



Elias Rodriques
on Ta-Nehisi Coates

Seyla Benhabib
on liberalism in crisis

Daniel Immerwahr
on Jill Lepore



Kate Aronoff
on climate politics

Randall Kennedy
on Clarence Thomas

Adom Getachew
on Pan-Africanism

Rumaan Alam
on Zadie Smith

**Trump Gives
Peace a Bad Name**
ROBERT BOROSAGE

THE Nation.

FALL

SPECIAL ISSUE

BOOKS



EdH

DOWNLOAD

CSS Notes, Books, MCQs, Magazines



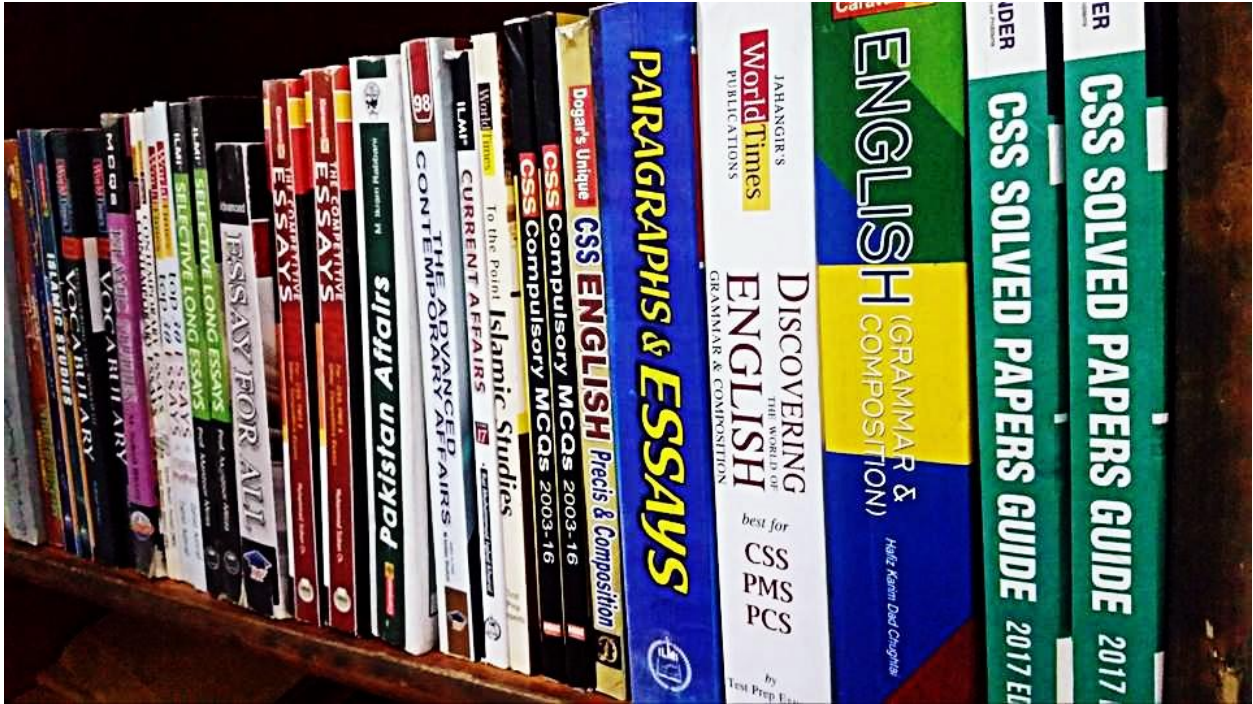
THE CSS POINT
Yes We Can Do It!

WWW.THECSSPOINT.COM

- **Download CSS Notes**
- **Download CSS Books**
- **Download CSS Magazines**
- **Download CSS MCQs**
- **Download CSS Past Papers**

*The CSS Point, Pakistan's The Best
Online FREE Web source for All CSS
Aspirants.*

Email: info@thecsspoint.com



BUY CSS / PMS / NTS & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE BOOKS
ONLINE **CASH ON DELIVERY** ALL OVER PAKISTAN

Visit Now:

WWW.CSSBOOKS.NET

For Oder & Inquiry
Call/SMS/WhatsApp

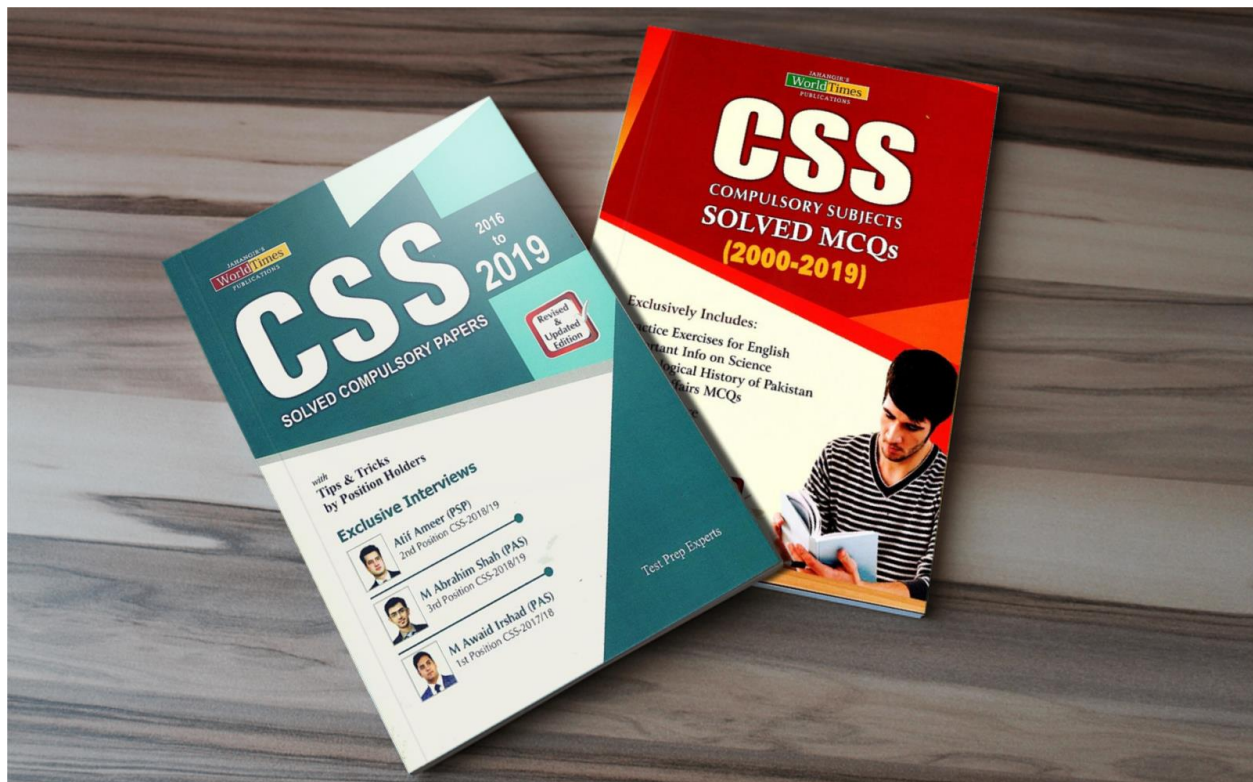
0333 6042057 – 0726 540316

CSS Compulsory Solved MCQs from 2000 to 2019

&

CSS Compulsory Solved Subjective Papers from 2016 to 2019

ORDER NOW!



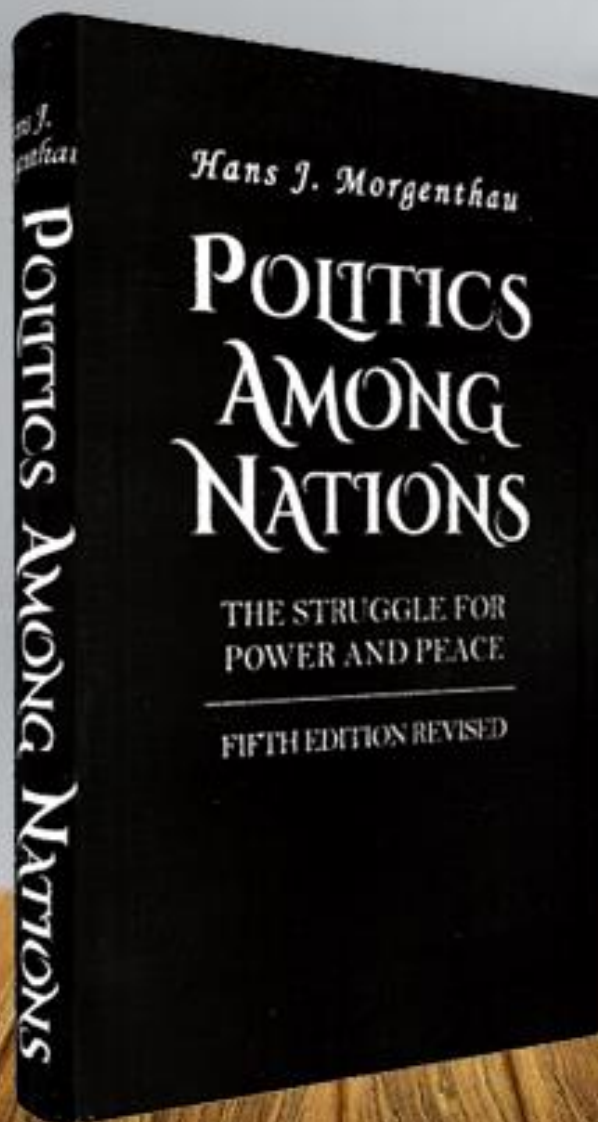


For Order Call/SMS 03336042057 ~ 0726540141

Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power & Peace

By Hans Morgenthau

Order Now



30% OFF

CALL OR SMS
03336042057



www.danzoman.com

Kids Clothing Online Shop

Best available Kids Dresses in Pakistan



What future are you investing in?



We believe that investors who avoid fossil fuels are not only protecting their portfolios, they are also protecting their future.

Invest in the Domini Impact Equity FundSM



www.domini.com
1-800-762-6814

Before investing, consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses. Contact us for a prospectus containing this information. Read it carefully.

The Domini Funds are not insured and are subject to market, market segment, style and foreign investing risks. You may lose money. DSIL Investment Services LLC, Distributor, member FINRA. 9/19



Join the conversation,
every Thursday,
on the **Start Making
Sense** podcast.



Subscribe wherever you get your podcasts or go to **TheNation.com/StartMakingSense** to listen today.

- STACEY ABRAMS MARGARET ATWOOD CHARLES M. BLOW NOAM CHOMSKY DAVID COLE MIKE DAVIS ELIZABETH DREW BARBARA EHRENREICH FRANCES FITZGERALD ERIC FONER THOMAS FRANK ALEX GIBNEY MICHELLE GOLDBERG AMY GOODMAN CHRIS HAYES SEYMOUR HERSH MARGO JEFFERSON DAVID CAY JOHNSTON NAOMI KLEIN RACHEL KUSHNER VIET THANH NGUYEN NORMAN LEAR GREIL MARCUS JANE MAYER BILL MCKIBBEN WALTER MOSLEY JOHN NICHOLS LAWRENCE O'DONNELL RICK PERLSTEIN LAURA POITRAS KATHA POLLITT ROBERT REICH JOY REID FRANK RICH BERNIE SANDERS ANNA DEAVERE SMITH EDWARD SNOWDEN REBECCA SOLNIT MARGARET TALBOT CALVIN TRILLIN KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL YANIS VAROUFAKIS JOAN WALSH AMY WILENTZ GARY YOUNGE DAVE ZIRIN

—Hosted by **Jon Wiener**

A Matter of Degrees

I have been most interested in *The Nation's* coverage of the climate crisis, particularly Daniel Judt's "Climate Injustice Hits Home" [October 7]. However, in many publications, including *The Nation*, the projected temperature increase is expressed in Celsius instead of Fahrenheit. I find that misleading to US readers, who may not be accustomed to the metric system and may find it harder to take climate change seriously when expressed in Celsius—"What's a few degrees? Nothing serious." But if *The Nation* and other publications would express temperature projections in Fahrenheit, that might help highlight the crisis.

MARYANNE BUCHANAN
AKRON, OHIO

Devil in the Dixie

I want to thank Patricia J. Williams for unpacking the disturbing and painful prettification of Confederate slavery ["Plantation Blues," October 14]. A few years ago, my family visited the upscale Hilton Head resorts in South Carolina for a music festival. Numerous gated communities (all-white, of course) have "plantation" in their names. Nobody but our family seemed embarrassed by this vicarious enjoyment of slave owners' privileges.

ANDREW ORAM
ARLINGTON, MASS.

Rush to Judgment

Many thanks for Eric Alterman's column "Vicious Cycle" [October 14], in which he summarizes three books tackling the mystery of the Trump presidency. I must say that I am in most agreement with the talk radio theory put forward by Brian Rosenwald in *Talk Radio's America*. I was married to a registered Republican for years. I can almost tell you to the day when he started listening to Rush

Limbaugh. Every night, it was another outrageous tale of terror that started with "You'll never guess what they are going to do now." "They" were the liberals. My now former husband became suspicious, agitated, angry, and xenophobic. Talk radio let him off the hook. He was no longer complicit in the creation of his own unfulfilled life. "They" were.

HELEN TEMPLE
LONG BEACH, CALIF.

Tag-Teaming the Primary

That Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren stick together ["Bernie and Liz" by D.D. Guttenplan, October 14] is a tribute to their progressivism and their refusal to play politics as usual. Only one, however, can win the Democratic nomination for president, not both. Changes in the Democratic Party's rules governing the nomination in 2020 give one of them the opportunity to win, but as the polls stand now, only with the cooperation of the other.

In terms of Democratic primary polling, Biden and Warren are running quite close; neither has a majority in most states. The sum of their votes, however, could constitute a majority. If the situation stays the same through the early primaries, Warren and Sanders could ensure that one of them will win the nomination: They could jointly issue a statement acknowledging that neither is likely to have a majority of delegates when the primaries and caucuses are over; consequently, the one with fewer delegates would withdraw in favor of the other. The withdrawal could be delayed until May or June, permitting both to continue campaigning and emphasizing progressive policies.

Let's hope they continue to work together in that way and their supporters show the same generosity.

NEIL A. (TONY) HOLTZMAN
MENLO PARK, CALIF.

letters@thenation.com

The Nation.

since 1865

Giving Peace a Bad Name

Donald Trump's abrupt order to withdraw US troops from the edges of Syria has unleashed horrors there—and a political firestorm here. By justifying the slapdash retreat of US forces under the banner of “ending endless wars,” Trump could well wind up giving peace a bad name.

Trump's fiasco surely deserves the stinging rebuke he has received from both parties in the House of Representatives. The president's casual green light to the Turkish invasion of northern Syria, though put on hold by a cease-fire after Vice President Mike Pence's meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has resulted in hundreds of casualties and thousands of refugees, betrayed our Kurdish allies, expanded Russian and Iranian influence, and left American troops both ashamed and at risk. But amid the ruins, it is worth remembering that we should never have been in this position in the first place.

Joe Biden was rewriting history when he sputtered, during the most recent Democratic presidential debate, that “with regard to regime change in Syria, that has not been the policy [that] we change the regime.” In 2011, as a revolt against Bashar al-Assad's repression spread, President Barack Obama announced that Syria's dictator must go, froze Syrian assets subject to US jurisdiction, and imposed economic sanctions. By 2012, the United States was sending direct support to various rebel groups. When Assad proved more resilient than expected—and Russia and Iran came to his aid—Obama sensibly chose not to escalate. Instead, the US dispatched a small military force to Syria to recruit primarily Kurdish rebels to take on ISIS, backed by US air raids, while continuing to oppose Assad. The Kurds consolidated control over about a quarter of Syrian territory.

This armed American invasion of a sovereign nation was and is without legal sanction. Syria posed no threat to the United States and did not invite US troops in. The Obama administration had no resolution from the United Nations or any mandate from Congress. Military coordination with the Kurds outraged Turkey, our NATO ally, which considers them terrorist separatists. After ISIS was largely defeated, token US forces remained to deter Syria

from reclaiming its territory and Turkey from invading. But the implicit position of the foreign policy establishment—that US forces should stay indefinitely in a sovereign nation without permission—was never tenable.

Bipartisan outrage over Trump's folly has erased all this from the public discourse. During that debate, Biden called Trump's act the “most shameful thing a president has done in modern history”—ignoring, say, George W. Bush's ruinous war against Iraq, the use of state torture in the War on Terrorism, and even the previous betrayal of the Kurds by Henry Kissinger. Pete Buttigieg, a veteran of the Afghanistan War, warned that the betrayal was what happens “when we think our only choices are between endless war or total isolation.” Cory Booker echoed him, arguing that “we cannot allow the Russians to continue to grow in influence by abandoning the world stage.” The notion that Trump (who just dispatched more troops to Saudi Arabia) is “abandoning the world stage” is risible.

Happily, not all of the candidates lost their bearings. Elizabeth Warren argued that we should get the troops out of the Middle East but should do it the “right way,” via a “negotiated solution.” Beto O'Rourke reminded viewers of the importance of diplomacy and “resolving our foreign policy goals not on the backs of 18- and 19- and 20-year-olds anymore.” The billionaire Tom Steyer noted that the “most important international problem that we're facing...which is climate” can't be solved by the US alone and requires taking on rapacious corporations.

A presidential debate is hardly the setting for a serious policy discussion. But Democratic leaders have brandished the same bellicosity, rushing to rebuke Trump and join Republican Senator Lindsey Graham on the need for “crippling sanctions” against Turkey. Senator Chuck Schumer even argued



UPFRONT

- 3 **Giving Peace a Bad Name**
Robert L. Borosage
- 4 **Rest in Power, Elijah Cummings**
John Nichols
- 5 **Asking for a Friend**
Liza Featherstone
- COLUMNS**
- 6 **Between the Lines**
They'll Be Watching Us
Laila Lalami
- 10 **Beneath the Radar**
Bored to Submission
Gary Younge
- 11 **Deadline Poet**
Why Trump Released a Transcript That Revealed Him Committing a Crime
Calvin Trillin

Books & the Arts

- 13 **An Ongoing Battle**
Elias Rodriques
In his debut novel, Ta-Nehisi Coates sets out to recover a more usable past.
- 18 **The Center Does Not Hold**
Daniel Immerwahr
Jill Lepore insists that liberals should take back the idea of the nation from the right. But should they?
- 23 **A Fuller Freedom**
Adom Getachew
The lost promise of Pan-Africanism
- 28 **High Liberalism**
Seyla Benhabib
What is living and what is dead in John Rawls's theory of justice?
- 35 **The Apparatchik**
Randall Kennedy
The rise of Clarence Thomas
- 38 **Things Are Bleak!**
Kate Aronoff
Addressing climate change will take a whole lot more than changing our diets.
- 42 **The Urge to Be Good**
Rumaan Alam
Zadie Smith's new short story collection offers us cautionary tales and experimental riffs.

VOLUME 309, NUMBER 12,
NOVEMBER 11/18, 2019

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers October 29 at TheNation.com

Cover illustration by Erin Hanson



BY THE NUMBERS

17M

US voters purged from states' voter rolls from 2016 to 2018

15

States with more-restrictive voter ID laws than they had in 2010

12

States that have made it harder to register to vote since 2010

4

States that made it more difficult for students to vote from 2016 to 2018

1,500

Twitter accounts suspended for posting intentionally misleading election-related content, such as the wrong day of the 2018 midterms

235K

Number of voters that Ohio planned to purge from its rolls this year

20%

Percentage of that number who were active voters who would have been erroneously prevented from voting

—Alice Markham-Cantor

for putting the troops back in. *Washington Post* columnist Dana Milbank exalted that Democrats “flipped the script on national security” and were now able to paint Trump’s Republicans as the “party of cut and run.”

Most striking in the presidential debate was the stark contrast between economic and national security policy. On the former, progressives have driven the most radical agenda since at least the New Deal. Medicare for All, tuition-free public college, taxing the rich, the Green New Deal, universal child care and pre-K, fair trade—bold progressive reforms now frame the discussion. Even Buttigieg, the man from McKinsey, embraces a tax on wealth. Steyer says corporations own the government. Andrew Yang says the opioid epidemic is “capitalism run amok.”

On national security, however, the establishment’s death grip is stronger, despite a dismal record of misadventures. Democrats are more comfortable raging about Vladimir Putin and jumping on Trump’s grotesqueries than laying out an alternative vision of how the US should live in the world. This is perilous politically: Americans are tired of wars without end and without victory on the other side of the world, and Democrats should be wary of ceding the opposition to “endless wars” to Trump.

It is also wrongheaded. This country desperately needs to rein in its interventionist appetites, build international alternatives to policing the world, and give far more attention and priority to addressing the present danger of climate change and reversing the ominous lurch into a new nuclear arms race.

The delicious pleasure of branding Republicans as the “party of cut and run” offers a sugar high—one that is surely dangerous to the health of the party and the country.

ROBERT L. BOROSAGE FOR THE NATION

Democrats are more comfortable raging about Vladimir Putin than laying out an alternative foreign policy.

Rest in Power

Representative Elijah Cummings linked the struggle for workers’ rights and the struggle for civil rights.

There are progressive members of Congress who cast good votes in favor of economic, social, and racial justice, peace, and the planet and who understand this to be the purpose of their service. Then there are the rarer members like Representative Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, who have always recognized casting good votes as the starting point for a service that embraces movements far from Capitol Hill. Cummings, who died October 17 at the age of 68, is being honored for his able work on the congressional committee charged with holding the powerful to account. But it should be remembered as well that he spent an extraordinary amount of time

picketing and rallying and marching with working-class people who have had few congressional allies so diligent and determined as the Baltimore Democrat.

Cummings cast the right votes—against the war in Iraq and the Patriot Act, for higher wages and civil rights. He joined the Congressional Progressive Caucus and chaired the Congressional Black Caucus. He defended the system of checks and balances during Republican and Democratic administrations alike. After the Democrats took control of the House in 2019, Cummings led inquiries into the Trump administration, enraging the president. Last July he attacked the representative as “a brutal bully” who had “failed badly!” as a member of the House since 1996 and dismissed Cummings’s beloved Baltimore—a city of about 600,000—as “a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess” where “no human being would want to live.” A son of the civil rights movement who recalled being “spit upon, threatened and called everything but children of God” in 1962 when he and other African American youths marched to integrate a public pool in Baltimore, Cummings could handle the presidential bluster. But the representative raised his deep, resonant voice in defense of his constituents and his community.

“Those in the highest levels of government must stop invoking fear, using racist language, and encouraging reprehensible behavior,” he declared at the National Press Club. “As a country, we finally must say that enough is enough—that we are done with the hateful rhetoric, that we are done with the mass shootings, that we are done with the white supremacists, domestic terrorists who are terrorizing our country and fighting against everything America stands for. We all are sick of this.”

It was a powerful moment that confirmed Cummings’s absolute devotion to the community where his parents—both sharecroppers from South Carolina—settled after moving north. Yet those of us who covered Cummings can easily recall moments when he displayed a similarly impassioned solidarity with racial justice activists and union workers who were struggling outside the glare of the cameras.

Few members of Congress showed up so frequently at rallies to defend the US Postal Service, which Cummings hailed as “one of America’s most treasured and trusted public institutions,” a service that “reaches every corner of every state, touches the lives of millions of Americans and truly binds our nation together.” Even though he was ailing in the past year, he could be seen with his walker marching at the side of federal workers. He would invoke the memory of African American labor leaders like A. Philip Randolph, linking the struggle for workers’ rights with the struggle for civil rights.

In a Congress that is too often biased in favor of corporate interests and their powerful political allies, Elijah Cummings knew what side he was on. “I stand on the shoulders of some people who have been unseen, unnoticed, unappreciated, and unapplauded. But now I’m [going to] run a race for them,” he said in one of his final interviews. Cummings spoke of “a day when I pass my baton on” to others who would carry his righteous struggle forward. That day has sadly come.

JOHN NICHOLS

COMMENT

Asking for a Friend



Boycott or Benefit?

Dear Liza,

Our unincorporated community in Northern California has been economically depressed (though culturally rich) for decades. We have struggled just to get sidewalks and streetlights on our main street.

Within the last year, two wealthy individuals have bought up a lot of real estate on the commercial strip. They're planning new development, in the process helping to address our affordable housing crisis. They also respect the history of our area. I'm an artist and historian, and they've asked me to be involved in bringing art and history into the proposed project.

Then someone learned that one of these rich folks made homophobic, anti-marriage-equality Facebook posts and that their business partner was backing a Tea Party group. Outrage blossomed on social media, with many vowing to boycott their businesses.

