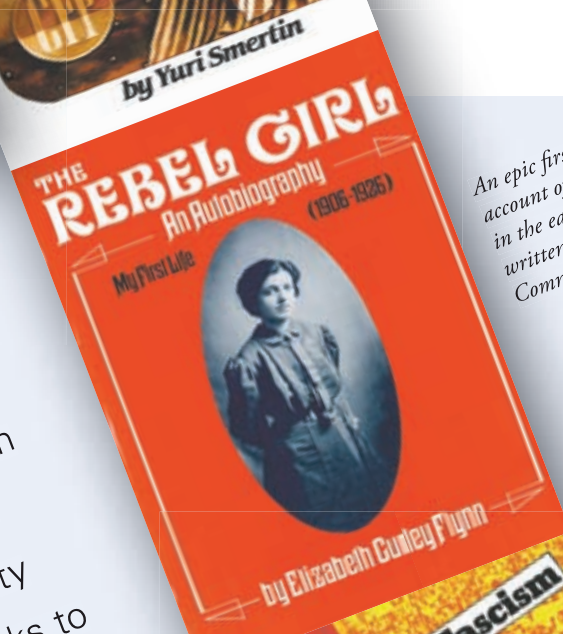


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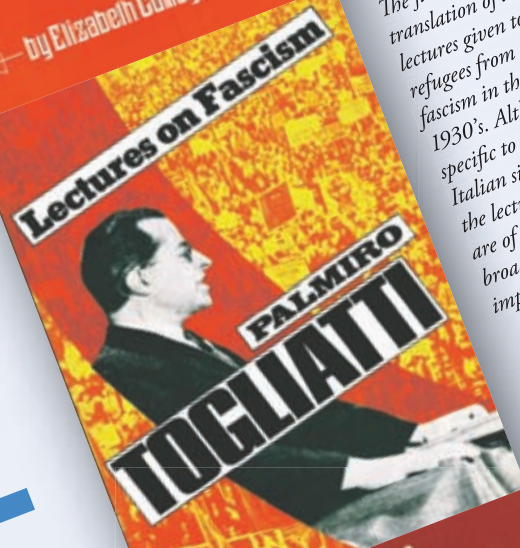
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