I worry that a boycott would hurt the locals who work for them. Additionally, the investors are making a commitment to the area that no one else has. This situation is a stark example of the effects of wealth concentration. We are being all but forced to accept the capitalists' abhorrent views in order to receive the benefit of their wealth. Is a community boycott the best way to react? What else could we do?

—Artistic Serf

Dear Serf,

Hold a town meeting and abide by whatever is decided there. If the businesses are national or global, your community may be too small to have an impact through a boycott. What about a commercial rent strike on these investors' main street properties until they apologize for the homophobic Facebook posts and cease funding Tea Party organizations? A labor strike involving anyone who works for them—that includes you—could strengthen this effort. But if people decide not to jeopardize the investment, that's also reasonable. One problem with capitalism is that when the 99 percent lack leverage, capital flight may be too costly to risk.

Dear Liza,

Our school district (28, in the New York City borough of Queens) is embarking on a diversity plan, and I am confident that as a result, we will be enrolling our children in private school or moving to the suburbs. In my heart, I understand and believe in the goals of such plans. I feel strongly that

all children deserve access to a top-tier education. But for our family, it would not be realistic to have my child take a 45-plus-minute bus ride in the opposite direction of our jobs for a school that has a lower rating than the one a few blocks from our home. For the first time, my progressive values conflict with my family's best interests, and that is unsettling. If our desegregation plan is similar to the one recently adopted in District 15 (in Brooklyn), a large percentage of seats (over 60 percent) in each middle school will be reserved for families classified as low income, living in temporary housing, or English language learners. Those are not good odds for my family. In our area, many lack access to subways. Our neighborhood has mostly dual-career households; both parents have to get to work on time, and they rely on access to local after-school care. How can we be expected to embrace a change that will cause logistical mayhem? How do we move forward? —Queens Parent

Dear Parent,

There is no plan in your district yet! "There is a lot of misinformation and hysteria," says Vajah Ramjattan, the president of your local Community Education Council. The district has a \$200,000 grant from the city to create a diversity working group, which will spend about two years holding meetings with parents, students, teachers, principals, and all affected community members on questions of diversity and integration in the district. The working group doesn't exist yet, though it may be early November. Its meetings will be held several times a month; times and dates will be announced on the CEC's website. After all this listening, the group will make recommenda-

(continued on page 8)

Questions?
Ask Liza at
TheNation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend





PRIVATE PRISONS

A Blow to ICE

In October, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 32, which enacts a state-wide ban on private prisons and immigration detention facilities. The first of its kind in the United States, the bill prohibits California's Department of Corrections from contracting with private prison companies or renewing existing contracts. The move is a win for the prison and immigration reform movements and a blow to Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which reportedly incarcerates about 3,700 migrants in the state's four privately run detention centers.

The ban comes after mounting protests. In California's largest privately run detention center, a Department of Homeland Security report noted concerns about delayed medical care, the overuse of solitary confinement, and nooses found in cells. About 8.5 percent of the people incarcerated in the United States are held in private prisons, so the ban is only one part of dismantling the broader prison industrial complex. But about 70 percent of detained immigrants are held in private facilities, which means the law significantly diminishes ICE's ability to imprison migrants.

In a statement, one of the bill's sponsors, Democratic State Assembly Member Rob Bonta, said, "By ending the use of for-profit private prisons and detention facilities, we are sending a powerful message that we vehemently oppose the practice of profiteering off the backs of Californians in custody, that we will stand up for the health, safety and welfare of our people, and that we are committed to humane treatment for all."

—Teddy Ostrow

They'll Be Watching Us

From the streets to our smartphones, surveillance has taken on frightening proportions.

Nearly every day in my neighborhood, I walk by signs placed at eye level outside homes and businesses, warning me, "This property is under surveillance." Despite their ubiquity, these signs always make me pause. If what is surveilled is property, then what does that make those of us who live under the constant scrutiny of cameras at the grocery store and the bank, in hallways and elevators, at street intersections and public parks? My resentment at being observed wherever I go strikes some of my friends and family as a strange quirk. Even my teenager rolls her eyes at me.

But as Assia Boundaoui shows in her chilling documentary *The Feeling of Being Watched*, I have reason to be concerned. Boundaoui, the daughter of Algerian refugees who settled in Bridgeview, Illinois, recalls waking up at 3 AM when she was 16 to find two men atop a telephone pole outside her window, fiddling with equipment and soldering wires. Terrified, she ran to her mother to report the incident, expecting that the police would be called. "Calm down," her mother replied. "It's probably just the FBI. Go back to sleep."

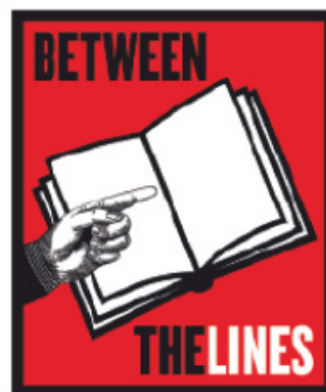
The year was 2001, but the surveillance of the Arab community in Bridgeview started years earlier, under an FBI probe known as Operation Vulgar Betrayal. Boundaoui interviews her family, friends, neighbors, and members of the congregation at her local mosque. Some of them relay disturbing anecdotes, like having cars parked outside their homes for hours on end and men in suits going through their trash cans. Others refuse to speak to her on camera. An effect of decades of law enforcement surveillance is a sense of paranoia that has become pervasive in the community, as well as a deep fear of speaking out about anything political.

To fight this fear and silence, Boundaoui filed Freedom of Information Act requests with the FBI and, when they were rejected, sued to compel the release of the requested documents. She eventually prevailed in court, and more than 33,000 redacted pages have since been given to her, documenting years of surveillance of the entire Arab community in Bridgeview. *The Feeling of Being Watched*, which was shown at several film festivals and recently

screened on PBS, made me reflect on how the government violated the privacy rights of hundreds of people with impunity. It managed to do this because the surveillance targeted a vulnerable constituency: Arab refugees and immigrants, along with their American children.

This is by no means the only surveillance operation focusing on nonwhite communities in the country. A few years ago in a Pulitzer Prize-winning series, the Associated Press revealed how the New York Police Department conducted secret surveillance of Muslims in the city. Plainclothes officers were sent into largely Muslim neighborhoods, where they visited mosques and businesses, infiltrated student groups, and gained access to private homes in order to collect data. The program originated with a CIA officer in 2003 when he started working with the NYPD. After a decade of surveillance, however, the police failed to generate a single credible terrorism lead and shuttered the program when it came under public scrutiny.

Other victims of targeted surveillance include Black Lives Matter activists in New York, whose smart devices mysteriously switched off—as if controlled remotely—while they were recording BLM demonstrations in 2014. New York City police took and circulated pictures of the marchers protesting the killing of Eric Garner, a black man who was arrested by police for selling loose cigarettes and placed in a lethal choke hold by an NYPD officer. And in October an investigative report by Univision showed that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents tracked the mobile phones of undocumented immigrants, using stingray spying devices ordinarily seen in counterterrorism probes. These secret programs are part of a long history of covert government surveillance going back at least to CoIntelPro, an FBI program that began in 1956 and was directed against communists, Black Power activists, anti-war demonstrators, feminists, and many other domestic groups.



Facebook has flouted so many laws that it is frankly alarming to have the company in possession of so much private data.



Laila Lalami

*Introducing
the future of personal
transportation.*



Also available in Black



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

It's not a Wheelchair...

It's not a Power Chair...

It's a Zinger Chair!

More and more Americans are reaching the age where mobility is an everyday concern. Whether from an injury or from the aches and pains that come from getting older—getting around isn't as easy as it used to be. You may have tried a power chair or a scooter. The *Zinger* is NOT a power chair or a scooter! The *Zinger* is quick and nimble, yet it is not prone to tipping like many scooters. Best of all, it weighs only 47.2 pounds and folds and unfolds with ease. You can take it almost anywhere, providing you with independence and freedom.

Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a personal electric vehicle that's truly unique. They created a battery that provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. The *Zinger* features two steering levers, one on either side of the seat. The user pushes both levers down to go forward, pulls them both up to brake, and pushes one while pulling the other to turn to either side. This enables great mobility, the ability to turn on a dime and to pull right up to tables or desks. The controls

are right on the steering lever so it's simple to operate and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the *Zinger* is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk— you can even gate-check it at the airport like a stroller. Think about it, you can take your *Zinger* almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your independence and quality of life?

Zinger Chair®

Call now and receive a utility basket absolutely FREE with your order.

1-888-443-7022

Please mention code 112075 when ordering.



- Just think of the places you can go:*
- Shopping • Air Travel • Bus Tours
 - Restaurants— ride right up to the table! • Around town or just around your house

The Zinger Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair, and has not been submitted to the FDA for review or clearance. Zinger is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid.

If American constitutional protections mean anything, then the people need greater transparency and government accountability.

Some people might justify these surveillance programs as necessary for security. Others might dismiss them as harmless, especially in the context of omnipresent technologies with embedded tracking capabilities. But if you haven't committed a crime or given your consent to being watched, then law enforcement agencies have no business monitoring you. When the government does otherwise, it subjects communities that it perceives as undesirable to a form of social control.

Increasingly, however, surveillance is the work of private companies—Facebook and Google, for example—that share data with law enforcement. Since tech companies are accountable to shareholders rather than users, their mechanisms of data sharing fall outside the realm of democratic oversight. Facebook has flouted so many laws and been fined so many times that it is frankly alarming to have the company in possession of so much private data. Yet our lawmakers seem to

be in no hurry to force it to abide by basic standards of privacy.

My apprehensions about surveillance stem from experience. I grew up in Morocco during a period of state surveillance and repression that came to be known as the Years of Lead. Hardly a week went by when my parents didn't warn us that walls have ears, by which they meant that we should watch what we said in public and steer clear of anything remotely political, lest we get reported to the king's intelligence services. It is the great irony of my life that although I now live in the "land of the free," the warning still applies.

If American constitutional protections mean anything, then we need greater transparency and accountability when it comes to government surveillance programs. And considering how rapidly the technology changes, it is imperative that we bring corporate surveillance under democratic oversight as well. ■

(continued from page 5)

tions. Solutions might indeed emerge from this process, but it will be a long process, and you'll have plenty of input.

I would urge you to go to the meetings. If you don't think the CEC is doing enough to get the word out, let its members know that.

You should support integration. New York City's schools are among the most segregated in the nation. Going to diverse schools increases everyone's social intelligence; in this respect, it's as good for rich kids or white kids as for anyone else. In an unequal system, with some people's schools

better than others, segregation is a kind of resource hoarding by the privileged, and desegregating schools is redistributive. All parents want the best for their kids. We have to fight to expand the pie and redistribute the pieces at the same time. Government desegregation policies significantly reduce the black-white test score gap without harming white kids' achievement, and no other reform does this, journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones has written. Such policies also boost outcomes for black kids in ways far more important than test scores: less poverty, less incarceration, and longer lives.

With such stakes, it seems OK to inconvenience some people. And if your district does take action on segregation, the impact on your family may not be what you imagine. If District 28 ends up with a plan similar to District 15's—and we have no idea whether it will—your kids might end up less likely to attend your zoned middle school than they are at present. But keep in mind, you'd list only schools that you want on your application and might well get something else that's acceptable to you. Remember, too, that middle school kids in New York City can use public transit to get themselves to and from school and after-school activities, so your work locations don't necessarily matter. (Although the specter of busing haunts these debates, long commutes to school are common in New York City not because of desegregation policies but because of school choice.) The middle school process in the city has an appeal period, so if your kids are placed in schools that are unreasonably far away, don't despair. Reforms can—and should—undermine privilege, but they don't take away your ability to advocate insistently for your kids. No one's asking you to give that up. ■

COMIX NATION

PETER KUPER



THE *Nation*. Cruise

LAST CHANCE!

Last chance to join *The Nation* on our 2019 cruise!

Sailing December 8-15, 2019, from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with stunning ports of call in Half Moon Cay, Bahamas; Falmouth, Jamaica; George Town, Grand Cayman; and Cozumel, Mexico.

On board, you'll meet a star-packed roster, including Ai-jen Poo, George Goehl, Zephyr Teachout, William "Fergie" Reid, Linda Burnham, Laura Flanders, Ben Jealous, and *Nation* writers John Nichols, Joan Walsh, Dave Zirin, Sasha Abramsky, Stephen Cohen, and *Nation* editorial director and publisher Katrina vanden Heuvel.

Together we'll explore our roiling political landscape and debate what we can do about it as we enjoy the natural beauty of the Western Caribbean.

Only a few cabins remain. Visit NationCruise.com to secure your spot today!



AI-JEN POO



ZEPHYR TEACHOUT



BEN JEALOUS



KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL



JOHN NICHOLS

NationCruise.com



The Nation purchases carbon offsets to cover the emissions generated by the cruise in order to help mitigate effects on the climate.



Gary Younge



Bored to Submission

Brexit fatigue is real, but it shouldn't be a reason to leave the EU.

PUBLIC PRISONS

An End to Rikers?

The New York City Council voted on October 17 to overhaul the city's corrections system by 2026. The council approved two plans, the first for the construction of four jails—one in every borough except Staten Island. These new jails will support the goal of the second plan: to demolish the massive Rikers Island jail complex, which has housed the city's incarcerated population since the 1930s.

Collectively, the new jails will be designed to hold 3,300 inmates, an estimate based on the projected effects of a series of recently passed criminal justice reform measures, including the near elimination of cash bail. That number is less than half of the city's current jail population of about 7,000.

But opponents note that the plans have committed the city to a fraught process that could result in new jails but not the end of Rikers. The city council committed itself to a zoning proposal that would prohibit incarceration on Rikers, but this may not be guaranteed until 2027, well after Mayor Bill de Blasio leaves office.

"I believe this vote only enriches developers in the short term while leaving the fate of Rikers in the hands of a future mayor and a future council," Brooklyn Councilman Carlos Menchaca said in a statement. "Yet the mayor asks us to trust him. I do not trust the mayor. Do you?" —Molly Minta

There is a moment in the movie *Primary Colors* when presidential candidate Jack Stanton (played by John Travolta) demands that someone call his campaign manager, only to be reminded that he just threw his phone out of the car window in a tantrum. They circle back to look for the phone, which his wife, Susan (played by Emma Thompson), finds in some bushes. "Well, shit," says Jack, "you wouldn't have found it if I hadn't thrown it out of the car."

The prospect of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson (think Donald Trump with a worse dentist but the same hairdresser) taking any credit for the Brexit deal, which has been endorsed by Parliament, is akin to Jack seeking praise for finding his phone. The jam in which the British government has found itself for the past three years was entirely of its own making. The Tories called a referendum, lost it, and have been embroiled in a rancorous process of self-impalement. So far, they have lost two leaders and their majority in Parliament.

Along with stalling the rest of the country's legislative agenda (Brexit consumes everything) and leaving the UK more divided than it has been in living memory (Brexit consumes everyone), Brexiteers may have stupefied their way to some kind of victory.

The tortured back-and-forth between London and Brussels, MPs voting "no" on everything, internecine Conservative rivalries, Labour's circular firing squad, arcane parliamentary procedures, threats of elections, and demands for referendums and prime ministerial resignations have left us in the UK dulled and desensitized.

The rest of Europe is bored with us. It wanted us to stay. We would not. It wanted us to come up with a coherent plan for leaving. We could not. It wanted us to at least agree on what we wanted. We did not know how. Having bent over backward to help us avoid committing significant self-harm, it is now in the process of checking out. If you must play with matches, at least do it outside the house, it seems to be saying. In his last address to the European Parliament, the outgoing president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, called Brexit "a waste of time and energy."

And perhaps most important, we are bored

with us. It's been three years now. There are only so many Facebook fallouts, Twitter spats, family rows, and dinner party disasters you can have about something that has not happened. Brexit has worn us out.

Ultimately, this fatigue was the decisive factor nudging Parliament toward accepting Johnson's deal. After three years of everything being threatened and nothing actually happening, a few politicians who had resisted finally succumbed—not many, but enough to make the difference.

That's more than a pity; it's an abdication of responsibility. This is a terrible deal for Britain, far worse than the one offered by Theresa May and rejected by Parliament last year. Environmental, consumer, and labor protections, which under her deal would have been legally binding, will now be optional, and any possibility of having a new customs union is ruled out.

There was no great feat of brinkmanship in getting to this point. Johnson merely threw his erstwhile ally the Democratic Unionist Party under the bus, reneging on a promise he made a year earlier over the Irish border. Meanwhile, he pushed through his demand that British businesses no longer have to align themselves with EU regulations.

This tells us two things that will shape what comes next. First, in the finest tradition of austerity politics, the Tories have bought themselves out of this crisis by making working people pay. This exposes Brexit for the neoliberal race-to-the-bottom project wrapped in a Union Jack that, for its architects, it always was.

There has never been a mandate for this agenda. What the 2016 referendum delivered was a very narrow majority for leaving the European Union—under conditions undeclared and unknown. It is in that crude majoritarian vein that we now continue with Johnson's narrow acceptance in Parliament.



There are only so many Facebook fallouts, Twitter spats, and dinner party disasters you can have about something that has not happened.

A handful (19 out of 245) of Labour MPs—many from constituencies that voted to leave—backed his deal so we could, as one put it, “move on” and “get Brexit done.”

That is a mistake. The fatigue is real, but their constituents won't thank them for curing their boredom by making them broke. Johnson, they say, has promised that even though the guarantees on workers' rights and environmental standards have been deliberately removed, he will not go back on them.

Which brings us to the second point: Johnson is a habitual liar. There is no more polite way to say this. He was fired from his first journalism job after fabricating a quote, was fired from the Tory shadow cabinet for lying to the leader about an affair, has often professed his support for a single market that he is about to bring us out of, and has completely shafted his coalition partner the DUP.

I wouldn't trust him with a lunch order, let alone the livelihoods of working families. Nor should anyone else.

This is why even after Johnson's deal was approved, Parliament demanded an extension so that it could read the small print. Too few, even on the Tory benches, trust a Johnson-led government. Johnson's skill has been to make enough Brexit hard-liners fear that if they don't accept his deal, then there will be a second referendum that they might lose. And to convince enough Remain MPs that if they don't accept his deal, then the alternative will be no deal. On the night of the vote itself, he said that if Parliament rejected his three-day timetable, he would call an election. When they called his bluff, he said he'd go back to Brussels. We have yet to see if his ability to leverage his renown for duplicity has its limits. Those who have not been bored into submission have been lied into it. ■

This exposes Brexit for the neoliberal race-to-the-bottom project wrapped in a Union Jack that, for its architects, it always was.

COMIC TURN / ROBERT GROSSMAN

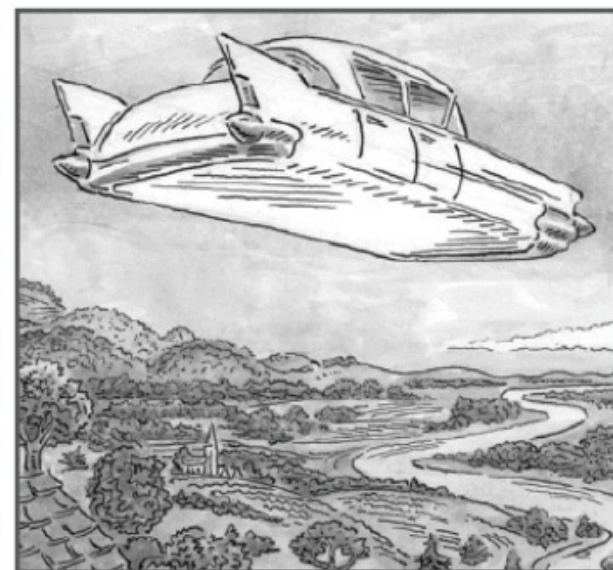
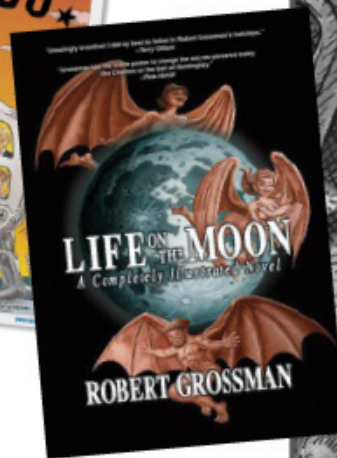
Life on the Moon

Robert Grossman (1940–2018) was an illustrator and *Nation* cover artist who caricatured political figures for decades. Before his death, he drew *Life on the Moon*, a graphic novel published this year and based on the Great Moon Hoax of 1835, when a New York newspaper ran a series of articles about a civilization on the moon.

WHY TRUMP RELEASED A TRANSCRIPT THAT REVEALED HIM COMMITTING A CRIME

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

The call, he said, was proved proper. He's called it "perfect" all along. That's just more proof, if more were needed: He can't distinguish right from wrong.



LIFE ON THE MOON
BY ROBERT GROSSMAN
YOE BOOKS. 400 PP. \$40

TOP LEFT: JAN WELT (COURTESY OF THE GROSSMAN FAMILY)

Library of America

Rediscover



**WHERE THE
LIGHT FALLS**
Selected Stories
of Nancy Hale

Lauren Groff, editor
Twenty-five brilliant
stories by an unsung
20th-century writer.
372 pp. // \$26.00 cloth

"What an exhilarating book!"
Ann Beattie

**THE AMERICAN
CANON**
Literary Genius from
Emerson to Pynchon
HAROLD BLOOM

David Mikics, editor
Our foremost literary
critic on our most
essential writers.
435 pp. // \$32 cloth

JOAN DIDION
The 1960s & 70s

Run River
Slouching Towards Bethlehem
Play It As It Lays
A Book of Common Prayer
The White Album

David L. Ulin, editor
The definitive Didion
edition begins.

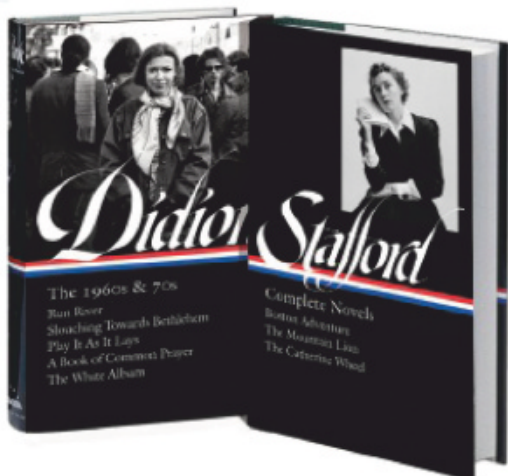
980 pp. // \$39.95 cl. // LOA #325

JEAN STAFFORD
Complete Novels

Boston Adventure
The Mountain Lion
The Catherine Wheel

Kathryn Davis, editor
Gathered for the first time,
all three novels by a mid-
century master.

904 pp. // \$40 cloth // LOA #324



www.loa.org

 /LibraryAmerica

 /libraryofamerica

 /libraryofamerica

Distributed by Penguin Random House, Inc.

The Nation.

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR & PUBLISHER: Katrina vanden Heuvel

EDITOR: D.D. Guttenplan **PRESIDENT:** Erin O'Mara
EXECUTIVE DIGITAL EDITOR: Anna Hiatt

LITERARY EDITOR: David Marcus

SENIOR EDITORS: Atossa Araxia Abrahamian, Roane Carey, Madeline Leung
Coleman (*acting*), Emily Douglas, Lizzy Ratner, Christopher Shay

MANAGING EDITOR: Rose D'Amora

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Robert Best

COPY DIRECTOR: Jose Fidelino

RESEARCH DIRECTOR: Miguel Salazar

COPY EDITOR: Rick Szykowny

MULTIMEDIA EDITOR: Francis Reynolds

ENGAGEMENT EDITOR: Annie Shields

ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR: Kevin Lozano

ASSISTANT COPY EDITORS: Lisa Vandepaer, Haesun Kim

WEB COPY EDITOR/ PRODUCER: Sandy McCroskey

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR: Ricky D'Ambrose

INTERNS: Mary Akdemir, Spencer Green, Alice Markham-Cantor, Molly Minta, Shirley
Ngozi Nwangwa, Teddy Ostrow • Mary Esposito (*Design*), Acacia Handel (*Business*)

ASSOCIATE WASHINGTON EDITOR: Zoë Carpenter

NATIONAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENTS: William Greider, Jeet Heer, John Nichols,
Joan Walsh

INVESTIGATIVE EDITOR AT LARGE: Mark Hertsgaard

EDITOR AT LARGE: Chris Hayes

COLUMNISTS: Eric Alterman, Laila Lalami, Katha Pollitt, Patricia J. Williams, Kai Wright,
Gary Younge

DEPARTMENTS: *Architecture*, Michael Sorkin; *Art*, Barry Schwabsky; *Civil Rights*, Rev. Dr.
William J. Barber II, *Defense*, Michael T. Klare; *Environment*, Mark Hertsgaard; *Films*,
Stuart Klawans; *Legal Affairs*, David Cole; *Music*, David Hajdu, Bijan Stephen; *Poetry*,
Stephanie Burt, Carmen Giménez Smith; *Sex*, JoAnn Wypijewski; *Sports*, Dave Zirin;
Strikes, Jane McAlevey; *United Nations*, Barbara Crossette; *Deadline Poet*, Calvin Trillin

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Robert L. Borosage, Stephen F. Cohen, Marc Cooper, Mike
Davis, Slavenka Drakulic, Bob Dreyfuss, Susan Faludi, Thomas Ferguson, Melissa
Harris-Perry, Doug Henwood, Max Holland, Naomi Klein, Sarah Leonard, Maria
Margaronis, Michael Moore, Christian Parenti, Eyal Press, Joel Rogers, Karen
Rothmyer, Robert Scheer, Herman Schwartz, Bruce Shapiro, Edward Sorel, Jessica
Valenti, Jon Wiener, Amy Wilentz, Art Winslow

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: James Carden, Michelle Chen, Bryce Covert, Liza Featherstone,
Laura Flanders, Julianne Hing, Joshua Holland, Greg Kaufmann, Richard Kreitner,
Dani McClain, Collier Meyerson, Scott Sherman, Mychal Denzel Smith

EDITORIAL BOARD: Deepak Bhargava, Kai Bird, Barbara Ehrenreich, Richard Falk,
Frances FitzGerald, Eric Foner, Greg Grandin, Philip Green, Lani Guinier, Richard
Kim, Tony Kushner, Elinor Langer, Malia Lazu, Richard Lingeman, Deborah W. Meier,
Walter Mosley, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Victor Navasky, Pedro Antonio Noguera,
Richard Parker, Michael Pertschuk, Elizabeth Pochoda, Andrea Batista Schlesinger,
Rinku Sen, Zephyr Teachout, Dorian T. Warren, David Weir

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, SPECIAL PROJECTS: Peter Rothberg

VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS: Caitlin Graf

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, CONSUMER MARKETING: Katelyn Belyus

CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER: Olga Nasalskaya

CIRCULATION FULFILLMENT MANAGER: Vivian Gómez-Morillo

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, DEVELOPMENT: Sarah Burke

EMAIL MARKETING MANAGER: Christine Anderson

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE: Guia Marie Del Prado

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT: Yubei Tang

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, ADVERTISING: Suzette Cabildo

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT: Kit Gross

DIGITAL PRODUCTS MANAGER: Joshua Leeman

IT/PRODUCTION MANAGER: John Myers

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: Duane Stapp

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE: Denise Heller

ASSISTANT MANAGER, ACCOUNTING: Alexandra Climciuc

HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR: Lana Gilbert

BUSINESS ADVISER: Teresa Stack

PUBLISHER EMERITUS: Victor Navasky

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: E-mail to letters@thenation.com (300-word limit). Letters are subject to
editing for reasons of space and clarity.

SUBMISSIONS: Go to TheNation.com/submission-guidelines for the query form.

Each issue is also made available at TheNation.com.

Books & the Arts



AN ONGOING BATTLE

Ta-Nehisi Coates's narratives of freedom

by ELIAS RODRIQUES

American history has always been a weapon in the hands of Ta-Nehisi Coates. As a blogger and columnist for *The Atlantic*, he wielded it to chronicle the long assault on black people in America by both the state and private citizens. In his essays on cultural products like HBO's *Confederate*, political events like the elections of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, and the successes, failures, and future of radical movements in America, he has invoked it to argue

Elias Rodriques is a PhD candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. His work has been published in n+1, Bookforum, and elsewhere.

about the causes and effects of our troubling present. For him, America's racist past is key to understanding the afflictions of black communities today.

Coates learned to appreciate history as a young person. As he grew up in the 1980s, his schoolteachers offered a celebratory version of it in the hopes that, as he put it, the hard-won triumphs of African Americans might offer "the curative for black youth who had no aspirations beyond the corner" in the present. Yet as an adult, he embraced a darker version of that history—one that examined at length the reactionary, racist backlash that often followed black victories.

This often pessimistic view of America's past—and the body of historiography that vindicated it—was central to the 2014 article that helped launch him into the national spotlight. In "The Case for Reparations," Coates argued that much of the country's history has been defined by the "armed robbery" of black people by whites. From the brutal theft of black labor via slavery through the predatory practices of the Jim Crow era to today, the state has used and sanctioned violence against African Americans to exploit them. To finally put an end to this regime of subjugation, Coates insisted that Congress should pass HR 40, the

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE CIARDIELLO

long-touted bill to fund an investigation into the amount of reparations due to black people for slavery. This inquiry might yield inconclusive results, but the research would force the United States to account for its sins and, in so doing, help it mature “out of the childhood myth of its innocence into a wisdom worthy of its founders.” A public return to the past, in other words, would change America’s future.

No such bill was passed, and in time Coates turned away from history’s uses and toward its limits. In his 2015 book *Between the World and Me*, he emphasized how history books have failed to capture the immediate experience of racism. After describing several recent police murders of black people to his then-15-year-old son, he insisted that the language used to discuss state violence—phrases as neutral as “race relations” and as critical as “white supremacy”—did not adequately render its human toll. “You must always remember,” he observed, “that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.” The distance between experiencer and observer inherent in any historical inquiry—as well as those of other academic fields—put historians at a disadvantage. It made it impossible, Coates argued, to capture racism’s felt violence; something more was needed if the past was still to be used as a weapon for the present.

In its insistence on what history cannot capture, Coates’s polemic resembles recent scholarly arguments on the historiography of slavery. Saidiya Hartman, in her powerful essay “Venus in Two Acts,” similarly points out that the historian’s main tool, the archive, often obscures black people’s experience of slavery. Instead, the enslaved are abstractly listed as monetary values in logbooks, discussed as property, and so on. Coates agrees in *Between the World and Me* that history too often hides this human experience—not only in the age of slavery but also in its afterlife.

Coates’s latest book, *The Water Dancer*, is his first novel, a work of historical reconstruction that joins the growing body of creative and scholarly works intended to fill this gap. Told from the perspective of Hiram Walker, an enslaved man born in Elm County, Virginia, who eventually joins the Underground Railroad, the novel seeks to capture aspects of black experience difficult to access in archives. In this way, it descends from a large body of fictional slave narratives that came into being in response to William Styron’s 1968 novel *The Confessions of Nat*

The Water Dancer

A Novel

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

One World. 416 pp. \$28

Turner, which projected then-common racial stereotypes onto the history of slavery. Troubled by his portrait of enslaved men, Sherley Anne Williams in *Dessa Rose*, Ernest Gaines in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, and several other authors challenged Styron’s novel by writing their own, which are rooted in visions of black history that do not rely on racial caricatures—a genre that the literary critic Ashraf Rushdy has examined in *Neo-Slave Narratives*. Just as these earlier novels projected black people’s views of themselves onto a past that often obscured them, so too does Coates aim to recover black experiences—the sense of pain and hope, submission and resistance—lost to history.

To capture this experience, Coates supplements realism with the techniques of fantasy and the metaphorical powers of myth. Midway through the novel, Hiram discovers that he has a magic gift: Upon entering a body of water and recalling a deep-seated memory, he can conduct—or teleport—himself to a different body of water that he has seen. Because of this supernatural skill, members of the Underground Railroad recruit him to their cause, and Hiram learns of other enslaved people who have magically freed themselves. This list includes such historical personages as Harriet Tubman, another conductor, and Henry “Box” Brown, who mailed himself across the country in a wooden crate to gain his liberty. The best way to understand enslaved people freeing themselves from such a dominant, repressive system, *The Water Dancer* implies, is to view such feats as fantasy.

For Coates, the magical and the fantastic are also a perfect way to explore something that slavery and its violences obscured: how black people created families and a broader social life despite being trapped in a system that sought to prevent both. While the novel chronicles the fracturing of kin units by slave owners, it simultaneously follows enslaved people who use magic to reunite them.

From the outset, *The Water Dancer* avoids slavery’s terms. On the Lockless plantation in Virginia, where Hiram is born and the novel begins, there are no slaves or slave owners but rather the Tasked and the Quality. As a young child on the Street, where the Tasked of Lockless live, Hiram is singled out almost immedi-

ately as special. He has a near-perfect recall of everything he hears; by the time he is 5, he can sing an entire song after hearing it just once. He will soon discover other, more magical skills, but his natural talent, he insists, is his memory.

The one caesura in his memory is indicative of the Task’s effect on the black people it enslaves. After his father and master, Howell, sells Hiram’s mother when the boy is just 9, Hiram is left with “no pictures, no memory, of any goodbye, indeed no pictures of her at all.” Hiram is forced to find a new mother in Thena, an ornery woman whose children were sold. The two cling to each other and, in so doing, keep kin and culture alive despite the Task’s assaults.

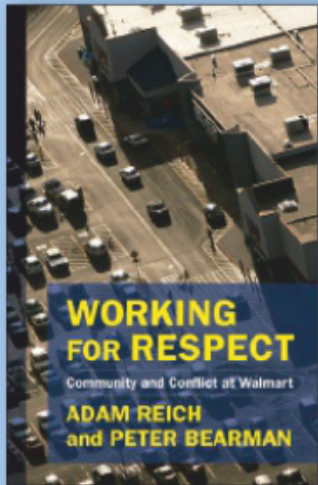
When Hiram is called up to the house by Howell after he turns 12, the boy learns that Lockless’s peculiar institution has perverted the familial relationships of its white residents as well. After Hiram impresses his father with his flawless memory, he begins attending lessons with the man who tutors his white half-brother, Maynard. Being better at his lessons, Hiram comes to think that Lockless has been doomed not by “the land but the men who managed it.” He continues:

My father, like all masters, built an entire apparatus to disguise this weakness, to hide how prostrate they truly were.... We were better than them—we had to be. Sloth was literal death for us, while for them it was the whole ambition of their lives.

Beholden to his father and half-brother but more capable than both, Hiram learns that he will be forced to look after the foolish Maynard as his “personal servant.”

In time, the apparatus of violence built to protect the Task not only alienates Hiram from his family but also compels him to repress his romantic interests. Shortly after he begins as Maynard’s servant, he falls in love with Sophia, a woman on the Street who “belonged to my uncle, my father’s brother, Nathaniel Walker. None needed to guess at the nature of this arrangement.” Worried about the consequences of pursuing her, Hiram realizes that “my own natural wants must forever be bottled up, that I must live in fear of those wants, so that more than I must live in fear of the Quality, I must necessarily live in fear of myself.” The Task, in Hiram’s eyes, remakes him so that he fears not just loving others but his ability to do so.

Hiram does, however, hold on to one hope: the possibility of escape. After he



Working for Respect

Community and Conflict at Walmart

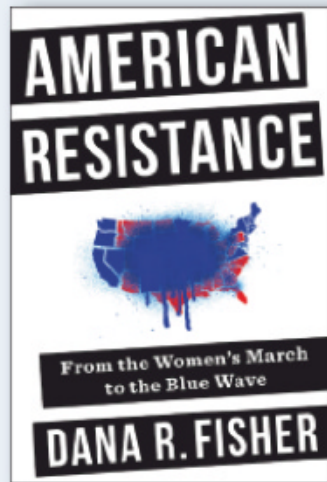
ADAM REICH

AND PETER BEARMAN

WINNER OF THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS 2019 DISTINGUISHED BOOK AWARD

“The use of interview excerpts amplifies the voices of low-wage workers not often heard in public discourse. This is an insightful examination of the inner workings of the ‘country’s largest corporate employer.’”

—*Publishers Weekly*
(*starred review)



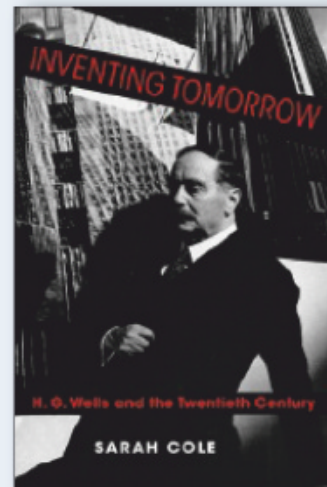
American Resistance

From the Women's March to the Blue Wave

DANA R. FISHER

“*American Resistance* charts the course of the anti-Trump surge in activism and organizing, shedding light on crucial realities and busting myths along the way. This is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the people-powered movements that are changing American politics in the Trump era.”

—Leah Greenberg,
co-executive director,
Indivisible



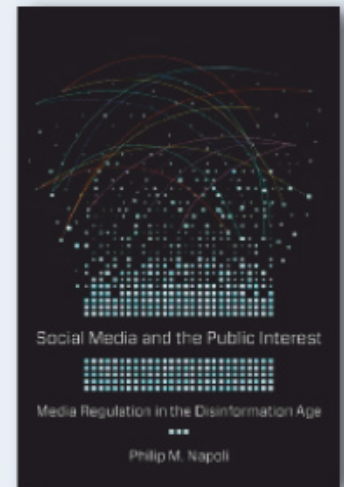
Inventing Tomorrow

H. G. Wells and the Twentieth Century

SARAH COLE

“Sarah Cole’s fascinating literary investigation *Inventing Tomorrow* shows how H. G. Wells’s work is relevant and meaningful today. . . . The book’s scholarship combines literary criticism with biographical elements, explaining how Wells mixed details of his own life and his modernist philosophy into his work.”

—*Foreword Reviews*
(*starred review)



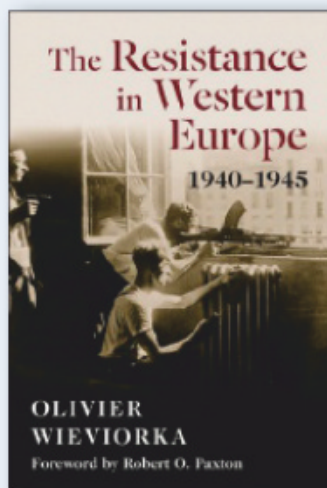
Social Media and the Public Interest

Media Regulation in the Disinformation Age

PHILIP M. NAPOLI

“This market failure is so deep, Napoli argues, that it cannot be solved by conventional antitrust or other competition policies. Instead, he argues, Americans must embrace rigorous regulation of social media platforms so that they are made to serve public purposes.”

—*Washington Monthly*

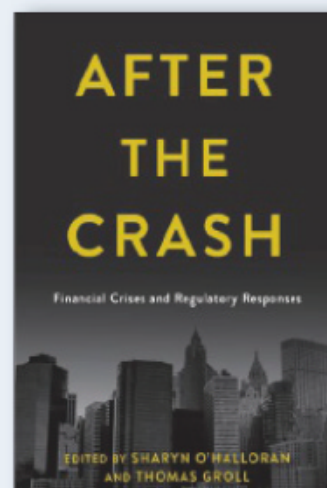


The Resistance in Western Europe, 1940–1945

OLIVIER WIEVIORKA
Foreword by Robert O. Paxton

“This is a history on a grand scale commensurate with the epic character of the complex struggle it recounts.”

—Philip Nord,
Princeton University



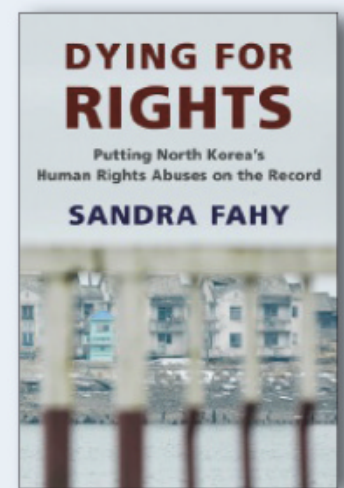
After the Crash

Financial Crises and Regulatory Responses

SHARYN O'HALLORAN
AND THOMAS GROLL, EDS.

“The financial crisis raised numerous questions; this book is a stepping-stone toward answers.”

—Alan S. Blinder,
Princeton University, and
former vice chair,
Federal Reserve Board



Dying for Rights

Putting North Korea's Human Rights Abuses on the Record

SANDRA FAHY

“With her deep knowledge and her anthropological approach, augmented by her obvious compassion for the victims of this regime, [Fahy] has provided the basis for one day holding Kim Jong Un to account. A must-read.”

—Anna Fifield, author of
The Great Successor



COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

CUP.COLUMBIA.EDU

drives a chariot carrying himself and Maynard into a river, Maynard drowns, and Hiram survives by unwittingly using Conduction to teleport himself from the dangerous current onto the river's bank. Having barely escaped drowning and afraid of being sold now that Maynard is dead, Hiram begins to dream of a different life. After Sophia tells him that her master will never let her go, he comes upon an "understanding," Coates writes, that will set them on the path to freedom. "Running is not a thought, not even as a dream, but a need, no different than the need to flee a burning house."

Hiram plans an escape and goes to a freed black man rumored to be a member of the Underground Railroad. One week later, he and Sophia flee in the middle of the night and go to the freed man, who awaits them with a fugitive-slave patrol known as Ryland's Hounds. The two are arrested, but as we soon discover, this will merely be their first attempt.

Hiram's incarceration after their thwarted escape helps him better understand the Task. While held in chains, Hiram fully realizes what it meant to be a slave: "All my life I had been a captive." One night during his detention, some white men unlock Hiram and the other incarcerated black men and let them run. Should they evade the white men for the night, they will be free. No one succeeds at this contest, even though the prisoners repeat the trial for many nights. But over time, Hiram improves and even comes to feel "freedom, brief as it was, in those nights of flight." Freedom here is not a static quality but a process.

In time, Hiram also comes to see the process of liberation as an ongoing battle. During one of the nightly trials, Hiram falls into a pond and once more accidentally uses Conduction, this time to teleport himself to the river near where he grew up. There he is found by a man enslaved to Corinne, Maynard's former fiancée. When Hiram is delivered to her, Corinne informs him that she has purchased him and that she and "her" Taskers are actually covert agents of the Underground Railroad. Rather than flee to the North, she tells Hiram, they "have accepted the gospel that says our freedom is a call to war against unfreedom." They have been monitoring him because he has the power of Conduction. Now they want him to master it and use it for their war against unfreedom.

After learning that Sophia has been sold farther south, Hiram abandons the idea of

reuniting with her and instead dedicates himself to the Underground Railroad's war. In time, he becomes an agent and works to free other enslaved people. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, Hiram helps rescue an enslaved woman named Mary. Yet when her rescuers tell her that she is free, Mary responds, "Ain't no living free, less I'm living with my boys." The freedom that the North offers is worth nothing without her family, and so Hiram comes to think that no enslaved person can be truly free until the families that have been torn apart by slavery are rebuilt. "For what did it mean to be free," he observes, "when those you hold to most are still tasked?" For Hiram, this applies not just to black people in general but to himself as well: He will not be truly free until he has been reunited with Sophia and Thena and once again has a family.

This quest to revive lost relationships also becomes, over time, a quest to remember. When Hiram decides to use his skills of Conduction to save his family, he turns to the greatest conductor in the Underground Railroad, a woman named Moses who turns out to be Tubman. At her request, Hiram agrees to join her on a trip into "Pharaoh's land" (Maryland) to free her brother. They meet at the Schuylkill River, on whose waters Moses walks, and she explains that recalling an important visceral memory is the key to using Conduction. "The jump is done by the power of the story," she tells him. "For memory is the chariot, and memory is the way, and memory is bridge from the curse of slavery to the boon of freedom." Hearing this, Hiram realizes that he must come to terms with the memory he's been repressing: the loss of his mother. If he can remember her, he can save those he loves and prove an even more effective soldier in black Americans' war for freedom. Throughout *The Water Dancer*, the recovery of past experiences and feelings is the key to future liberation.

Hiram's return to those he loves is far from ideal. After he sneaks south, he goes to see Corinne, who agrees to let him serve as an agent at Lockless under the pretext of being leased out to his father. Hiram begins sleeping in the room of his deceased half-brother. Shortly thereafter, he visits Thena:

But before me now was one who had lost as I had, who had been joined to me out of that loss, out of that need, and had become my only unerring

family at Lockless, just as she had told me.

They were made family not in spite of their losses but because of them. And in the case of Hiram's relationship with Sophia, their losses mean that what remains is even more important. After listing all the people she has seen sold south or west, Sophia tells him, "It has been a blessing of mine to see you return to us, to be reborn, twice in a lifetime.... Must be some powerful meaning, for we are not in Natchez, but right here before each other."

Hiram becomes a historian and archivist of his lost family. Hoping to learn more about his mother, he discovers a shell necklace that she once gave him in his father's belongings. He then recalls that his mother tried to flee the Task with him and that Howell, in turn, sold her off and took the necklace.

He took my memory of her too....

The pain of memory, my memory so sharp and clear was more than I could bear, so that this one time, I forgot, though I forgot nothing else.

By reclaiming the necklace, Hiram regains a once-lost past and acquires the tools he needs to transport his loved ones to freedom.

And yet Conduction does not grant Hiram the familial arrangement he expects. He had hoped to conduct Sophia and Thena north and then return south himself to fight the war for freedom. But when he tells Sophia his plan, she refuses to leave without him. Thena responds similarly. When Hiram tells her that he has found her daughter in the North and will deliver her there, she asks, "What will I do when I look at her and all I can see are my lost ones?" Although she's ambivalent about journeying north, she eventually agrees to let Hiram conduct her to freedom.

The Water Dancer does not end with the uprooting of slavery—that work is ongoing—but by helping Thena recover part of her lost family, Hiram has begun such a task. With this pivotal victory, Coates concludes his novel, with emancipation and family reunification as only the first vital step in ending black enslavement.

Like Hiram, Coates does a fair amount of Conduction in the novel to help move narratives of freedom and enslavement from their traditional spatial and temporal boundaries to new territory. Whereas historical accounts frame the war for and against slavery as

taking place from 1861 to 1865, *The Water Dancer's* narrative occurs earlier, in the 1850s, and locates that war in the wilderness where enslaved people steal away and in the homes where black families persist. This account accords with Coates's earlier non-fiction work. In the 2012 *Atlantic* essay "Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?" he insists that "for African Americans, war commenced not in 1861, but in 1661, when the Virginia Colony began passing America's first black codes." And throughout his career, he has argued that the war for black freedom has never been limited to the period between a formal declaration of hostilities and the signing of a peace treaty or to the front lines of a given battle.

Whereas his earlier work often discusses the white counter-insurgency, *The Water Dancer* focuses on black insurgency. This attention to resistance places Coates's novel at the intersection of two different but related antebellum traditions. The emphasis on war brings to mind Martin Delany's 1859 novel *Blake*, which recounts the tale of a fugitive enslaved man conspiring to start a war to free black people and found a black nation. Meanwhile, the emphasis on black people striving to reunite their families recalls *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed*, the 1856 narrative of Peter and Vina Still, which tells of their separate escapes and subsequent reunion in the North. (Peter Still is also alluded to in *The Water Dancer*.) The result of the influence of these earlier works is a novel that depicts the abolition of slavery as both the unmaking of a violent social order and the reknitting of a more harmonious one, creating families and, in so doing, societies premised on freedom.

Coates's insistence that the family is the quintessential front on which this struggle is waged has another source: black feminism. *The Water Dancer* makes this influence apparent; the title of proto-black feminist Ann Petry's novel *The Street* provides the name of the quarters where the black people of Lockless live. Coates's tale of black families surviving slavery's assaults also owes much to the work of Gayl Jones and Toni Morrison, both of whom wrote about black people creating and maintaining families in the midst of horrifying antebellum violence. And he learns much from the work of black feminist historians like Tera Hunter and Heather Williams, who have similarly emphasized how the effort to rebuild the black family was shaped by enslaved people reasserting their humanity in the face of a system that sought to transform them into commodities.

But what impact does black feminism have on the plot and characters of Coates's novel? Narrated entirely from a black man's point of view, *The Water Dancer* foregrounds Hiram's lack of understanding of the women in his life. Of his early infatuation with Sophia, he says:

I was young and love to me was a fuse that was lit, not a garden that was grown. Love was not concerned with any deep knowledge of its object, of their wants and dreams, but mainly with the joy felt in their presence and the sickness felt in their departure.

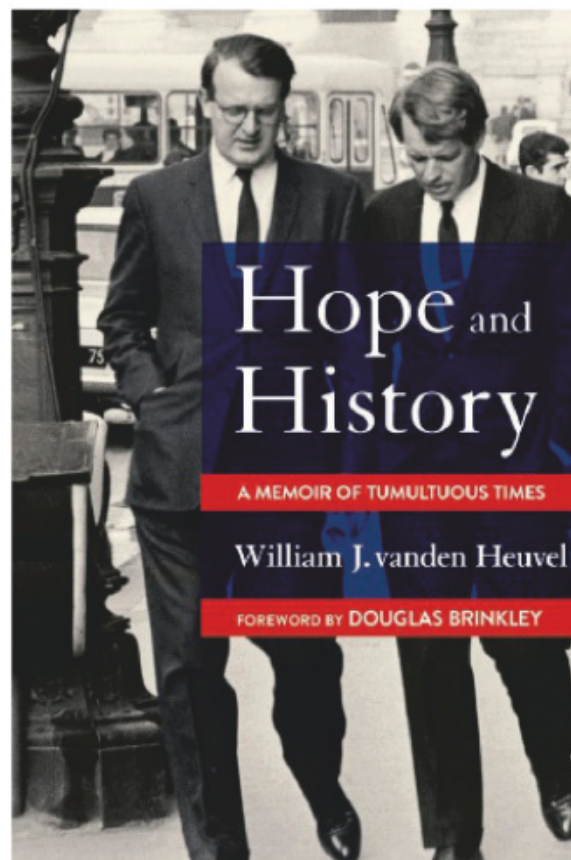
The novel's women play a central role in moving the narrative forward and in helping Hiram discover the ways that he must change to liberate himself and others. For example, he constantly learns of his own naivete, thanks to Sophia. Early in the novel, she tells him that she does not want to flee with him if he intends simply to become her new master. Later she observes, "You want me to be yours, I understand. But what you must get, is that for me to be yours, I must never be yours." He has to accept that

he cannot presume to know what she wants or decide for her. This, Sophia implies, is an integral part of freedom too: Liberation must happen on all fronts, not just one.

In this way, Coates offers an important contribution to our historical understanding of slavery. By depicting his black characters, especially the women, as freedom fighters, he asserts their agency throughout the novel—an agency that has often proved elusive to historians relying only on archives. In addition to Tubman and "Box" Brown, we are introduced to the historical figure Ellen Craft, who passed as a white man in order to liberate herself and her husband. According to C. Riley Snorton in *Black on Both Sides*, enslavement excluded Craft from white, female gender norms, which enabled her to pass as a white man and helped her collaborate with her husband to free themselves. By alluding to Craft's story as well as Tubman's exploits and by creating resourceful female characters like Sophia and Thena, Coates reminds us that liberation was the work not only of black cis men like Hiram but also of all those who did not fit that label, who faced persecution for their gender, and who fought for their freedom through different means.

Coates may have turned away from his teachers' belief that learning about moments of black triumph in the past might change the lives of black people in the present, but *The Water Dancer* does breathe new life into stories of black Americans struggling to end the country's long history of racial violence and inequality. The novel adds to the historical scholarship by imagining those parts of the struggle that scholarship cannot access. But it does something else as well: It insists that emancipation was only the first step toward black liberation—that freedom is a process. Indeed, as Hiram observes at *The Water Dancer's* end, the war for Elm County, for Virginia, and for the nation is only beginning. ■

"Bill vanden Heuvel's career reminds us of how honorable public service can be."
—Doris Kearns Goodwin



\$28.95 hardcover
296 pages, 21 b&w halftones
Available at cornellpress.cornell.edu



THE CENTER DOES NOT HOLD

Jill Lepore's awkward embrace of the nation

by DANIEL IMMERWAHR

In 1931, historian James Truslow Adams published *The Epic of America*, a one-volume history of the country. At more than 400 pages, it was a formidable volume, but Adams's lyrical prose and insistence on putting everyday people at the center of his narrative drew readers in. They took inspiration from his idea of an "American dream," a phrase he coined for the book and intended as its original title. As Adams saw it, the American dream—the notion that all who lived in the United States would be able to pursue their ambitions "regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position"—wasn't empty talk. It had shaped the country's past, and it might well shape its future.

Daniel Immerwahr teaches history at Northwestern University. He is the author of Thinking Small and How to Hide an Empire.

Adams wasn't the only one trying to cram the national narrative between two covers; it was a "crowded field," he noted. Writing single-volume overviews of US history was once a venerable tradition, and such masters of the craft as Samuel Eliot Morison, Charles and Mary Beard, and Carl Degler offered their own additions to it. Many have faded with time, but one—Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, published in 1980—has not. Zinn's history was bleak, a story of the tyranny of the powerful and of the popular movements that fought back. But with the country still smarting from Watergate and the rise of Ronald Reagan portending a new stratification of wealth, the book's themes suited the times. For many readers, it appeared that the mask had finally slipped, that history had been revealed as a violent struggle between the elites and the masses.

Zinn sought to provide a defiant riposte to the traditional flag-and-freedom histories, but his book has entered the canon. Like *The Catcher in the Rye*, it's a they're-all-phonies book that, despite itself, now appears regularly on high school syllabi. Though decades old, *A People's History* still cracks Amazon's list of the 50 best-selling history titles. Stanford University's Sam Wineburg, an expert on history education, says that it "has arguably had a greater influence on how Americans understand their past than any other single book."

Yet Zinn's book, perhaps the most successful single-volume history of the United States, also drove a stake through the heart of the enterprise. Seeing the country as divided between oppressors and oppressed, he made little room for common cause, for shared dreams, for even a common history.

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM ROBINSON

Indeed, after Zinn the once-crowded field grew bare. It's not just that no subsequent single-volume history has penetrated the national psyche the way Adams's and Zinn's did; it's also that, textbooks aside, few major US historians have attempted the feat. There are still one-volume histories being written but not, by and large, by scholars who profess a lifelong expertise in the subject.

At least this was the case until Jill Lepore set out to "rekindle a lost tradition" with her nearly 1,000-page tome *These Truths: A History of the United States*, published in 2018. A Harvard professor, she won the Bancroft Prize, one of the most prestigious awards in the field, for her first book, *The Name of War*. The last 10 winners whose ages I could determine won the Bancroft, on average, in their late 50s; Lepore won it at 33 and has been virtually unstoppable ever since. Her colleagues in Harvard's history department have written an average of three scholarly books apiece; she has written 11. She's also cofounded a journal, coauthored a novel, and served on the staff of *The New Yorker*, for which she has written more than 100 pieces on topics ranging from *Frankenstein* to management theory. What is most impressive is that, in this white heat of research and writing, her work has been, well, conspicuously and reliably good.

It's been good, above all, because she is a superb storyteller. Her fans attest to weeping over *These Truths*, and I'll confess to feeling a prelachrymal lump in my throat more than once while reading it. The story of Thomas Jefferson and his enslaved consort Sally Hemings isn't news. Yet reading Lepore's rendition of it, in which the tragedy of slavery cries out with an almost unbearable poignancy, is like watching a virtuoso pianist set to work on the "Moonlight" Sonata. You've heard the piece a thousand times; you just never quite appreciated how rich it was.

But what do these deftly narrated stories add up to? Lepore is coy about announcing a thesis. Her flavorless title, *These Truths*, does less to guide the reader than Zinn's pugna-cious *A People's History of the United States* or Adams's intended, evocative *The American Dream*. She is fascinated by political dis-course, questions of inclusion, and commu-nication technologies, yet it is only with her follow-up book—a short volume bearing the (similarly bland) title *This America*—that we clearly see how they connect. In the new book, Lepore shows her hand, revealing the political commitments that impelled her to write *These Truths* and that shape her world-view and approach to history.

This America

The Case for the Nation

By Jill Lepore

Liveright. 160 pp. \$16.95

These Truths

A History of the United States

By Jill Lepore

W.W. Norton & Company. 960 pp. \$19.95

This America announces its intentions on the very first page. It is, she writes, an argu-ment for "the enduring importance of the United States and of American civic ideals." Those words may sound tepid, but they are, for Lepore, a declaration of a multifront war. Against scholars who have become too enamored with far-reaching global histo-ries of capitalism and empire or too tight-ly focused on subnational identity groups, Lepore sternly redirects attention to the nation, a single people united by common experience. Against the "postmodernism" that she says has "suffused" politics—a Fox News right crying "fake news" and a mil-lennial left that, she claims, locates epistem-ic authority in personal identity—Lepore stands for the reasonableness of the center. She's for free speech, civil debate, democrat-ic processes, and love of country.

Like Zinn, Lepore has written a soup-to-nuts history of the country. But unlike Zinn, she doesn't regard it as an us-versus-them story. Instead, she likens the nation to a ship that is barely still afloat. As liberalism's enemies pull up the planking to light "bon-fires of rage," patriots must mend the listing vessel before it tilts into the "doom-black sea." Her history is itself intended as an act of repair. In the face of the forces rending the United States, Lepore depicts it as a unitary society with a distinct and laudable set of civic ideals, one whose past can be intelligibly told as a single story.

Single stories are unfashionable at present. Historians today are relent-less pluralizers, far more inclined to write the histories of modernities than the history of modernity. They have good reason(s). The more the field grows—new research, new perspectives—the harder it becomes for writers to agree on a central narrative. Two tendencies in particular have turned US history into a forest of tangled branches. The first is diver-sification: As their ranks have grown more heterogeneous, historians have consciously sought to offer accounts that aren't narrated solely from the implicit vantage of well-off white men. The second is globalization:

The acceleration of flows of ideas, people, and things across borders in recent decades has called into question what "the United States" even means and whether its history can be hived off and told apart from that of the rest of the world.

With regard to history's diversification, Lepore is warmly receptive. Having writ-ten a biography of Jane Franklin, Benja-min Franklin's lesser-known sister, Lepore is practiced at opening up the past so that it is not just the story of presidents and generals. On this score, *These Truths* excels. The American Revolution, for Lepore, stars not only George Washington but also Har-ry Washington, who toiled in slavery on the founder's plantation. Harry Washington escaped twice, fought with the British in the Revolution (while "wearing a white sash stitched with the motto 'Liberty to Slaves'"), and sailed for Sierra Leone, where he led his own revolt against the colonial government. Similarly, Lepore's version of the civil rights movement features, alongside Martin Luther King Jr., Pauli Murray, the brilliant intellec-tual and tactician whose contributions were likely kept quiet because Murray, born with female genitalia, identified as male.

One of the great achievements of *These Truths*, in fact, is how tightly it weaves the Harry Washingtons and Pauli Murrays into its tapestry. Lepore includes them not duti-fully but eagerly and to great effect. And by taking both Harry Washington and George Washington seriously at the same time, she compellingly demonstrates that writing an inclusive history needn't require splitting the past into separate histories "divided by race, sex, or class," as Lepore contends many of her colleagues do.

The second change that has fractured national narratives—globalization—is a more complicated story. Living with porous bor-ders has led historians to recognize that the past isn't served up neatly in national contain-ers. Borders, they argue, have never been as fixed and straightforward as maps suggest—and events have a way of spilling over them anyway. It's for this reason that historians increasingly study empires, borderlands, dias-poras, oceans, trade networks, climatic zones, and other transnational entities rather than countries, as they used to all do.

This is where Lepore draws the line: "This world is a world of nations," she insists. *These Truths* is thus a resolutely national history, concerned with what takes place inside US borders, not beyond them. Lepore recognizes diversity within those boundary lines—the nation contains many kinds and colors—but she nevertheless con-

sistently interprets that diversity as part of a shared national heritage.

There is something admirably inclusive about Lepore's vision of the country as a diverse nation, but there is something restricting about it, too. After *These Truths* appeared, historian Christine DeLucia and other critics noticed that Lepore had made little room in her story for Native Americans, especially in the latter half. She acknowledged this and has added material to the paperback edition. Yet from reading *This America*, it's easy to see why indigenous peoples initially played a small role in her story. *These Truths* is the history of a nation, which Lepore defines as a "political community" that joins people "as if they were a family." Native Americans, who have often defined themselves (and been defined in federal law) as nations apart from the United States, do not easily fit within her frame. They have been and continue to be an integral part of the country, but they haven't uniformly sought membership in the US nation, in what she calls the "community of belonging and commitment."

In *This America*, Lepore reckons with the presence of tribal nations within the United States. "The struggle for native nationhood," she writes, helps to "constitute the nation in much the same way that debates over the Constitution constitute the nation. They challenge the nation to live up to its ideals." This is fine as far as it goes, but notice what she has done in making such an assertion: To force indigenous demands for sovereignty into the frame of US national history, she's reinterpreted them as internal dissent, as part of a rich debate about how to achieve shared national goals. She's turned a country containing multiple nations into a single diverse nation. The problem is that seeing the "struggle for native nationhood" as a bid to help the US nation "live up to its ideals"—Lepore likens it to the civil rights movement—is to miss the point.

Overseas territories are another blind spot, another part of the country that doesn't fit Lepore's nation-centered approach. By 1940, about 19 million people lived in the United States' colonies, meaning that one-eighth of the US population lived not in the States but in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, American Samoa, or the US Virgin Islands. Yet major events in the country's colonial history, such as the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy or the Puerto Rican nationalist uprising of 1950 (which included an assassination attempt on Harry Truman), don't merit mention in *These Truths*. The Philippine War, which might have killed more US nationals than

the American Civil War, appears briefly, but in Lepore's telling, it matters more for how it reflected and affected race relations in North America than for what it did to the Philippines.

Lepore's national frame consistently directs her readers' gaze inward; it's the history of a "we." She rightly has an inclusive understanding of that "we," but she exhibits little interest in anything outside of it. The Vietnam War, which split the nation, consumes Lepore's attention. The Korean War, which didn't, she barely mentions, even though it permanently divided the Korean Peninsula and may have taken as many Asian lives as the Vietnam War did. Lepore writes ably and critically about the George W. Bush administration's Global War on Terrorism, yet she is more concerned with how the use of torture violated long-standing norms and tarnished national morals than she is with the far more consequential destabilization of the Middle East.

Such far-off consequences of US actions are beyond Lepore's remit. In writing *These Truths*, she confined herself to "what, in my view, a people constituted as a nation in the early twenty-first century need to know about their own past." That sounds sensible. But given that the nation in question is also an empire—with Native American reservations, overseas territories, and hundreds of military bases spread across the planet—perhaps its members should also know a little about the other peoples and pasts this empire has engrossed. They, too, are US history.

There's a reason Lepore doubles down on the nation—on the "we"—and it's not that she's ignorant of other approaches. While her colleagues are embarking on their free-form jazz odysseys, decentering the nation by writing books about oceans, most readers still see the world in terms of nations, and they want history written accordingly. "They can get it from scholars or they can get it from demagogues, but get it they will," Lepore warns.

She has a point. "Serious historians," as Lepore calls them, are reluctant to deliver single-volume national histories or accounts of the powerful men and wars that shaped the country, but that hasn't stopped the less serious. "America's bestselling historian," according to his publisher, is not a learned professor but former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly. His wildly popular *Killing* series (*Killing Lincoln*, *Killing Kennedy*, *Killing Reagan*, etc.), coauthored with Martin Dugard, offers national history in its familiar Father's Day form, just with more gore and less ac-

curacy. Joining O'Reilly and Dugard atop the *New York Times* best-seller list are Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, authors of the counter-Zinnian *A Patriot's History of the United States*. Schweikart can be found these days on Twitter, offering edifying thoughts about the "DemoKKKrats."

Driving the demagogues out of the Barnes & Noble will require more than just taking back the nation as an object of serious historical inquiry. Lepore also sees a need to show that object in a more flattering light. Whereas many of her colleagues narrate US history as a tragedy and a chronicle of oppression, Lepore sets out to capture a fuller range of feeling. Her version features "a great deal of anguish," she admits, but it also contains "decency and hope," "prosperity and ambition," "invention and beauty."

Lepore's relatively upbeat tone is more than a sensibility; it's a politics. The Bill O'Reillys of the bookshelf, she insists in *This America*, have not only taken control of the national story but also claimed for themselves the mantle of patriotism. Lepore wants to take it back for liberals. O'Reilly and his ilk are, in her view, best described not as patriots but as nationalists using the flag as a cloak for their illiberal agendas. True patriots, those who cherish the liberal values of the country, must stand and be counted. Lepore's distinction—"patriotism is animated by love, nationalism by hatred"—is not one that holds up well under scrutiny, but her point is clear enough. She hopes that she can tell US history in an inclusive way, staring the cruelties of the past full in the face yet coming out of it with her faith in the country intact.

This determination not to cede love of country to the nationalists supplies Lepore with a creed. "The United States," she insists, "is a nation founded on a deeply moral commitment to human dignity" and to the proposition that "all of us are equal." What's noteworthy here is not Lepore's celebration of dignity and equality; it's her insistence that such values lie at the core of the United States and always have. But that claim, essential to her patriotism, is hard to square with history. We now have a much better understanding of how central patriarchy, the Indian Wars, and slavery were to the country's founding, and Lepore denies none of this. (She writes that George Washington attended the Constitutional Convention wearing "dentures made from ivory and from nine teeth pulled from the mouths of his slaves.") Yet her faith is dauntless. "Notwithstanding the agony and hypocrisy of the nation's past," she insists, "these truths endure."

These truths endure. Lepore's devotion to the country's core values is a major part of *This America*. She twice quotes historian Michael Kazin's point that radicals and reformers succeed in the United States only when they appeal to what he calls "the national belief system." Lepore has little patience for those who fail to heed Kazin's advice, for the reformers and radicals who see that the national belief system as an impediment to equality rather than an instrument for achieving it.

In *These Truths*, this comes out particularly clearly in Lepore's treatment of the Black Power movement, which she narrates through the figure of Stokely Carmichael. He began his career with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, as someone for whom political action meant registering voters. But by 1966 he had given up on reforms secured within the existing frame of US politics. "The reality is that this nation, from top to bottom, is racist," he wrote in *The New York Review of Books*. "We won't fight to save the present society."

Lepore regards this position as reckless. She explains that his star wasn't the only one rising; this was also an era when a newly emboldened right emerged. When Carmichael received an invitation in 1966 to speak at the

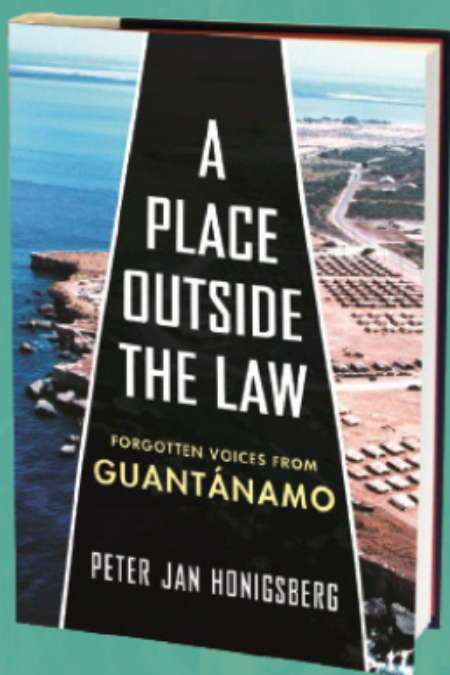
University of California, Berkeley, a California gubernatorial candidate named Ronald Reagan seized on it as a chance to bolster his own campaign. "We cannot have the university campus used as a base from which to foment riots," Reagan declared. Predictably, Carmichael refused to back down, and in so doing, he "played right into Reagan's hands," Lepore laments. The Republican candidate used Carmichael's speech as a wedge issue and won the election handily, triumphing in 55 out of California's 58 counties. It was, she writes with palpable irritation, "a victory of conservatives over liberals."

Lepore's pairing of Carmichael and Reagan is telling. Other historians charting the rise of the right have invoked such structural and economic factors as white flight to the suburbs and the rise of corporate-funded think tanks. Her narrative stresses what she views as the ill-advised intransigence of the left. "With each new form of public protest, Reagan's political capital grew," she explains. As campus activists "descended into disenchantment and a profound alienation from the idea of America itself," Republicans fed off that disenchantment. Conservatism surged, she writes, when liberalism faltered because "the idea of identity replaced the idea of equality."

We are now risking imminent collapse, Lepore insists. "The nation has been coming apart." One horseman of the apocalypse is the right-wing radio host Alex Jones, who consumes so much of her attention that a reader unfamiliar with history might conclude from *These Truths* that his arrival in politics was more momentous than the Korean War. Certainly, Jones is a perfect villain for Lepore: Not only is he malicious, but he openly scorns any shared national project.

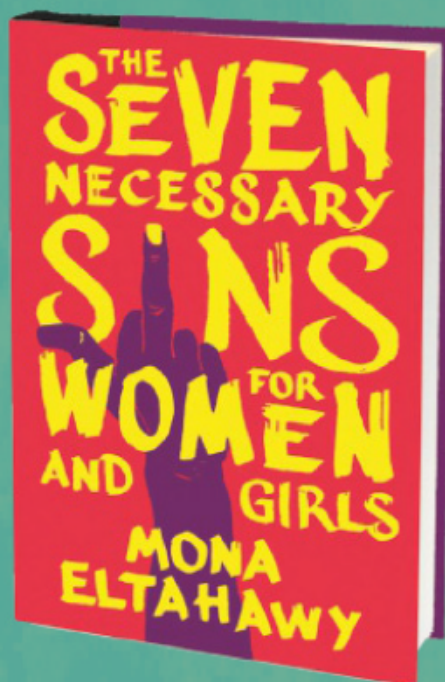
But other illiberal horsemen stalk the land as well. Lepore sounds the alarm over "left identity politics," particularly the campus-based "alt-left" (here she uses a *Breitbart*-favored pejorative), which she regards as comparable to the alt-right. She decries the left's "meaningless outrage" and "sanctimonious accusations of racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia." As an illustration, she describes a Twitter squabble. "After fourteen people were killed in a terrorist attack on a gay nightclub in San Bernardino, California," she writes, "the alt-left spent its energies in the aftermath of this tragedy attacking one another for breaches of the rules of 'intersectionality,' which involve intricate, identity-based hierarchies of suffering and virtue." Twitter users, she continues, responded to the news by angrily

BEACON BOOKS CONFRONT INJUSTICE



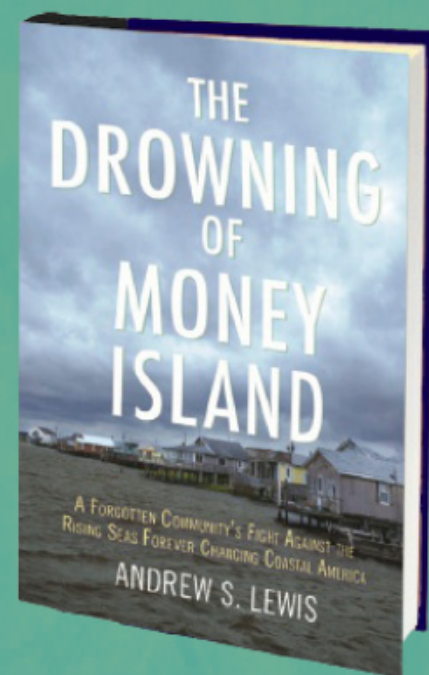
"A well-documented, hard-hitting, necessary exposé."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



"Shocking, brave, gloriously unfeminine, and right on time."

—Gloria Steinem



"A must-read for anyone interested in how climate change is already deepening preexisting inequality."

—Elizabeth Rush, author of *Rising*

correcting newscasters who described the attack as the worst massacre in US history (that would be Wounded Knee, they insisted) and arguing about whether it was ableist to blame the shooting on mental illness.

This is a caricature and an uncharacteristically mean one for Lepore, who typically treats her subjects with sympathy. Her account comes secondhand from Angela Nagle's *Kill All Normies*, and Lepore's garbling of it—conflating the attack on the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino with the mass shooting at Pulse in Orlando, Florida—strongly suggests that she hasn't read the offending tweets herself. I have. They seem far more calm and reasoned in context, and I saw no evidence that they consumed the "energies" of the left or set off cascading wokeness competitions. What is more, in reducing the younger left to these tweets, Lepore overlooks its bold environmental and economic agendas. At a time when progressive millennials are achieving extraordinary political success pushing programs like the Green New Deal and Medicare for All, Lepore sees them as largely feckless, more likely to sink the ship than steer it.

What young leftists fail to recognize, she continues, is how fragile the nation has become. In the decade before the Civil War,

New York Senator William Seward warned of an "irrepressible conflict" brewing. Lepore quotes him when describing the sharpening of political knives that has been ongoing since the Reagan administration: The 2016 election "nearly rent the nation in two," she writes. Holding it together will require repudiating extremism, affirming core values, and grabbing tight hold of the nation. "Whether nations can remain liberal," she counsels, "actually depends on the recovery of the many ways of understanding what it means to belong to a nation, and even to love a nation, the place, the people, and the idea itself."

The "irrepressible conflict" of which Seward warned killed hundreds of thousands, yet it also ended slavery. The war's two faces illustrate the big question at the center of Lepore's view of US history. For her, the United States has professed democratic equality from the start. There is no shortage of what she calls "hypocrisy"—the failure to live up to announced values—in its past. But progress has only ever been achieved by affirming the nation and those core values.

That is the liberal view, and Lepore isn't alone in seeing things that way. Yet radicals tend to have a different understanding. In

their view, the United States—a settler empire carved out of Native lands by rich white men, many of whom enslaved others—was not particularly egalitarian in its origins. If it's a better society today, this is because activists made seemingly unrealistic demands and fought for them. Stark conflict has been essential to progress, and the times of greatest national division—the 1860s, the 1960s and '70s—have also been times of major progressive victories like the abolition of slavery and the establishment of reproductive rights. For a radical, this is not the time to mend rifts or make compromises. It's a time of crisis—and when it comes to the threat of global warming, an existential one. It's also a rare chance to achieve root-and-branch change with regard to the environment, the economy, gender, sexuality, and race. If what is needed is an overhaul rather than an adjustment, then the ideals and methods of 18th century men—"these truths"—may not be the best guides.

Lepore doesn't disavow radical aims, so her case for nation-centered histories and liberal patriotism is tactical. Global solidarities and widened horizons are fine to contemplate, but there's a reason that books about the nation sell best. To reject the nation is to give up on reaching an audience, on making a difference. Similarly, in her view, radical intentions are laudable, but radical political programs that condemn the nation backfire and inadvertently aid the enemy. In the end, she argues, it is liberals, not radicals, who can deliver progressive change. They do so using the most powerful tool within reach: the nation.

The problem is that Lepore is preaching this liberal gospel in increasingly radical times. The Trump presidency and the climate crisis have raised sharp challenges to her worldview. She finds herself in the awkward position of espousing patriotism at a moment of cruel nationalism, of explaining why radicalism doesn't work at just the time radicals on all sides are gaining clout, and of insisting that the nation is the most relevant geographical unit while storms, droughts, and heat waves make a mockery of political borders. In the face of such challenges, Lepore stands firm: The nation and its founding values are a shared heritage, and we must hold fast to them. The epic history she has written from this position is an important one, further evidence (if any were needed) of her prodigious powers. Yet it's hard not to wonder, as the evidence mounts daily that the old rules no longer apply, if the ground that Lepore is digging her heels into isn't an ice shelf, melting beneath her feet. ■

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

104 South Fifth Street • Philadelphia, PA 19106-3387
(Tel) 215-440-3425 • (Fax) 215-440-3450

- 1.** The Cabinetmaker's Account: John Head's Record of Craft and Commerce in Colonial Philadelphia, 1718-1753
Jay Robert Stiefel
- 2.** John Laurance: The Immigrant Founding Father America Never Knew
Keith Marshall Jones III
- 3.** Essays by Benjamin Franklin: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 1786
American Philosophical Society
- 4.** Jean François de Bourgoing's Grand Mémoire on the War of American Independence
Edited by Jean-Pierre Cap
- 5.** Optical Magic in the Late Renaissance: Giambattista Della Porta's *De Refractione* of 1593
A. Mark Smith
- 6.** A More Perfect Union: Essays on the Constitution—Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 1987
Foreword by Laurence H. Tribe
- 7.** Art, Science, Invention: Conservation and the Peale-Sellers Family
Renée Wolcott
- 8.** The Cuneiform Uranology Texts: Drawing the Constellations
Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Eckart Frahm, Wayne Horowitz, and John Steele

BOOK ORDERS: Please contact our fulfillment service—Diane Publishing Co., P.O. Box 617, Darby, PA 19023 (phone 800-782-3833 or 610-461-6200; fax 610-461-6130). Online orders may be sent to orders@dianepublishing.net. See our website for additional recent titles, catalogs, and available backlist: www.amphilsoc.org/publications.



A FULLER FREEDOM

The lost promise of Pan-Africanism

by ADOM GETACHEW

Had Peter Abrahams, the South African-born novelist, journalist, and Pan-Africanist, not been killed tragically in his Jamaican home in January 2017, he would have celebrated his 100th birthday this year. Born in 1919 on the outskirts of Johannesburg to an Ethiopian father and a “colored” (in the parlance of apartheid) mother, Abrahams lived his life along the winding paths of Pan-Africanism in the 20th century. In the same year that Abrahams was born, W.E.B. Du Bois helped organize the First Pan-African Congress to lay out a vision of what the end of the “war

to end all wars” might mean for the colonized and Jim Crowed, who had long been subjugated by empire and white supremacy. When the end of another world war spurred the creation of the United Nations in 1945, Abrahams was old enough to join in the Pan-Africanists’ Fifth Congress, serving as its secretary of publicity. By that time, he had escaped South Africa after being accused of treason for criticizing his country’s inequalities and had established himself as a writer with the publication of the short story collection *Dark Testament* and the novel *Song of the City*. At the Fifth Congress, he was joined by a cohort of black intellectuals—Amy Ashwood Garvey, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore—who would soon define the coming postcolonial era. “The struggle for political power by Colonial and subject peoples,” the congress

declared, “is the first step towards, and the necessary prerequisite to, complete social, economic and political emancipation.”

Reflecting on the proceedings, Abrahams identified this call with a new “militant phase” of the struggle against colonialism. “Forward to the Socialist United States of Africa! Long live Pan-Africanism!” he exhorted after the congress’s closing. To Du Bois’s 1900 declaration that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” Abrahams and his generation answered with a vision of an independent and united Africa that could finally secure racial equality across the globe.

However, Abrahams’s story also mirrored the swift disillusion that followed with the emergence of neocolonialism and the fractures within the Pan-Africanist movement. In his prescient 1956 novel

Adom Getachew is the Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago. She is the author of Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination.

A Wreath for Udomo, he depicted the unraveling of Pan-Africanism just as it was becoming a wide-ranging movement. The book's main character, Michael Udomo, is a composite figure (based on Nkrumah and Padmore) who moves from organizing for African independence in London to becoming the prime minister of a fictional "Panafrika." Narrated in two parts, "The Dream" and "The Reality," the novel tracks the exhilarating promise of national liberation, the hopes of a militant generation of Pan-Africanists, and the tragic choice that follows as Udomo weighs the costs of betraying the cause by accepting aid from a white settler nation or risking the ire of powerful states by supporting a fellow revolutionary. His dilemmas culminate in his destruction at the hands of his domestic opposition.

In the years to come, numerous anticolonial activists—from Nkrumah in Ghana to Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria and Patrice Lumumba in Congo—would meet a similar fate, witnessing their hopes for independence dashed in the face of domestic dissension, Cold War interventions, and persistent economic dependence. In an age of decolonization, the Pan-Africanist wager was premised on the view that nationalism and internationalism must go hand in hand, that national independence could be secured only within regional and international institutions. As a result, the early postcolonial constitutions of Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, for instance, included clauses that authorized the delegation of sovereignty to a Union of African States when such an entity came into being. Yet over the three decades that followed World War II, internationalism and nationalism gradually came apart. While the sovereign state proved to be a limited vehicle for realizing independence and equality, its rights of nonintervention and territorial integrity emerged as powerful tools, especially against domestic critics and subnational challenges to state authority. In this context, committed Pan-Africanists and internationalists soon became wedded to the sovereign nation-state and its capacity to discipline newly independent and fragile societies.

"The one-man leadership thing I never condoned," Abrahams later recalled, but even in the face of such thwarted hopes, he remained loyal to the cause of Pan-African liberation for the rest of his life. A chance

Pan-Africanism

A History

By Hakim Adi

Bloomsbury Academic. 312 pp. \$33.95

meeting in 1955 with Norman Manley, who was then leading Jamaica's anticolonial struggle, prompted Abrahams to move to the island, where he participated in its transition to independence and later supported the social transformation inaugurated by Norman Manley's son Michael Manley, the democratic socialist prime minister who swept into office in 1972. Abrahams worked as the chairman of Radio Jamaica and hoped that the Caribbean might realize the democratic, egalitarian, and internationalist vision of society that he had long fought for. From his home in the mountains of Jamaica, Abrahams set his sights across the Atlantic, critically assessing the failures of the postcolonial African states and especially the rise of authoritarian regimes. But as he declared near the end of his long life, "Jamaica is Africa to me."

The story of Pan-Africanism as a cresting wave of 20th century aspirations for African freedom and unity that crashed on the limits of postcolonial statehood is compelling because it attends to the defeats and disappointments that followed decolonization. Yet it is only one story of Pan-Africanism, and it renders invisible and illegible those projects of African unity that circumvented the aspiration to statehood and persisted in alternative institutional and ideological trajectories. Throughout his life, Abrahams used his novels to restage and recast Pan-Africanism's promise of black freedom. In his last novel, *The View From Coyaba*, published in 1985, he offered a transnational and transhistorical story that begins in Jamaica before the abolition of slavery there and follows the life of Jacob Brown, a Maroon descendant who studies with Du Bois in the United States before traveling to Africa as a missionary. Forced to flee Uganda, Brown returns to the hills of Jamaica, where his ancestors once took flight from slavery. Rather than see his return as marking a full circle, Brown awaits another opportunity to fly back to Africa.

Driven by a similar impulse toward historical recovery, Hakim Adi's recent book *Pan-Africanism: A History* situates the tragedies of mid-20th-century Pan-Africanism in a longer and more capacious history. Pan-

Africanism, he shows, began in the 18th century with the struggle against slavery and has persisted well into the 21st century with, among other movements, contemporary reparations activism. Rather than a crashing wave, Adi argues, Pan-Africanism "might be more usefully viewed as one river with many streams and currents." It flowed and ebbed and then flowed (and ebbed) again, helping to shape much of the 20th century in the process and continuing to leave a deep imprint on the 21st. Few scholars are better positioned than Adi to chart Pan-Africanism's history: Over the course of two decades, he has chronicled it and the modern black experience more broadly as the writer or editor of 11 books, not to mention many journal articles and chapters written for other books. In *Pan-Africanism*, he brings to bear his encyclopedic knowledge of black freedom movements in Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

Adi opens his book with the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the black struggles for emancipation that arose from it. The forced migration of 12 million people across the Atlantic as chattel, he argues, created the conditions in which "Africa" became a transnational marker—an idea as much as a place. In this context, Olaudah Equiano, born in what is now the Igbo region of Nigeria in 1745 and enslaved at a young age, styled himself the "African" in his 1789 *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. With fellow freedman Ottobah Cugoana he organized the Sons of Africa, a group that agitated for the end of the slave trade. From the communities of escaped slaves that dotted the Americas and the early repatriation movements to the emergence of a "black empire" in the Haitian Revolution, the image of Pan-Africa began to take shape.

But as Adi shows, if Pan-Africa was born out of the experience of diasporic bondage, it was not a unidirectional transmission from the enslaved and the colonized in the Americas to Africa. The transatlantic idea of Africa also took inspiration from the connections formed between these communities and the Africans still on the continent. For instance, the vision of "African regeneration" articulated by Edward Blyden, the Caribbean author of 1857's *A Vindication of the Negro Race*, who eventually settled in Liberia, inspired a whole cohort of West African intellectuals—J.E. Casely Hayford, John Mensah Sarbah, and Mojola Agbebi among them—who demanded reforms to the British Empire on the basis of West



African solidarity. Reversing this trajectory of influence, the writings of James Africanus Horton, a Sierra Leonean doctor who supported and extended Blyden's vision, proved an important source for the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, whose group the Universal Negro Improvement Association would become the largest black mass movement in the world. At its height in the 1920s, UNIA had almost 1,000 chapters and divisions in Africa, the Caribbean, South and Central America, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Garvey's Black Star Line, a shipping company that sought to cultivate commercial links among black people, was likely modeled on the efforts of Chief Alfred Sam, a trader from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) who registered a company in New York to develop trade routes and encourage black emigration to Africa.

Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries, black people moved around the world in search of work and greater freedom, and through this they generated solidarities out of the collective experience of racialized slavery and colonialism, turning forced displacement and exile into political possibility. Meetings like the 1900 Pan-African Conference and its successors might suggest that these forms of mobility were limited

to a small male elite. But as Adi highlights, the official spaces of Pan-Africanism relied on women's labor, even if women were marginalized. The 1900 conference, best remembered for Du Bois's evocative formulation of the global color line, was in fact co-organized by Alice Victoria Kinloch of South Africa, who emerged as a critic of black oppression in her homeland before moving to Britain in 1896. Garvey's wives Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques, as well as Garveyite women like Mamie De Mena and Henrietta Vinton Davis, also contributed to the successful expansion of UNIA as they advanced women's causes within the organization. The Martinican sisters Paulette and Jane Nardal, as students in Paris during the 1920s, convened gatherings of black students and exiles and helped black print culture to proliferate. In an article for the inaugural issue of *La Dépêche Africaine* (*The African Dispatch*), Jane Nardal articulated the emergence of a new "*Internationalisme Noir*" (Black Internationalism). "Blacks of all origins and nationalities, with different customs and religions," she argued, "vaguely sense that they belong in spite of everything to a single and same race.... From now on there will be a certain interest, a certain originality, a certain pride in being black, in

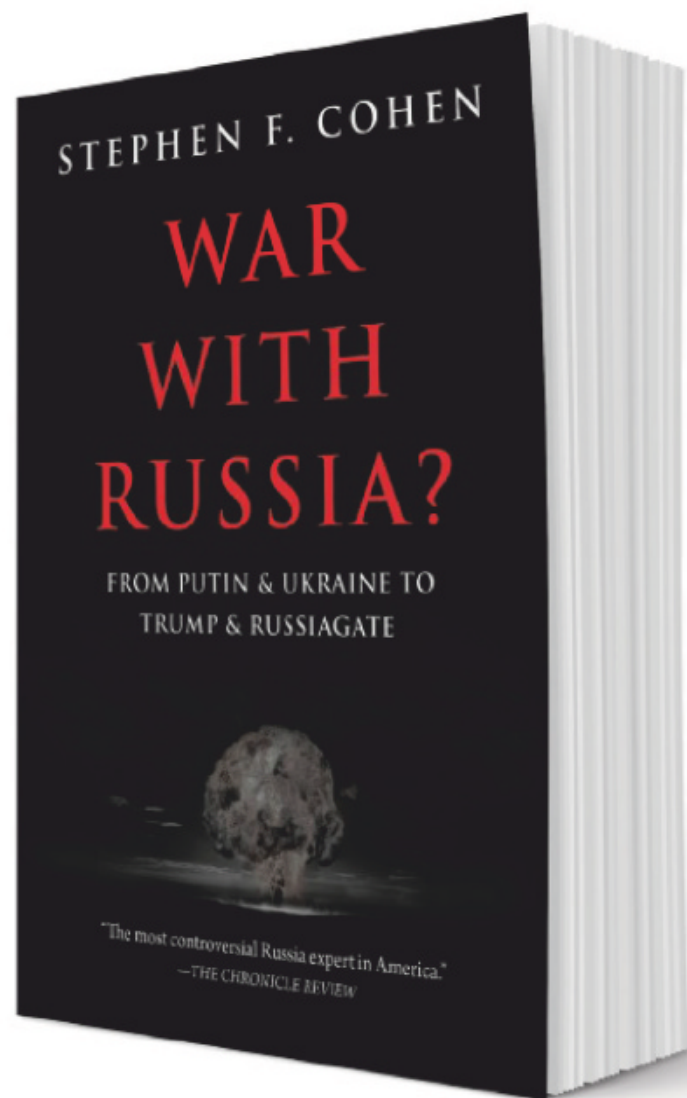
turning back towards Africa, cradle of the blacks, in recalling a common origin."

Outside the rarefied conferences and chance meetings in imperial metropolises like London and Paris, the vision of a global Africa was lived and enacted in everyday life and culture by millions who remain anonymous to history. The idea of African freedom and unity traveled with the Caribbean workers who dug the Panama Canal. It was carried with the African Americans who escaped north in the Great Migration, and it traversed the African continent with figures like Abrahams's father, who traveled from his native Ethiopia to South Africa in order to find work in the mines and plantations of a voracious new imperialism. Black sailors and migrant workers in the circum-Caribbean and in southern Africa clandestinely distributed UNIA's newspaper, *Negro World*. The Comintern-funded *Negro Worker*, the Paris-based *Le Cri des Nègres*, and countless other black newspapers and magazines carried news of a global Africa along similar networks. After formal decolonization was achieved, the message of Pan-Africanism lived on in the vernaculars of Rastafarianism and reggae music, the aesthetics of the Afro, and the global reverberations of "Black is beautiful."

**"The most controversial Russia expert in America."
—THE CHRONICLE REVIEW**

From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate

Stephen F. Cohen, the acclaimed historian of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, gives readers a sharply dissenting narrative of what he sees as a new and more dangerous Cold War—its origins in the '90s, the role of Putin, the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, Trump, and "Russiagate." *War With Russia?* let's readers decide if we are living, as Cohen argues, in a time of unprecedented perils at home and abroad.



HB HOT BOOKS, An Imprint of Skyhorse Publishing, Inc.
Available everywhere books are sold, in store and online.
Paperback and eBook \$18.99

Weaving together the institutional high politics of Pan-Africanism with its popular and cultural iterations, Adi presents his readers with a wide tapestry of black freedom dreams that challenges many of the neat divisions imposed on black intellectual and political life by historians and scholars. For instance, much has been written about the differences between Du Bois's moderate calls for imperial reform at the early Pan-African congresses and Garvey's radical demand of "Africa for the Africans." But as Adi shows, the two were united in their shared aspirations for black representation within the League of Nations, and figures like Kojo Tovalou Houénou of Dahomey (now Benin), who founded the Ligue Universelle Pour la Défense de la Race Noire (Universal League for the Defense of the Black Race), deftly navigated these two visions of Pan-Africanism. He attended UNIA meetings in New York and corresponded with Du Bois in the hope of positioning his own league as an umbrella Pan-African organization. For Houénou, Africa—not a particular territory or region—was his country, and the league sought to "develop the bonds of solidarity and of universal brotherhood between all

members of the black race; to bring them together for the restoration of their country of origin—Africa."

Houénou's project, Adi tells us, was "an aspiration that remained unrealized." Not only the efforts of imperial states to quash resistance and censor black publications but also internal differences of language, ideology, and orientation worked to fragment this and other efforts to consolidate and centralize Pan-Africanism. It is here that we begin to see the difficulties of viewing Pan-Africanism as one unvaried whole. Although Adi acknowledges different currents and streams, his river metaphor is too naturalistic to capture the disjuncture and disruption, the reformulation and rearticulation that characterized projects of African unity. Especially when he surveys the 1920s and '30s—arguably the high point of Pan-African cultural and political organizing—one finds the historical record replete with ephemeral organizations and publications and fleeting collaborations.

Even following a single historical figure moves you through a half-dozen iterations of Pan-African politics. Take George Padmore. Born Malcolm Nurse in Arouca, Trinidad, in 1903, he began his political career by joining the Communist Party

of the United States, where he lived as a student, and quickly emerged as a leading figure of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers and the editor of *The Negro Worker* from his base in Hamburg, Germany. Deported in 1933 by the Nazi police, then ousted from the party the following year for his criticism of Soviet alliances with colonial powers, Padmore briefly joined his fellow black communist Tiémoko Garan Kouyaté in Paris, where they planned a Negro World Unity congress. When growing repression and a lack of funding thwarted the group's founding, Padmore moved to London and, with fellow Trinidadian C.L.R. James, organized the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) in 1935 "to assist by all means in their power in the maintenance of the territorial integrity and political independence of Abyssinia" (now Ethiopia) as Italy threatened it with invasion. IAFA soon folded, however, and James and Padmore turned their efforts to a new organization, the International African Service Bureau, which would then serve as the basis for the Pan-African Federation, which organized the Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945.

Writing of this interwar period, Brent Hayes Edwards has argued that the "un-



New books in the *Justice, Power, and Politics* series from UNC Press

Join in on the conversation, and follow the series [@JPPBOOKS](#)

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD NOMINEE!

RACE FOR PROFIT

How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership

Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor

"This book powerfully disrupts a standard story about racism—that it depends on discriminatory exclusion—and introduces readers to 'predatory inclusion,' an analytical gift for students of social history. Taylor offers an unflinching examination of the mythology that has sustained the American dream, ultimately revealing that, for many African Americans, homeownership hasn't resulted in the fulfillment of a dream but instead has been a nightmare—a horror story of racial capitalism."

—**Michelle Alexander**, author of *The New Jim Crow*

368 pages \$30.00

STIRRINGS

How Activist New Yorkers Ignited a Movement for Food Justice

Lana Dee Povitz

"Povitz uses the political history of food advocacy organizations in New York City to explain why such groups focus almost exclusively on feeding hungry people rather than on addressing the root cause of that hunger—poverty. The lessons taught by this history make this book essential reading for anyone interested in ending hunger in America."

—**Marion Nestle**, author of *Food Politics*

360 pages \$29.95 paper

DEMOCRACY'S CAPITAL

Black Political Power in Washington, D.C., 1960s–1970s

Lauren Pearlman

"Deeply researched and engagingly written, this book convincingly portrays D.C. as a compelling illustration of federal experimentation, white recalcitrance to the freedom struggle, and the complexity of grassroots responses to such politics."

—**Gordon K. Mantler**, George Washington University

352 pages \$29.95 paper

THOSE WHO KNOW DON'T SAY

The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State

Garrett Felber

"This stunning book is the definitive account of the Nation of Islam's political activism. Felber provides a revelatory look at the urgency and far-reaching influence of this controversial, pivotal Black nationalist organization."

—**Dan Berger**, University of Washington Bothell

272 pages \$24.95 paper

WE ARE NOT SLAVES

State Violence, Coerced Labor, and Prisoners' Rights in Postwar America

Robert T. Chase

"This book is filled with agonizing accounts of state-sanctioned violence, clear analysis of the role of incarceration in shoring up the old Jim Crow, and breathtaking narratives of the struggles of ordinary prisoners to expose the system's underlying brutality. A must-read, tragic book."

—**Max Krochmal**, author of *Blue Texas*

512 pages \$34.95



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
at bookstores or 800-848-6224 · [uncpress.org](#) · [uncpressblog.com](#)

Learn more about the series at
[www.justicepowerpolitics.com](#)

foreseen alliances” that diasporic blacks fostered “also are characterized by unavoidable misapprehensions and misreadings, persistent blindnesses and solipsisms, self-defeating and abortive collaborations, a failure to translate even a basic grammar of blackness.” This is not to say that visions of Pan-Africanism were futile from the outset but instead only to note the experimental and improvisational character of the projects taken up in its name and to acknowledge the linguistic, geographic, and ideological tensions against which Pan-Africanists labored.

At tending to the fragmentary quality of Pan-Africanism helps us make better sense of the discontinuities and reversals so presciently outlined in *A Wreath for Udomo*. The postwar phase of Pan-Africanism was unassimilable into a single movement or project, in part because the very premise of decolonization appeared to confine anticolonial activists to the territorially bound nation-state, undermining the transnational and non-territorial scope of Pan-Africa. Following earlier histories of Pan-Africanism, Adi describes the shift of Pan-African activity from imperial metropolises to postcolonial Ghana and other newly independent states as the Pan-Africanists’ “return home.” Yet such a reading narrows the scope of Pan-Africanism’s internationalist ambitions; it becomes a black Zionism in search of a national homeland. To be sure, repatriation has always featured prominently in the African diasporic imagination, and so has the thirst for national independence. Reflecting in 1971 on *The Black Jacobins*, his classic 1938 history of the Haitian Revolution, James noted, “It was written about Africa. It wasn’t written about the Caribbean.” Yet what mattered for him was not that Pan-Africanism might return home but that the Caribbean was the terrain on which African independence could be worked out. But even the achievement of African independence was not the end point, in his view. It was just the beginning of a global political and economic transformation—a world revolution that would simultaneously defeat white supremacy and capitalism. Nurturing a commitment to a Pan-Africa that exceeded a continental cartography, James was ambivalent about a politics that directed its energy primarily toward nation-state building and worried that despite the best intentions of the new generation of postcolonial statesmen, the trappings of

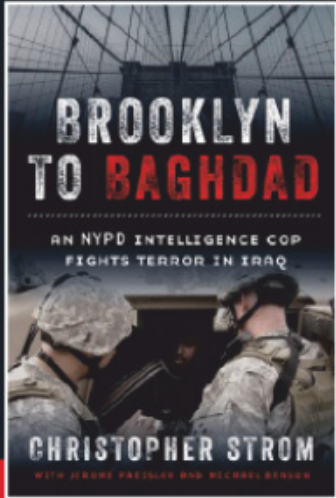
state sovereignty would soon thwart their larger ambitions of securing African unity and building a racially egalitarian international order.

The shift of Pan-African activity from imperial metropolises to the African continent and from international networks to postcolonial nation-states is perhaps Pan-Africanism’s most contentious and uncertain moment—one that exposed the fragile suturing of difference and unity. The emergence of independent states like Ghana and Tanzania—led by two advocates of African socialism, Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere—created institutional and ideological openings to realize African unity. Yet the achievement of state sovereignty also worked to stymie more radical visions of Pan-Africanism. When the Sixth Pan-African Congress was convened in Dar es Salaam in 1974, the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney warned that a majority of congress attendants would be spokespersons of “African and Caribbean states which in so many ways represent the negation of Pan-Africanism.” Having been denied reentry into Jamaica in 1968 for his support of Black Power activism, Rodney was intimately familiar with the conservative bent of the new postcolonial states. By 1974, Abrahams’s call for a Socialist United States of Africa had given way to the tepid Organization of African Unity (OAU), which supported liberation movements across the continent but remained committed to the political form of the nation-state.

The tensions inaugurated in the age of decolonization—between a black politics conscripted into a defense of the nation-state and one that aspired to succeed or transcend it—are with us today. Adi points to the OAU-sponsored First Pan-African Conference on Reparations for Slavery, Colonization and Neocolonization, which took place in 1993 in Abuja, Nigeria, as one of the starting points of a new Pan-African politics. The Abuja proclamation declared that “the damage sustained by the African peoples is not a ‘thing of the past’ but is painfully manifest in the damaged lives of contemporary Africans from Harlem to Harare, in the damaged economies of the Black World from Guinea to Guyana, from Somalia to Suriname.” Yet at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia in Durban, South Africa, the geopolitical fractures of the black world frustrated a collective call for reparations. While Nigeria’s then-President Olusegun

Obasanjo told the conference that an apology from the European states that had imposed slavery and colonialism would suffice, Nigerian activists and civil society organizations joined the Caribbean states in demanding a more expansive program of repair.

Despite the differences that have undermined Pan-Africanism throughout its existence, Adi is right to reject accounts that reduce its staying power to “a matter of hazy vague emotions—a vision or a dream.” The promise of Pan-Africanism was always much more than that. Like most political ideals, it helped galvanize generations into taking action. But as much as Pan-Africanism was an organized movement, it was also a sensibility, a culture, and a lived experience—guises in which it continues to shape contemporary life. Whereas black skin had been an epithet—famously captured by Frantz Fanon in the moment when a white French child pointed at him and said, “Look, a Negro!”—Pan-Africanism made it into a resource for imagining a radically egalitarian future. Out of forced exile and dispersal, it built a Black World, and from the depths of slavery, it limned the outlines of a fuller freedom in its songs of redemption. ■



BROOKLYN TO BAGHDAD
AN NYPD INTELLIGENCE COP FIGHTS TERROR IN IRAQ
CHRISTOPHER STROM
WITH JEROME FREDRICK AND MICHAEL DENSON

“An exhilarating and infuriating look at busting bad guys on both sides of the Earth.”

—VINCENT MARRA, NYPD Deputy Inspector, Ret., from his foreword

**CHICAGOREVIEWPRESS.COM/
BROOKLYNTOBAGHDAD**

CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS
@ChiReviewPress



HIGH LIBERALISM

John Rawls and the crisis of liberal democracy

by SEYLA BENHABIB

John Rawls is widely considered one of the most important political philosophers of the 20th century. *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism* are classics in political philosophy, helping resurrect the fields of applied ethics and normative theory from the near-dead and giving rise to countless commentaries, analyses, and criticisms in nearly two dozen languages. After the Cold War, Anglo-American ethics and much political theory were caught up in debates about the meaning of normative terms like “justice” and “equality.” Did they have a rational basis, or did they merely express the emotions and dispositions of their users? Advocates

of socioeconomic reforms were confronted with the charge that top-down structural change would result in some form of totalitarianism, and so they had to show how redistribution could fit into a liberal model. Rawls fought on both fronts: He showed that ethical and political concepts did have rational bases, and he came to believe that liberal democracies, to achieve justice, needed to undertake major social reforms. By doing so, his work provided the most important philosophical justification for coupling liberal democracy with the welfare state, despite his later criticisms of welfare state capitalism.

Yet as we approach the centenary of Rawls’s birth, not all is well with his vision or, for that matter, with liberal democracy itself. Rawls’s “high liberalism”—a term that is also used to refer to the work of Ronald

Dworkin and Jürgen Habermas—is said to be dead, slain not only by feminist and critical race theorists who have exposed how it tends to exclude women and people of color from the community of just persons but also by political realists who have a much darker view of human nature and the capacity of reason to guide our emotions.

As a result, contemporary liberal political philosophy has taken on a funereal mood. Books with titles like *Why Liberalism Failed* and *How Democracies Die* abound. Few, however, ask the other side of these questions: What in Rawls’s and the 20th century’s high liberalism was so vital to begin with? Andrius Gališanka’s new book, *John Rawls: The Path to a Theory of Justice*, serves as a good start in answering this question. Offering a biographical portrait of Rawls, who died in 2002, and drawing

Seyla Benhabib is the Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale. Her most recent book is Exile, Statelessness, and Migration.

BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

“A comprehensive, timely overview of Springsteen’s life and work.”

—Kenneth Womack, author of *Long and Winding Roads: The Evolving Artistry of the Beatles*

“A killer collection of Boss studies and stories, as varied as Springsteen’s own body of work and a fitting tribute to the man — at 70, both an American legend and an artist as vital as ever.”

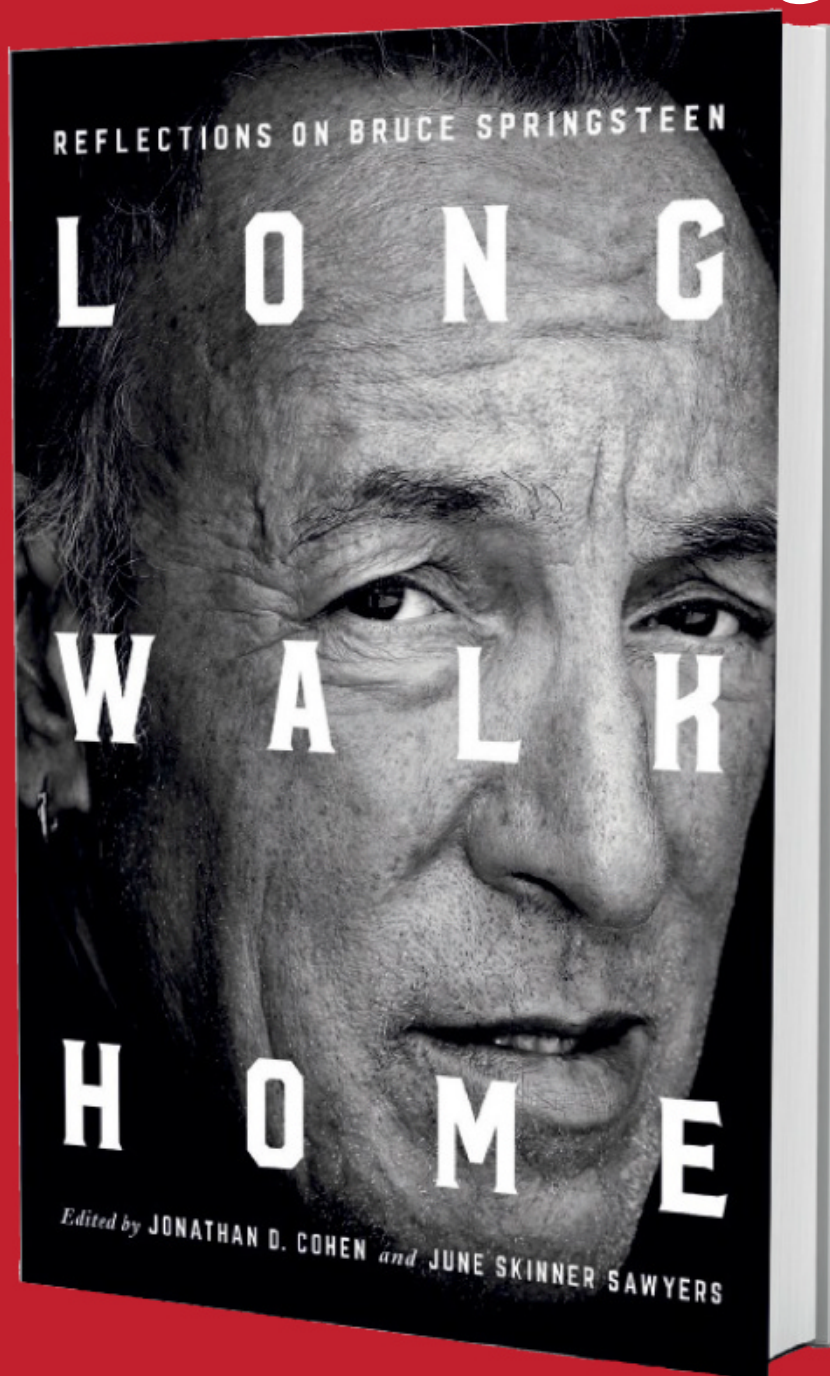
—Christopher Phillips, editor of Backstreets.com

“A rich understanding of why the Boss matters so profoundly to his audience; how each of us has been moved, challenged, and shaped by Springsteen’s music.”

—Roxanne Harde, co-editor of *Walking the Line: Country Music Lyricists and American Culture*

“Highly recommended. It deepened my appreciation for the artist by broadening my understanding of his relevance and influence.

—E Street Shuffle



Long Walk Home

Reflections on Bruce Springsteen

Edited by Jonathan D. Cohen and June Skinner Sawyers

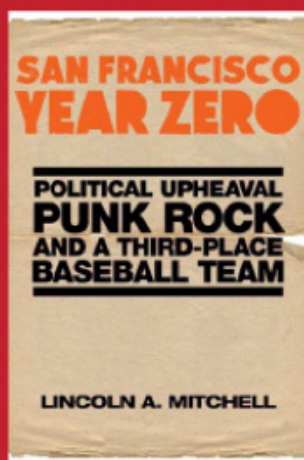


Best Actress
The History of Oscar®-Winning Women

Stephen Tapert
Foreword by Roxane Gay

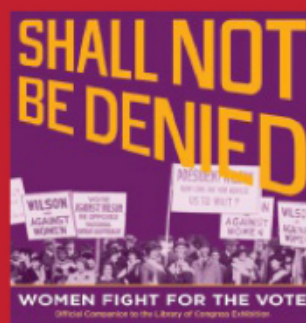


Queer Objects
Chris Brickell and Judith Collard



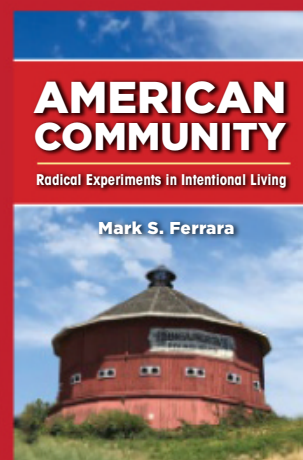
San Francisco Year Zero
Political Upheaval, Punk Rock and a Third-Place Baseball Team

Lincoln A. Mitchell

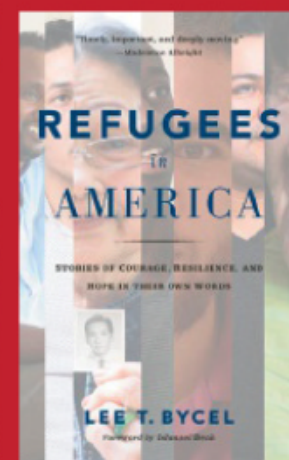


Shall Not Be Denied
Women Fight for the Vote

Published by Rutgers University Press in association with the Library of Congress.



American Community
Radical Experiments in Intentional Living
Mark S. Ferrara



Refugees in America
Stories of Courage, Resilience, and Hope in Their Own Words

Lee T. Bycel
Foreword by Ishmael Beah
Photographer Dona Kopol Bonick

Celebrate University Press Week (Nov. 3-9) and Small Business Saturday (Nov. 30)!



#ReadUP #ReadThinkAct #IndiesFIRST

Sign up for special offers.
rutgersuniversitypress.org



from newly accessible archived materials—including from the courses taken and taught by Rawls at Princeton, Cornell, and Oxford universities and from the Rawls archive at Harvard, which houses papers from 1942 to 2003—Gališanka tracks the development of Rawls’s philosophical work as it evolved from his early inquiries into theology and the roots of evil to his secular justification for distributive justice. He stops short of considering Rawls’s later writings, which eventually confronted the political implications of his theory more explicitly. But the book nonetheless leaves us with a compelling account of Rawls’s evolution and reminds us how philosophically rigorous the justification of Rawlsian high liberalism is.

Rawls was born in Baltimore in 1921, the second of five children, to well-to-do Protestant parents. His father was a lawyer who was an informal adviser for Maryland Governor Albert Ritchie. His mother was involved with the League of Women Voters and worked on Wendell Willkie’s 1940 presidential campaign. Despite his parents’ political activities, Rawls was relatively apolitical as a young man. After attending parochial school in Baltimore, he went on to Prince-

John Rawls

The Path to a Theory of Justice

By Andrius Gališanka

Harvard University Press. 272 pp. \$45

ton, at first intending to study art and architecture before developing an interest in religion and, in particular, theological ethics. Although his Episcopalian upbringing was quite conventional, in his last years as an undergraduate, Rawls found himself gripped by a strong sense of the reality of sin, faith, and divine presence. The early 1940s, after all, were a frightening moment, and for the young Rawls these questions were not only theological but also deeply moral—a subject that he explored in his undergraduate thesis, “A Brief Inquiry Into the Meaning of Sin and Faith.”

Rawls’s growing religiosity and his interest in its implications for moral behavior were abruptly interrupted by the war, as he later recalled in “On My Religion,” in which he spelled out the events that led him away from his thoughts of joining the seminary and toward a career in philosophy. In one particularly striking episode, Rawls tells of his time serving on Luzon in the Philippines, when a superior officer asked “for two volunteers, one to go with

the [colonel] to where he could look at the Japanese positions, the other to give blood badly needed for a wounded soldier in the small hospital nearby.” Rawls had the same blood type as the soldier; his tentmate did not and so went on the mission, only to be killed by a mortar shell. For Rawls, as Gališanka observes, this led to a dramatic change in worldview. He “could not give this death a higher purpose, and God appeared more and more withdrawn from the details of human life.” As the facts of the Holocaust emerged, Rawls’s crisis of faith only deepened: God was indeed *absconditus*—hidden—and would not intervene in human affairs.

Rawls’s loss of faith did not set him apart from many of his peers in the harrowing years of World War II, but other aspects of his biography help explain his heightened sense of the unfairness and even cruelty of human life. While he was still a young child, two of his brothers died of diseases that were contracted through him, and this feeling of tragic loss accompanied him throughout his life. It helped spawn his interest in morality and applied ethics. In the face of the senseless contingency of human existence, the first virtue of social institutions, Rawls would insist, must be justice. Although not

THE JONATHAN SCHELL
MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES



Tuesday, November 12th
AT 7:30 PM
AT The Great Hall
AT Cooper Union
IN New York City

Presented by Type Media Center



Arundhati
Roy

Naomi
Klein

An original talk by Arundhati Roy followed by a conversation with Naomi Klein.



This event is **SOLD OUT**. You can stream live at facebook.com/jacobinmag.

even a just society could prevent tragedy from befalling its members, it should at least provide people with equal respect and reciprocity in order to act as a balm on human wounds. "Proper ethics," wrote the young Rawls, "is not the relating of a person to some objective 'good' for which he should strive, but is the relating of person to person and finally to God." As God receded from Rawls's worldview, the individual as a moral agent became prominent and would remain so for the rest of his career.

To develop a secular justification for moral action, Rawls's philosophical work in the postwar years began to draw more and more from Kant, especially in Rawls's 1947 essay "Remarks on Ethics," in which he argued that "certain characteristics and properties of human nature...if present in an individual, are understood to create moral claims, or to be the ground of certain rights." But he did not yet have an answer for what these characteristics were. He was certain that individuals were at the center of moral reasoning and that Kant's insistence that universal moral principles alone could establish the dignity of a person was correct. But Rawls had serious misgivings about certain aspects of Kant's approach and conclusions. Rawls criticized Kant's two-

world metaphysics—the idea that behind the world of appearances lies a supersensory realm of noumena that we can never know in themselves—and was also suspicious of his claim that the principle of universalizability ("Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law") was enough to generate moral principles. So Rawls was still in search of other philosophical foundations upon which to build a nonreligious justification for moral action.

This search led Rawls to an engagement with Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought. As Gališanka's painstaking reconstruction of this evolution demonstrates, Wittgenstein and the philosophers influenced by him, like Stephen Toulmin, proved formative in the next turn in Rawls's thinking on ethics. He began to accept their view that the task of philosophical analysis—rather than articulating principles deduced from practical reason, as Kant would argue—was "to uncover the constitutive rules of ethical reasoning." But exactly whose mode of ethical reasoning would be paradigmatic for such an analysis? Which communities or life-forms were to be viewed as exemplary? As Rawls sought a more contextual consideration of human practices in all their dizzying multiplicity, he

became aware that Wittgenstein had opened the door too widely to relativism. To stave this off, Rawls emphasized the concept of the "reasonable person" as a paradigm for how to think about moral and political precepts. But that concept nevertheless begged the question: If justice is what reasonable people would agree to, then what constituted reasonableness? The answer would be that reasonableness consisted of such people agreeing on precisely these principles of justice.

This back-and-forth in his own mind between Kantian universalism and Wittgensteinian contextualism would shape Rawls's thought throughout the 1950s, until he developed his method of "reflective equilibrium"—the idea that moral reasoning consisted of testing our deep intuitions about fairness, equality, and the like against a variety of moral principles, such the utilitarian one (the "greatest happiness of the greatest number") or the Marxian one ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"). Rawls had experimented with various strategies of justification in ethics. At Princeton as a young lecturer, he was influenced by game theory, and when he joined Harvard's faculty in the 1960s, W.V. Quine's anti-foundationalism

FROM NPR CORRESPONDENT AARTI SHAHANI

One immigrant family's American Dream, the justice system that took it away, and the daughter who fought to get it back

"Destined to take its place among the finest memoirs written in recent decades."

~ GUY RAZ, CO-CREATOR OF *HOW I BUILT THIS*, *WOW IN THE WORLD*, AND *TED RADIO HOUR*

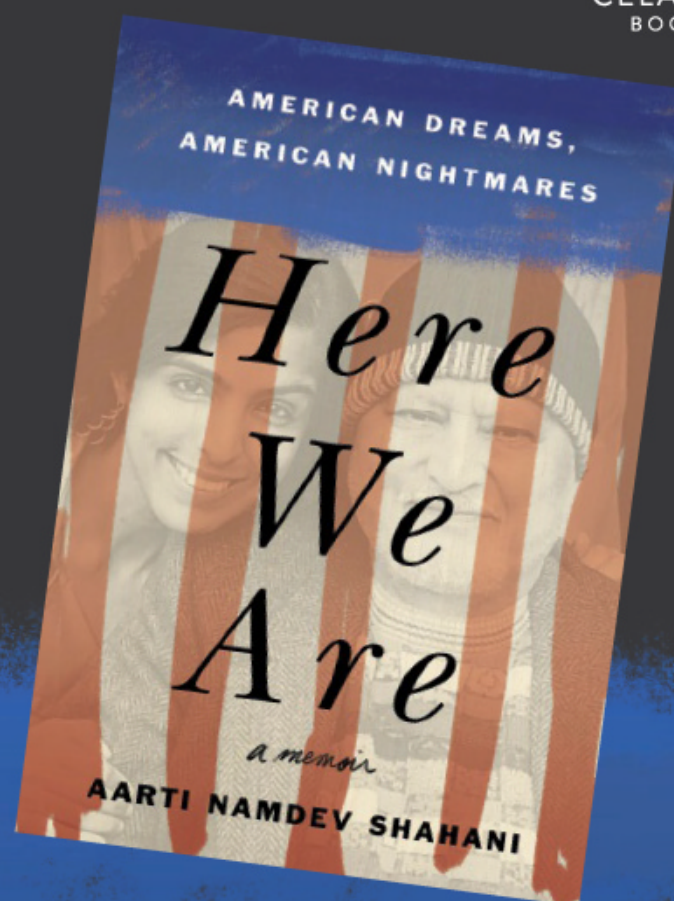
HERE WE ARE

AMERICAN DREAMS, AMERICAN NIGHTMARES

ON SALE NOW



CELADON BOOKS



affected him deeply. But now he had begun to use the method of reflective equilibrium to express and examine the deep intuition that justice ought to be a kind of fairness. In his lectures on political philosophy, he observed that “what one is trying to achieve is a state of self-conscious reflective equilibrium with respect to one’s own judgments on the justice and injustice of institutions (acts, and persons).”

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls demonstrated how such reflective equilibrium could work in developing a justification for a liberal political ethic. He did so through a now-famous device: the thought experiment of “the original position,” placing an individual deliberating on moral and political questions behind a “veil of ignorance.” The experiment asks us to imagine a hypothetical situation in which “no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like.” Such individuals do not even know their conception of the good or their own psychological inclinations.

Although no person has ever existed under such conditions, what Rawls was asking us to imagine was quite intuitive. If justice as fairness is to be attained, no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged through the genetic accidents of one’s birth, such as inborn abilities and aptitudes (gender and sexuality can be included in this list, although they played no role in Rawls’s deliberations), or the contingency of one’s social circumstances, such as class, family fortune, and social status. People are equal and, as Rawls wrote, if “all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.”

Yet as one begins to ask what kinds of principles of justice such individuals would choose when in this original position, things become murkier. By excluding knowledge of the historical properties of the society one lives in, its stage of economic development, and its social stratification, Rawls’s theory quickly becomes more difficult to parse. How could individuals situated behind so thick a veil of ignorance choose such complicated and historically informed principles as the two principles of justice eventually laid out by Rawls—that, first, “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible

with a similar system of liberty for all,” and that, second, “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged...and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.” Both of these principles were clearly shaped by history and culture; they not only evince a deep commitment to human equality—a legacy of the Enlightenment—but also suggest that social and economic inequalities are not inherited via some immutable destiny but can be changed through public activity and governmental policy.

The question becomes “How could one not know the salient facts of one’s history and society—such as whether it was a feudal or a free-market society—but know enough to agree to such principles?” Likewise, was inequality to be measured in narrow economic terms in the light of income or GDP? Or was some other index needed, such as the development of capabilities, as Amartya Sen would argue? What about sources of inequality that had their origins in status-specific concepts such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and cultural belonging?

Rawls did not restrict inequality to income and material goods. But as Iris Young noted in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, an early feminist critique of his work, the kind of disrespect and marginalization suffered by some groups cannot be articulated in terms of Rawlsian theory because the differences that would make a difference were ignored. Rawlsian equality of people amounted to sameness, to a homogenization of otherness rather than its recognition.

A similar assessment was developed by critical race theorists like Charles Mills. “Rawls himself had virtually nothing useful to say about race in any of the two thousand pages of his five books,” Mills asserted, “and he doesn’t even mention colonialism and imperialism.” For Mills, white racial privilege cannot be reduced to racism; it is not merely the product of an individual’s psychological attitude, and therefore justice could not be formulated from this vantage point, either. Despite denouncing the inequalities that resulted from racial privilege, Rawls’s theory could not offer, as Mills and others showed, a way out from white domination because its “ideal theory” did not deal with the sociohistorical specificity of colonialism, imperialism, and racial domination. Rawls’s famous thought experiment was, in this

view, so removed from material reality that it simply expunged historical institutions, without which racism could not be explained.

It is disappointing that Gališanka ends his reconstruction of Rawls’s evolution just as Rawls became increasingly more explicit about the political dimensions of his theory. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls clarified that his theory of justice was not formulated “sub specie aeternitatis” (as he argued in *A Theory of Justice*) but was developed to address the quandaries created by liberal societies deeply riven by enduring moral, religious, and political disagreements. It was not people behind a “veil of ignorance” who would choose the two principles of justice but citizens in liberal democratic societies both respectful of one another and interested in cooperating over time in building a just society. Gališanka could have discussed this stage in Rawls’s evolution, since it demonstrates quite fittingly the strong hold that Wittgensteinian contextualism still had on him. The two principles of justice were those that “we” in liberal democratic societies, and not Kantian noumenal selves, would choose after engaging in a reflective deliberation about justice as fairness.

But even as Rawls’s thinking took a more historical turn, it was not in response to feminists’ or critical race theorists’ evaluations of his work, and neither analysis was properly engaged with or satisfyingly answered in *Political Liberalism*. With the possible exception of Susan Moller Okin’s promptings to include the family in the basic structures of society to which the two principles of justice needed to be applied, Rawls largely ignored these other criticisms.

More than two decades after *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls still asked, “How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?” The differences among citizens that continued to preoccupy him were worldview differences pertaining to religion, science, and conceptions of the good but not the experiential differences of race, gender, sexuality, and culture.

Rawls’s continuing emphasis on reasonability and stability generated a third set of criticisms besides those of feminists and critical race theorists: What was “political” about a theory that seemed to exclude from consideration political parties, associations, and movements while bestowing on the US

Supreme Court the ultimate say in the exercise of public reason? Where was the agonism and passion of partisan politics, its hue and cry? Giving voice to many of these dissatisfactions, William Galston concluded in his critique of Rawls that his high liberalism reduced political philosophy to a subfield of moral theory. Both institutional realists like Jeremy Waldron and human-nature pessimists like John Gray clamored to orient political theorizing away from normative theory toward a more robust engagement with institutions and human history.

What, then, is still alive in the Rawlsian program after all this? Are we simply sifting the ruins of this once-grand theoretical architecture of justice? While many of these criticisms are incontrovertible and I was among the early critics of Rawls to take issue with the coherence of his “original position” argument and his neglect of feminist moral theory, I have never accepted that these analyses should amount to a rejection of normative theorizing in the Kantian tradition, by which I mean a philosophical commitment to moral and legal universalism that upholds the equality and dignity of every human person and that views human social arrangements as premised on the principles of justice and solidarity and changeable through contestation and cooperation. Such egalitarianism considers each and every one of us as concrete and vulnerable beings, embodied and embedded in particular historical and cultural contexts. Kant and Rawls are right that it is a measure of our human dignity that we can reach beyond our own specific interests and formulate moral principles that we believe can be shared by all. No matter how fallible our logic might be, we can and ought to think about the principles of a just world that we would like to build and share with others.

Kant and Rawls are also right that in considering human equality, we must necessarily set aside certain of our differences. We are one another’s equals because of our vulnerability as human animals as well as our dignity as rational beings. If we do not consider ourselves equals, our differences become sources of indifference or disrespect. Feminists and critical race theorists have been, at times, too quick to reject these normative aspirations to equality and dignity. The trouble is not with these ideals themselves but with their implicit prejudices about those humans who are worthy of equality and dignity. We can always ask “Whose equality?” and “Whose dignity?”

These ideals are always subject to struggle, interpretation, and resignification among human groups. But without upholding some rational ideals for evaluating such struggles, we are entirely at the mercy of the forces of history. As Hegel once noted caustically, “World history is the court of the judgment of the world.” This is not the position of the oppressed and the excluded, who always fight in the name of unrealized ideals.


If liberal democracies are in decline today, it is not because high liberalism has converted political theory into abstract moral philosophy. It is because the institutions of liberal democracy are not showing themselves to be strong enough to withstand the destructive effects of financial globalization, increasing inequality, climate change, and the crises of political representation. Citizens’ and residents’ equality—and here I include the undocumented—has been undermined by the privatization and monetization of ever-increasing domains of life, from health care to education, from transportation to housing. No one gives a damn about “the worst off,” although Rawls insisted we all should in agreeing to his second principle of justice. Rather, as the once economically secure industrial workers have seen their livelihoods and communities destroyed by outsourcing, capital flight, and global competition, “There but for the grace of God go I” has become the refrain. The immigrant and the asylum seeker have become symbolic bearers of the ravages of global capitalism, and it has proved all too easy to mobilize populist xenophobia against them.

Indeed, liberal democracies may not survive this storm and may be transformed into the kind of authoritarian and technocratic meritocracy with which David Runciman’s brilliant (if a bit too cheery) book *How Democracy Ends* concludes. And if the project of liberal democracy ends, it will be because we have failed to achieve equality and dignity amid the economic and political systems now whirling around us, awash in money, commodities, and consumerism.

In her new book, *In the Shadow of Justice: Postwar Liberalism and the Remaking of Political Philosophy*, Katrina Forrester identifies the big questions:

But if modern political philosophy is bound up with modern liberalism, and liberalism is failing, it may well be time to ask whether these apparently timeless ideas outlived their usefulness. Rawls’s ideas were developed during a very distinctive period of U.S. history, and his the-

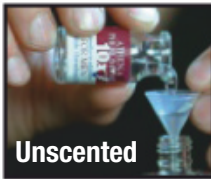
ATHENA PHEROMONES™ INCREASE AFFECTION



Created by Winnifred Cutler, Ph.D. in biology from U. of Penn, post-doc Stanford. Co-discovered human pheromones in 1986

Author of 8 books on wellness and 50+ scientific papers.

PROVEN EFFECTIVE IN 3 DOUBLE-BLIND STUDIES




Unscented

ATHENA PHEROMONES™ increase your attractiveness.

Athena 10X™ For Men \$99.50
10:13™ For Women \$98.50
Cosmetics **Free U.S. Shipping**

♥ **Sybil (NY)** “Following my divorce this year I began dating again at age 50. **I began using your 10:13 six months ago and am currently juggling three attractive men.**”

♥ **Frank (NJ)** 17 orders “**10X has helped me over the years. Thank you for what you do! 10X has really helped me with relationships.**”

Not in stores  **610-827-2200**

Athenainstitute.com

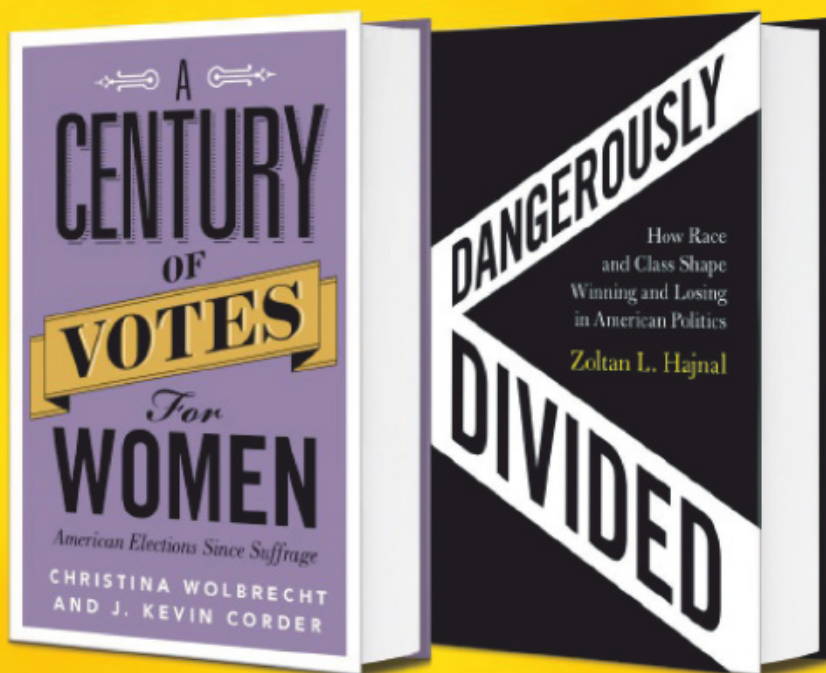
Athena Institute, Braefield Rd, Chester Spgs, PA 19425 NTN

ory bears an intimate connection to postwar liberal democracy. Is liberal political philosophy complicit in its failures? Is political philosophy, like liberalism itself, in crisis, and in need of reinvention? And if so, what does its future look like?

I am not convinced that we need to reject all of Rawls’s ideas in order to deal with our present crises. And I resist the thought that we should read Rawls in the near future only the way we read many earlier classics of political thought—that is, as a vague historical recollection of the kinds of beings we once aspired to be and the political communities we hoped to create but failed. But I agree that political philosophy today needs the kind of bold questioning that Forrester demands. In particular, in a globalized world a reconsideration of the framework of justice beyond the nation-state is necessary. This shift need not lead us to reject Rawlsian ideas of justice and equality altogether; rather, as Gališanka’s book well demonstrates and as feminist and postcolonial theorists have shown, we need to hold on to the tension between universalism and contextualism in formulating our own questions for our own times. ■

CAMBRIDGE

Explore today's politics, one book at a time



A Century of Votes for Women

"A remarkable and fitting tribute to mark the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States."

Susan Carroll, *Rutgers University*

Dangerously Divided

"Hajnal convincingly demonstrates that race has replaced class as the main dividing line in American politics, and that immigration has become a major contributor to this divide. A must-read."

William Julius Wilson, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged*

Red State Blues

"This book offers a series of X-Rays of our current political and ideological impasses, revealing hidden structural factors that have frustrated the grand conservative project, while allowing for under-the-radar liberal advances you didn't know were happening."

Greg Sargent, *The Washington Post*

Trump and Us

"Trump and Us is not merely a study of political rhetoric. It is a profound meditation on the role and meaning of campaign rhetoric for a democracy."

Jeffrey Cohen, *Fordham University*



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

 CUP_PoliSci
  CUPAcademic
 CambridgeUniversityPressPolitics

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



THE APPARATCHIK

The rise of Clarence Thomas

by **RANDALL KENNEDY**

Appointed 28 years ago, Clarence Thomas holds the honor of having held a seat on the Supreme Court longer than any of the other current justices. He is also the nation's second African American justice, having succeeded the first, Thurgood Marshall, in 1991. Born in Pin Point, Georgia, in 1948, Thomas grew up poor, though not destitute, and in circumstances in which he experienced both anti-black racism and the opportunities pried open by the civil rights movement. He attended Holy Cross College and Yale Law School, pursuant to admissions programs that expressly sought to assist promising black students. Upon graduating from Yale, he associated himself with Jack Danforth, an ambitious, well-connected Republican and future Missouri senator who became a life-long mentor and door opener. Through his

budding ties with the GOP, Thomas steadily rose on the rungs of the political appointee ladder. In 1981 he became assistant secretary for civil rights at the Department of Education, in 1982 chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and in 1990 a judge on the United States Court of Appeals. In 1991, George H.W. Bush tapped him for the Supreme Court, triggering a rancorous battle over his confirmation, especially after he was accused of sexual harassment by his former aide Anita Hill.

As a justice, Thomas has developed a distinctive persona. Resolutely silent during oral arguments, he writes bold opinions in which he uninhibitedly repudiates precedent, wielding an interpretive methodology in which he purports to propound an originalist understanding of the Constitution. He focuses on the racial consequences of cases more than his colleagues do, and he also refers to black thinkers—for example, Frederick Douglass and Thomas Sowell—who are largely ignored by the other justices.

With a voting record that places him at the right edge of a conservative court, there is little question where his politics lie, and he is said to be President Trump's favorite justice.

Thomas's influence is now poised to grow as the federal judiciary lurches to the right—a sobering prospect, given that if he had his way, there would be no federal constitutional protections against state power aimed at punishing the provision of contraception or abortion or against laws punishing disapproved sexual relations between consenting adults. The ability of the federal government to regulate industry on behalf of consumers, workers, and the environment would be sharply curtailed; prisoners would have virtually no recourse to federal constitutional redress against governmental abuse; affirmative action would be prohibited; and previously narrowed prohibitions against invidious discriminations would be trimmed even further. How successful Thomas will be in realizing such an agenda is unclear, but he has already made himself matter dramat-

Randall Kennedy is the Michael R. Klein Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. He is at work on a legal history of the Second Reconstruction.

ically. In 2000 he cast a decisive vote in *Bush v. Gore*, which handed the disputed election to George W. Bush. In 2008 he did the same in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, in which the court, taking a cue from an earlier opinion by Thomas, held that the Second Amendment grants individuals the right to bear arms. In 2013 he cast another decisive vote, this time in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a 5-4 decision that eviscerated a key section of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In *The Enigma of Clarence Thomas*, political theorist Corey Robin sets out to explicate the justice's motivations, writings, and votes—to make sense of his contradictions and ambiguities. The author of two previous books, *Fear* and *The Reactionary Mind*, Robin wants to show how Thomas “has managed to take his peculiar blend of black nationalism and black conservatism and...fit this alien and intransigent politics into that most traditional and stylized genre of the American canon, the Supreme Court opinion.” According to Robin, Thomas has done so by making race “the foundational principle of [his] philosophy and jurisprudence.... It is the ground of his thinking about morals and politics, society and the law.”

Other academics have noted this feature of Thomas's thinking, but Robin develops the argument for a general audience, updates it, and extends it to a broader range of topics than those typically discussed in relation to Thomas. Robin observes, for example, how Thomas justifies his hostility to the state's power to take private property through eminent domain by referring to episodes when municipalities callously used that power to demolish black communities.

Robin also cites how Thomas put his disapproval of campaign finance restrictions in the context of repudiating the notorious white supremacist senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina, who authored legislation that barred corporations from contributing to candidates for federal elective office. “For Thomas,” Robin argues, “even the seemingly non-racial subject of campaign finance is, like so many constitutional questions, deeply enmeshed in race.”

Robin portrays Thomas as self-consciously committed to improving the lot of black people, albeit by means at odds with the prescriptions of many prominent African American politicians and voters, most of whom are liberal Democrats. Convinced that the federal government cannot help black Americans with what he sees as their most pressing problems—those of communal issues of morale—Thomas favors shrink-

The Enigma of Clarence Thomas

By Corey Robin

Metropolitan Books. 320 pp. \$30

ing social welfare programs. Insisting that stringent law enforcement is necessary to save black people from the depredations of criminality, he favors strengthening policing.

In perhaps the most novel feature of his analysis, Robin argues that Thomas's willingness to countenance disfranchisement and racially discriminatory punishment (conduct that many observers see as anti-black) derives from his apparent belief that the best qualities in black America have been elicited in oppressive circumstances and that therefore, paradoxically, those circumstances are good for black Americans. With those views, Robin argues, Thomas has rationalized nearly all of his efforts to maintain the legal architecture under which African Americans have suffered most because “adversity helps the black community develop its inner virtue and resolve.” Robin adds, “It's astonishing how openly Thomas embraces not just federalism but a view of federalism associated with the slaveocracy and Jim Crow.”

To make his case, Robin opts for “interpretation and analysis rather than objection and critique.” He abhors Thomas's politics, maintaining that the justice's “beliefs are disturbing, even ugly; his style brutal.” But Robin wants his readers to confront this discomfort head-on and engage with Thomas's thinking in detail rather than evade it through ignorant dismissal. Robin does this by describing Thomas's views with sufficient equanimity to enable his readers to glimpse the world through the justice's eyes—no matter how troubling this perspective may be.

This approach has won Robin notable plaudits. In *Boston Review*, Joshua Cohen lauds *The Enigma of Clarence Thomas* as “a wonderful book” that is “a model of interpretive generosity.” In his determined effort to be coolly analytical and give Thomas his due, however, Robin can at times accord the justice an excessive solicitude. Eschewing charges that Thomas is intellectually superficial and “narrowly partisan,” Robin depicts him as a figure of impassioned idealism and substantial intellectual depth. But is he really a formidable thinker, or is his thinking merely that of a Republican apparatchik skilled in bureaucratic self-promotion and intensely focused on using the power he has amassed to promote retrograde policies? This is the central question posed by Thomas's status as one-ninth of the living American Constitution, and it is one that Robin fails to answer in a fully satisfying way.

Since his appointment to the Supreme Court, Thomas has routinely pretended that he is an accidental justice, someone who was promoted by others without his prompting. That is, of course, untrue. As Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson show in *Strange Justice*, he campaigned assiduously for the Supreme Court position. One skill that enabled him to succeed was his artful manipulation of other people's decent inhibitions. Particularly consequential was his exploitation of an abhorrence of racism in others to shield himself from scrutiny. The most striking instance of this surfaced in the wake of Hill's allegation that Thomas had sexually harassed her. With appalling effectiveness, he cowed the Senate Judiciary Committee, led by then-Senator Joe Biden, by charging that the public examination of her claim constituted a “high-tech lynching.” Another came when, under routine questioning, Thomas offered ignorant or evasive answers that should have been disqualifying. When Senator Patrick Leahy asked him to name a few important decisions handed down by the Supreme Court over the previous two decades, Thomas mustered a halting and fragmentary reply that would have been embarrassing for any law student. Asked about *Roe v. Wade*, he responded as if he had hardly even thought about the case. It is true that, as Robin states, the two justices about whom complaints concerning competence have consistently been raised are Marshall and Thomas, and that is not coincidental. Racism has played a role in some of those complaints. But that should not excuse Thomas's lack of legal fluency or the weakness of his preconfirmation legal record, his subsequent reluctance to enter into public disputation at oral arguments and other non-scripted occasions, or the poor quality of his memoir (*My Grandfather's Son*), all of which provide a reasonable basis for questioning his intellectual heft.

Robin mostly accepts at face value Thomas's portrayal of himself as a race man deeply invested in black America. After all, Thomas quotes approvingly from Douglass. He talks admiringly of the black folk who persevered under the brutal reign of Jim Crow. He notes the continuing prevalence of anti-black racism, and he concerns himself with the racial consequences of disputed policies. But this is mostly pretense. When Thomas cites Douglass, he does so not to perpetuate that great man's challenge to white supremacy but to burnish his own brand, signaling to black Americans that, beneath his reactionary politics, he has not forgotten where he came from and signaling

to white Americans that he is no ordinary right-wing Republican but something more valuable: a *black* right-wing Republican with code-switching capabilities.

In some readings of Thomas's opinions, Robin can also be excessively impressed by his arguments, such as his lone dissent in *Virginia v. Black*. In that ruling the court invalidated on First Amendment grounds a statute criminalizing cross burning. To Robin, Thomas's dissent shows the justice getting his black on. But the position he adopted—supporting the broad criminalization of cross burning—in addition to being misguided as a matter of First Amendment law, in fact posed no threat to most white conservatives, who are happy to sustain a system of racial hierarchy even as they condemn KKK-style symbolic mayhem.

Thomas, it seems, gets his black on only when the stakes are marginal or when he is shielding himself from scrutiny. When the stakes are high and urgent, his attentiveness to the interests of black Americans is scant. The best illustration is his vote with the majority in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Its dramatic undercutting of the Voting Rights Act is the most unjustifiable and hurtful decision imposed on black America in the past half century. It is atrocious, right alongside such judicial delinquencies as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Giles v. Harris*, and *Korematsu v. United States*. Yet here is Thomas providing a crucial vote to cripple legislation for which the proponents of racial justice marched, bled, and in some instances died. For Robin, Thomas's vote in cases like *Shelby County* is an expression of belief that the rules of political engagement are so stacked against African Americans that no intervention, including that proffered by the Voting Rights Act, can effectively assist them. His vote, therefore, was meant to convey the message that, for black Americans, electoral politics is a futile game in which whites will always ultimately call the shots, set the rules, and determine the winners.

This interpretation, though creative, is unconvincing. A more familiar and prosaic reading of Thomas's voting-rights jurisprudence is far more plausible: that for reasons of partisanship and indifference to racial wrongs, Thomas joined four other conservative justices in drumming up a rationale to seize an opportunity to do what their numbers enabled them to do—hobble a statute that, from their vantage, had been used all too effectively to encourage and protect voters who were likely to support their political enemies.

Despite offering illuminating readings

of Thomas's legal and political career, *The Enigma of Clarence Thomas* sometimes falls victim to a talented con artist who, over the course of his long career, has seduced and traduced many observers, allies, and adversaries. Robin maintains that Thomas is authentic, even if misguided, in his devotion to advancing the best interests of black America, and he leans heavily on the apparent sincerity that suffuses Thomas's reminiscences about the black people he claims to idolize, particularly the demanding grandfather who raised him; his stated desire to protect and advance African Americans; and his claim that he feels hurt because many of them revile him for his pronouncements. But an honest belief that a policy is beneficial ought not insulate a supporter of the policy from condemnation if it can be shown that the policy in question is profoundly unjust and seriously harmful to those purportedly helped.

At the turn of the 20th century, a black commentator, William Hannibal Thomas, recommended that African Americans embrace their racial subordination, even to the extent of permitting the state to divest them of authority over their children. He offered this advice out of the apparently honest belief that it was in the best interests of black people. Fortunately, his sincerity did not assuage the properly outraged sentiments of observers like the essayist and novelist Charles W. Chesnutt, who denounced these proposals as a "traitorous blow." Many African American critics of Clarence Thomas have responded similarly. Addressing black Americans in 1993, writer Pearl Cleage insisted starkly that Thomas "is an enemy of our race." His record over the ensuing quarter century has only accentuated the prescience of her judgment.

At the same time, I sympathize with those who have been solicitous of Thomas. I am among their number. Several years after his appointment to the court, he was invited to address the National Bar Association, the black analogue of the American Bar Association. (The NBA was created when the ABA was hostile to black lawyers.) Judge A. Leon Higginbotham of the Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, a stalwart champion of social justice, objected and urged the NBA to rescind its invitation. I wrote an article agreeing with the NBA's decision to honor Thomas and its effort to draw him into dialogue. I was a sap, and Higginbotham was correct: Thomas did not deserve the platform that was offered to him. He had shown

little distinction as a jurist and, contrary to his claims, was uninterested in a candid and reciprocal exchange of ideas.

Subsequently, I erred again. In my book *Sellout: The Politics of Racial Betrayal*, I absolved Thomas of any such dereliction. But if he is not a sellout, then the term has no utility. He is the paradigmatic figure that many African Americans rightly despise, someone who has been promoted by white Americans and then from a position of power and privilege subverts struggles for group elevation. He is the classic free rider and defector. Especially galling is that he has deployed his blackness so effectively for such wrong-headed judgments and opinions, repeatedly invoking his racial minority status to reinforce his broadside attacks against affirmative action.

It is understandable why Robin grants Thomas a grudging respect, but alas, the seriousness of his effort to understand an ideological adversary contrasts sharply with the vapidness, cruelty, and opportunism of his subject. This is not to say that Thomas is diabolical in every facet of his life. Many who have engaged with him personally, including those who disagree strenuously with his politics, report that, one on one, he is remarkably personable—courteous, cordial, without presumption. In the Supreme Court Building, he is widely appreciated for taking the time to know and assist members of its workforce who are often ignored, such as security personnel, secretaries, and food service and janitorial crews. There is reason to think that he would be a nice neighbor. On occasion, he has even quietly assisted people professionally whose ideological leanings he opposes.

Notwithstanding Robin's portrait of a conservative black nationalist consciousness deeply involved in deliberation, Thomas's thinking is little more than a distillation of reactionary sentiments, supplemented by a superficial acquaintance with black political thought and a resentment that remains on boil because of the humiliation he suffered at his confirmation hearings. He has substantiated the forebodings of those who warned that he would be a disaster as a justice and disappointed those who believed that the circumstances of his upbringing would, with time, make him more attuned to the plight of those subject to the many injustices that menace America.

With respect to the most consequential rulings of his career, a far better guide to Clarence Thomas's thinking than the Constitution or *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* are the platforms of the Republican Party and the talking points of Rush Limbaugh. ■



THINGS ARE BLEAK!

Jonathan Safran Foer's quest for planetary salvation

by KATE ARONOFF

Hi. I am a popular novelist, and these are my thoughts about global warming. I grew up in a major East Coast city or perhaps some lesser, sadder place that I've built a relatively successful career processing my feelings about in a semiautobiographical manner. Eventually I became very well educated—educated enough, I'm afraid to say, that I have come to understand the science of climate change. Here are a handful of cherry-picked findings from academic papers I have read on the matter, translated for the layperson with all the boilerplate prose and expert precision of an MFA graduate. And let me tell you: Things are bleak. Bleaker than any

of us could have imagined. But precisely the sort of bleak that lends itself to the grand literary soul-searching readers have come to love me for. Come along with me on my journey.

You see, as someone who has spent his career beautifully digesting the finer points of meaning and existence, the climate crisis—have I mentioned how horrible it is?—is a perfect foil. My fraught relationships with my father, my religious upbringing, and/or my ex-wife were the end of the world, metaphorically speaking, for me. But here it actually is! Human nature, I have deduced from my pained interactions with women and authority figures, is wretched and vile and lazy. Let's also not forget how tortured I am about those interactions and (now) my own interactions with the planet. Statistically, I happen to be among the wealthiest 10 percent of the world's population, which is responsible

for over half of its greenhouse gas emissions. If I were capable of reckoning with macro forces like capitalism and racism, this might be an opportunity to reflect on the fact that global warming is perhaps not the product of a universally shared moral failing but of a political economy that has allowed a very small group of people to hoard incredible amounts of wealth and power, enabling them to wreck the world. But I'm mostly interested in how I fit in. I see no reason my self-loathing cannot extend outward to the rest of the globe. If there is a way out of this epic mess, it certainly must have something to do with me.

Over the last few years we have seen a veritable cottage industry of essays by novelists turned climate catastrophists: Jonathan Franzen in *The New Yorker* writing on birds and how inevitable the coming

Kate Aronoff is a Type Media fellow and a co-author of *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*.

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM ROBINSON

collapse is, Michael Chabon in *The Paris Review* lamenting that his art residency has not changed the world, Nathaniel Rich in *The New York Times Magazine* offering us an obituary for climate policy-making. The climate sad bois abound, bringing us an important truth that they believe they alone have discovered and that alone can deliver the world from catastrophe, or at least confer on them some sort of personal absolution as the planet burns. Stop hoping and start growing kale and strawberries, Franzen tells us. Make art, Chabon suggests. All of this is to say that there are a great many voices that have been missing from the public conversation about the climate crisis, but none of them are Jonathan Safran Foer's.

Alas, Foer has entered the arena. The author of four works of fiction, a book on factory farming (*Eating Animals*), an esoteric Haggadah, and several turgid e-mails to Natalie Portman, he too wants to have his say on the warming planet, and 64 pages into *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*, we find the novelist—after essays on Thanksgiving and the Holocaust but before 27 pages of bullet points on climate change and animal agriculture—laying out his must-do task for tackling global warming: persuading everyone to stop eating animal products before dinner.

Foer does not propose that an accumulation of individual lifestyle choices will in and of itself solve the problem, which requires (by his admission) large-scale government action. He doesn't pretend he has One Quick Trick to Save the Planet. But he contends that change cannot come without an accumulation of individual lifestyle choices: Be the emission reductions you want to see in the world. "Humankind takes leaps," he writes, "when individuals take steps," noting also that "of course it's true that one person deciding to eat a plant-based diet will not change the world, but of course it's true that the sum of millions of such decisions will." Like so many well-intentioned liberals, Foer individuates a collective problem. Planetary salvation is possible only if we each, on our own, begin to become better people—and better eaters.

Reasonably enough, these novelists turned climate catastrophists like to make their cases by telling stories. Franzen speaks of community gardens, Rich of the early climate talks. Foer discusses the blackouts during World War II, when coastal US cities turned off their lights at dusk to prevent enemy ships

We Are the Weather

Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast

By Jonathan Safran Foer

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 288 pp. \$25

from being able to target Allied vessels using the urban backlight. "Of course, the war couldn't have been won *only* with that collective act," he notes, "but imagine if the war couldn't have been won *without* it. Imagine if preventing Nazi flags from flying in London, Moscow and Washington, D.C., required the nightly flipping of switches."

From this description, we might picture the war mobilization—from food rationing to the nation's massively increased industrial productivity—as a great patriotic coming together of the American people and companies to fight the Axis Powers, made possible by the epic will of a country under threat and by the individuals who, through their actions, helped the good guys win. It's true that vast swaths of the United States really did rally around the war effort, making changes large and small to meet the challenges of the day. But they didn't do so unprompted, let alone on the advice of a well-meaning novelist. The blackouts Foer refers to were the result of orders sent out from Washington, stringently enforced by local civil defense councils, and followed up with other state actions and regulations. To prevent disasters on roadways during the blackouts, for example, General Electric produced lamps for cars that shined only a sixth as brightly as a full moon. During the war, the United States effectively had a planned economy, with the government setting prices and wages and placing strict rules on corporations. Quick-footed industrial policy like the kind that created those blackout lamps did most of the work, and CEOs were happy to take lucrative public contracts. Yet with those carrots came sticks: Companies that failed to comply with the government's war production mandates faced a federal takeover, and by the end of the war, about a quarter of US manufacturing was nationalized.

War mobilizations are nothing to be nostalgic about. Still, the speed and scale of what the domestic economy was able to produce through economic planning—deemed all but impossible by plenty of contemporary naysayers—does make it a tantalizing metaphor for climate campaigners today. The same is true for the New Deal, which laid the groundwork for the state to play a more active and constructive role in setting the economy's course in the

midst of the Depression. But what Foer seems to get wrong is who and what was helping execute these changes. It was not just individuals acting out of their sense of moral responsibility; they likely wouldn't have done so had it not been for the federal action and movements and strikes that made them. The ideological project of the right in the decades since the Depression and World War II has been to claim otherwise, suggesting in public that economies can run on their own and in private that the state will safeguard profits from nuisances like regulation and democracy. Individuals, the right has insisted, are both the source of their own problems and the means to betterment and social change. As British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once infamously put it, "Too many...people have been given to understand, 'I have a problem, it is the government's job to cope with it!'... They are casting their problems on society, and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women, and there are families, and no government can do anything except through people, and people look to themselves first."

While hardly a conservative ideologue, Foer can often sound like one. "No one motorist can cause a traffic jam," one of his representative aphorisms goes. "But no traffic jam can exist without individual motorists. We are stuck in traffic because we *are* the traffic." Or another example: "It is easier than ever for the Left to blame the Right for our environmental negligence.... But that blaming can also be a means of turning away from our own reflections." (He even seems cognizant of the association but brushes it off: "Although it may be a neoliberal myth that individual decisions have ultimate power, it is a defeatist myth that individual decisions have no power at all.")

What's so unsettling and even tragic about Foer's book is that his moralizing is illustrative of a broader self-flagellating despair among many liberals who are troubled by the ominous climate forecasts but who have absorbed right-wing nostrums that it's a problem of our shared making.

When it comes to Foer's specific remedies for climate change, it is worth noting that there are compelling ethical and scientific cases to be made for constraining meat, dairy, and egg consumption—many of which Foer presents in *Eating Animals*. He is right to argue that the contribution of agricultural emissions—a stunningly large, if hotly debated, source of greenhouse gases—has been perilously neglected by many greens. For many reasons, we should

all eat fewer animal products. Yet Foer never makes it entirely clear how giving up yogurt and BLTs will lead to any significant change in the atmospheric temperature in the short time frame that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has given us to mitigate climate catastrophe. The high-consumption lifestyles of those lucky enough to have them are conditioned by much larger forces, from the agribusiness companies that lobby to maintain a broken food system to the fossil fuel executives who have funded disinformation campaigns to spread doubt about the reality of climate change. Driving to work in a gas-guzzling vehicle isn't a choice so much as a necessity for people living in places where austerity has deprived them of functional public transit and for whom 30-plus years of wage stagnation has put Priuses and Teslas out of reach. A less meat-intensive diet may well be easier and cheaper than we make it out to be, but without systemic changes to erode the power of industrial agricultural—to better value the work of farmers and make healthy food accessible to all—it won't be worth much to the planet.

Not unlike his description of World War II, the picture that Foer paints of US agriculture is as the sum total of American consumer choices. But reality tells a different story. As economist Raj Patel and National Family Farm Coalition president Jim Goodman point out in an expansive essay in *Jacobin*, the foundations of today's broken industrial agriculture were intended to forestall the type of militancy that led to the New Deal system. The Farm Bureau, for example—chock-full of corporate interests and a leading proponent of greenhouse-gas-spewing farming practices—grew in the early 1910s and '20s throughout the Midwest as a cudgel against the Socialist Party, the Non-Partisan League, and Farmer-Labor organizing in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Today, it's Big Agriculture that dominates American farms and eating habits by lobbying for generous subsidies to distort the cost of food, leaving farmers in debilitating debt and farm workers with poverty wages. "At the moment," Patel and Goodman note, "those who want to farm with dignity in the web of life plead a case for which there is no business logic."

As Foer has pointed out, meat is too inexpensive, and corporate-friendly agricul-

ture subsidies are a scourge. But he seems constitutionally unable to place the blame on the capitalist interests that maintain this status quo. He thinks tackling greenhouse gases is akin to a war, as he told Christiane Amanpour in a recent interview, but not a war in which there is a good and a bad side in the conflict. It's "a little bit different than any war we've ever fought before, because this war is us against us," he explained. "There is nobody to vilify. There is no enemy to point at and to become enraged at." That's an illusion that agribusiness and fossil fuel executives are eager to sustain as they continue to move full speed ahead with business as usual.

And therein lies the problem. For Foer, climate change is first and foremost an issue of personal morality, not corporate power. Throughout the book he grapples with the weight of the climate crisis and what it will mean for his young children, but the story has less to do with them than with how Foer feels about himself. For unnecessarily long portions of the book, he meditates on how—while on tour to promote a novel written after *Eating Animals*—he occasionally indulged in hamburgers at the airport, lamenting that although he kept saying we should do something, he himself was unable to. Foer's self-interrogations are so self-centered that in one lengthy section

he explores these and other moral quandaries via an extended dialogue between himself and his own soul, modeled after what is thought to be the world's first-ever suicide note. The metaphor isn't subtle.

There are a lot of missed opportunities in this book. Foer might have revisited the stories of the farmers he spoke with for *Eating Animals*. He also could have scratched beneath the surface to examine the moneyed interests that structure modern food production and consumption and that profit from our carbon outputs. He could have used his book as an opportunity to chronicle the many compelling people struggling against climate change, using his skills as a novelist to help give life and feeling to their experiences, hopes, and frustrations. But Foer ultimately gets bogged down by his climate anxieties and his painfully inchoate view of the problem he's describing. For Foer, ultimately, the main culprit in the ongoing climate crisis is individual apathy.

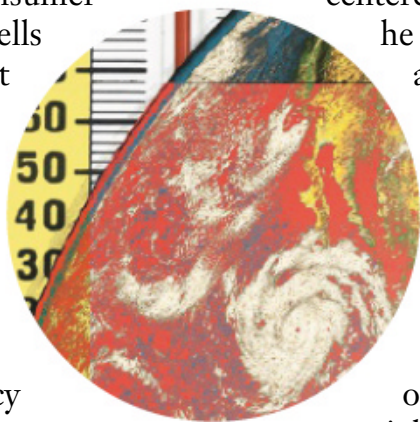
Early in the book, after relaying the story of his grandmother, a Jew who escaped

from Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, he writes:

I sometimes daydream about going from house to house in my grandmother's shtetl, grabbing the faces of those who would stay, and screaming, "You have to do something!" I have this daydream in a house that I *know* consumes multiples of my fair share of energy and I *know* is representative of the kind of voracious lifestyle that I *know* is destroying our planet. I am capable of imagining one of my descendants daydreaming about grabbing my face and screaming, "You have to do something!" But I am incapable of the belief that would move me to do something. So I know nothing.

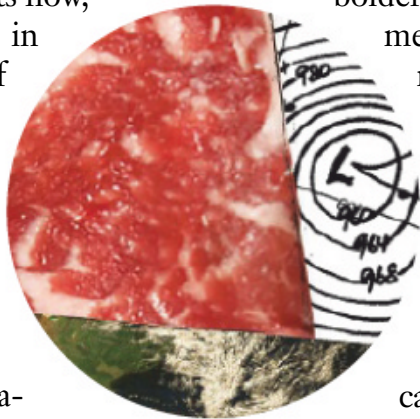
Like the Nazis, the corporations driving this crisis curiously don't factor much into the picture Foer paints; indeed, they barely make an appearance in the book. World War II was famously not a fight without enemies. Nor is the one against climate change.

In *We Are the Weather*, readers get what they should expect: a novelist offering his inner thoughts to the world styled in the same brand of brooding supposed realism that allowed Foer and a whole generation of literary men to make their names in the late 1990s and early 2000s. We sometimes even meet his fellow brooders, introduced in the text as his main interlocutors. Foer attempts to offer some counterweight to the fatalism found among them. Abandoning his longtime fixation on bird protection, Franzen (who somehow doesn't make an appearance in the book) wrote in his *New Yorker* essay, "Call me a pessimist or call me a humanist, but I don't see human nature fundamentally changing anytime soon. I can run ten thousand scenarios through my model"—which is to say, Franzen wants you to know he is thinking very hard about the climate crisis—"and in not one of them do I see the two-degree target being met." In contrast, Foer asserts a more sanguine view and believes that change is possible. But he doesn't have much hope in humankind. "In 2018, despite knowing more than we've ever known about human-caused climate change, humans produced more greenhouse gases than we've ever produced," he mourns. "There are tidy explanations—the growing use of coal in China and India, a strong global economy, unusually severe seasons that required spikes in energy for heating and cooling.



But the truth is as crude as it is obvious: we don't care."

Reading Foer, Franzen, and the other novelists turned climate catastrophists brings up the question "Who, for them, is 'we'?" The Global North has historically fueled the climate crisis, while the Global South is experiencing its effects now, as with catastrophic flooding in Bangladesh. Yet these far-off climate disasters are mentioned only briefly in Foer's book, and if they appear in other doomist books and essays, it is mainly as tragic set pieces. Instead, center stage is reserved for things like the dietary habits of relatively well-off people who can, at least, feel better about our environmental doom since they think they are doing their part. But if all of humanity is the "we," then Foer's insistence that we are all in a state of collective denial no longer holds. There are many millions of people affected by climate impacts, sometimes on a daily basis, who *do* believe in the tremendous scale of this crisis and who have been acting on that belief for decades because it's a matter of life and death. Released days before the worldwide climate



strike saw millions of people take to the streets around the world, Foer's book seldom discusses any existing climate movements—for example, the indigenous-led water protectors who have successfully fought fossil fuel infrastructure, the organizers from climate-vulnerable countries demanding bolder action from world governments, and the Sunrise Movement and those championing the Green New Deal, now the axis around which national conversations about climate policy revolve. Nor does he mention farmers' groups like La Vía Campesina that have argued for decades that dismantling industrial agriculture is inextricable from climate justice and have presented tangible alternatives, along with the kind of concrete policy that Foer treats as secondary. About the closest he gets to talking about climate hawks is an offhand reference to Meatless Mondays and an extended jab at Al Gore, subbing in here for the green movement and its silence on animal agriculture, which, as food journalist Mark Bittman and many others have noted, is only one of the problems plaguing our extractive food system.

"We" are not all the deniers that Foer makes us out to be. As even Bittman, who has long promoted the benefits of a mainly vegan diet, has noted, decades of writing and advocacy urging people to make more climate-friendly consumer choices hasn't led to a meaningful decrease in emissions. That's not likely to change based on a Jonathan Safran Foer book. Our best hope in the face of enormous odds is collective action of a different sort than he prescribes, pioneered by those listed above. As with the New Deal and even the mobilization for World War II, any adequate solution to the climate crisis will emerge from a head-on confrontation with those blocking progress and the kind of ambitious public policy that will allow countries and people to transform their consumption in the ways Foer advocates. In fighting the New Deal order, early neoliberals understood that changing public consciousness wasn't a matter of having enough conversations about Hayek around the dinner table. It was about taking power.

If the world does manage to steer away from catastrophe, the credit will be owed to a critical mass of social movements, unions, and the elected officials accountable to them, working to take power back. No angst-filled breakfast or lunch can do the same. ■

REC. a Real News Network original series

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

HOSTED BY TRNN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS
STEPHEN JANIS AND TAYA GRAHAM

STREAMING ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE
THURSDAYS AT 9:00PM EST

@POLICE_ACCOUNTABILITY_REPORT

/POLICEACCOUNTABILITYREPORT

theREALnews network
therealnews.com



THE URGE TO BE GOOD

Zadie Smith's turn to short fiction

by RUMAAN ALAM

Reading Zadie Smith's new short story collection, *Grand Union*, I kept thinking about Joni Mitchell. In part that's because for Smith, music is a touchstone: It is a subject and a metaphor, and you might say the stuff is right there in her sentences, too. I hear it, anyway, and certainly references to sound and music abound in *Grand Union*. In a story called "Words and Music" (see?), here's how Smith writes about a scat singer:

Instead of *la la do la be la* it was almost *al od al eb al*—like an ululation. In fact, at times it sounded like she was singing that word, *ululation*, over and over. Maybe she was. She sang in Spanish, she sang in English, she made us laugh, she made us cry, it was ridiculous!

But Smith and Mitchell share more than music. Both are virtuosic talents, geniuses a couple of times over. Mitchell is a composer who can write lyrics but also has a painter's eye—from her Van Gogh homages to her *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* blackface. (It's

not always a good eye.) Smith, too, can move between modes: Though many of her peers produce essays as well as stories and novels, very few do it well. (To be fair, this is a bit like being a marathoner who can also play the trombone while water-skiing.) *Grand Union* also made me think of Mitchell for one particular reason. It's a book like her 1979 record *Mingus*—a great concept, perhaps, but one that stubbornly resists old-fashioned ideas like pleasure. You can admire it, but it's hard to love it. I read *Grand Union*, but I doubt I'll ever read it again.

G*rand Union* collects 19 stories, eight of which were previously published, the earliest in 2013 and the most recent in 2018. As the remaining 11 stories are undated, it's impossible to fix a firm chronology to them, but taken as a whole, they give us a glimpse of Smith as a mature artist: Here we find the fiction written by a part-time American, a New Yorker, a celebrity writing professor at New York University, and a mother. She is liberated from niggling professional concerns. The Smith who wrote these stories is an author doing as she damn well pleases. (It's possible that she has always

been just such a writer; it's a perquisite of being a best seller.)

In a withering assessment of her early work, James Wood wrote that "Smith does not lack for powers of invention. The problem is that there is too much of it." It might be impossible to know whether she took his criticism under advisement—perhaps she would have naturally ended up moving in a more realist direction—but whatever the reasons for her artistic evolution, I'm grateful. Her best work is the 2012 book *NW*, more narrow in scope and restrained in voice than her previous three novels. It's no less imaginative than what preceded it; instead, Smith's focus yielded real depth, and the book is more mature and incisive—especially on class and urban life, that way-we-live-now jazz. Smith seems to have learned that sentence upon sentence of razzle-dazzle satisfies the writer but actual narrative and recognizable characters satisfy the reader.

These fundamentals pertain to the short story as well as the novel. But stories, by virtue of their brevity, allow the writer leeway. It's not that a short story is less demanding than a novel, but it's a dalliance, and like a heated love affair, it gives the writer a chance to try on and cast off alternate selves.

Smith seizes this opportunity in the collection. "Parents' Morning Epiphany," "Mood," "Blocked," "The Canker," and the title work feel more like feints than stories. If you read them without authorial attribution, I'm not sure you'd guess they were hers. And without her name attached, I'm not sure they'd find their way into print.

"Parents' Morning Epiphany" is a sketch about narrative and parenthood with a simple message: To be a writer, as to be a parent, is to care about time's passage. The story—which is broken up into sections of discrete paragraphs, a strategy deployed in "Mood" as well—defies summary because I cannot figure out what it's about. It's sort of about New York City, but it's also about dogs and Tumblr and the crisis of the migrant, and slicing these two stories into digestible sections does not make them any easier to swallow. Smith seems to be deliberately resisting the reader's expectations. I don't know if there's a reader not named Zadie Smith who will enjoy this.

"Blocked" is another story difficult to summarize; it might be a diatribe about the difficulty of making art. It might also be a defense of the younger artist's ambition and the middle-aged artist's desire to just... hang out with a dog? It would seem to catalog some of Smith's frustrations with her critics and readers. "No matter what anybody tells you, the underlying principle is not consum-

Rumaan Alam is the author of *That Kind of Mother and Rich and Pretty*.

er satisfaction,” she writes. Fair point, but then what is the rest of the text—a work of grievance? An artist’s explanation? Or just a fictional writer chatting at us? One thing is clear: I’m not sure that’s enough to make a story. There is no sense of movement or engagement with anything. The same could be said of “The Canker” and “Grand Union,” the former a sort-of fable and the latter a sketch that reads like someone describing a dream she once had. You are either the kind of person who enjoys hearing about someone else’s dreams, or you are not.

When all of these sketches are measured together, the math can be unforgiving. Given that a quarter of *Grand Union* consists of these oddities and false starts, it makes sense to conclude that the book doesn’t cohere the way the finest collections of stories can. If one reads only these pieces, the book can feel like a particular kind of disappointment from a writer who has rarely let her fans down; it’s a miscellany.

But *Grand Union* does have more traditional stories as well, and of them, “The Lazy River” stands in contrast to Smith’s handful of experiments, showing what this author is capable of doing with a few thousand words. Told in the first-person plural (no mean feat), it describes a family sojourn to a Spanish resort, contrasting the milieu’s mindless pleasures with glimpses of the African migrants whose labor makes such comfort possible. It made me think of the artist Fred Wilson, known for rearranging museum collections to show the presence and absence of black faces.

The story is knowing, even self-aware—“The Lazy River is a circle, it is wet, it has an artificial current.... If we may speak of the depth of a metaphor, well, then, it is about three feet deep, excepting a brief stretch at which point it rises to six feet four”—but not so tongue-in-cheek that it doesn’t satisfy in more conventional ways.

“The Lazy River” is one of five stories in this book that first appeared in *The New Yorker*. It’s no surprise that the magazine generally considered to be publishing the finest in contemporary fiction would have a relationship with Smith. What is a surprise is that it seems to have published so much by her that doesn’t stand the test of time. “Meet the President!” dates from 2013 but feels like an artifact from the distant past and the work of someone who had been reading too much George Saunders. It’s vaguely postapocalyptic in a way that seems both weighted with meaning and ultimately un-

Grand Union

Stories

By Zadie Smith

Penguin Press. 256 pp. \$27

important, a story of violence and war and technology that is impenetrable to the reader but was probably great fun for the writer.

The New Yorker also published “Escape From New York,” in which Smith imagines the possibly true, possibly apocryphal (honestly, who cares?) scenario of Michael Jackson, Marlon Brando, and Elizabeth Taylor fleeing Manhattan together on the morning of September 11, 2001. The précis tells it

all: The gimmick *is* the story. No one, not even a master like Smith, can conjure the inner life of Jackson, an utter cipher, and from the vantage of the present, the whole enterprise seems silly.

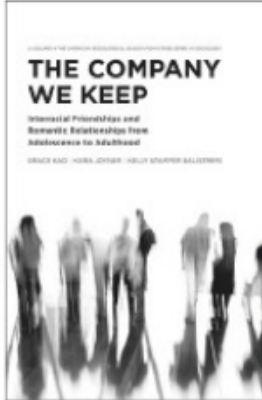
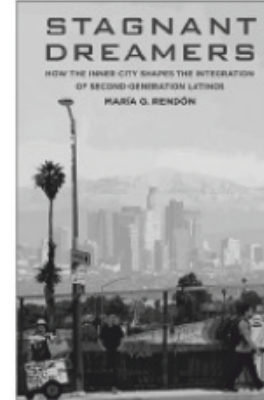
In “Now More Than Ever,” Smith takes on the culture of social-media-enabled umbrage that such a story might provoke. “There is an urge to be good,” she writes. “To be seen to be good. To be seen. Also to be.” This is a savage (and accurate) assessment of the tweeting classes and a scintillating way to begin a cautionary tale of a professor falling afoul of the masses. This professor lives in an apartment building whose residents use signs



RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

New Books | Fall 2019



 <p>STATUS Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter? Cecilia L. Ridgeway</p>	 <p>THE COMPANY WE KEEP Interracial Friendships and Romantic Relationships from Adolescence to Adulthood Grace Kao, Kara Joyner, Kelly Stamper Balistreri</p>	 <p>STAGNANT DREAMERS How the Inner City Shapes the Integration of Second-Generation Latinos María G. Rendón</p>	 <p>wrecked How the American Automobile Industry Destroyed Its Capacity to Compete Joshua Murray and Michael Schwartz</p>
<p>STATUS Why Is It Everywhere? Why Does It Matter? Cecilia L. Ridgeway Social psychologist Ridgeway examines how this ancient and universal form of inequality influences today’s meritocratic institutions. This important new book shows the pervasive influence of status on social inequality and suggests ways to ensure that it has a less detrimental impact on our lives. \$35.00 Nov 2019 978-0-87154-784-2</p>	<p>THE COMPANY WE KEEP Interracial Friendships and Romantic Relationships from Adolescence to Adulthood Grace Kao, Kara Joyner, and Kelly Stamper Balistreri Sociologists Kao, Joyner, and Balistreri analyze the ways school diversity and adolescent interracial contact intersect to lay the groundwork for interracial relationships in young adulthood. This new book provides compelling insights and hope for the future of living and loving across racial divides. \$29.95 Oct 2019 978-0-87154-468-1</p>	<p>STAGNANT DREAMERS How the Inner City Shapes the Integration of Second-Generation Latinos María G. Rendón Social policy expert Rendón follows 42 young men from two high-poverty Los Angeles neighborhoods as they transition into adulthood. <i>Stagnant Dreamers</i> describes the challenges they face coming of age in the inner city and accessing higher education and good jobs. \$39.95 Dec 2019 978-0-87154-708-8</p>	<p>WRECKED How the American Automobile Industry Destroyed Its Capacity to Compete Joshua Murray and Michael Schwartz An analysis of the downfall of the American auto industry. This examination of labor relations and production processes in the U.S. and Japan shows that the decline of American manufacturers was a consequence of their attempts to weaken unions. \$35.00 Jun 2019 978-0-87154-820-7</p>

RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

russellsage.org/publications
(800) 621-2736

painted with arrows to indicate the homes of neighbors who fail to live up to the moral standards that the collective has agreed upon.

Smith is 43, but this piece feels like the work of a much older writer. It's hectoring, a little inane, and not very subtle, as if David Brooks turned one of his columns into fiction. And it's impossible not to notice that the protagonist is, like Smith, a woman professor. The narrator makes the mistake of defending a poet who has said something unacceptable. The tale ends with a stomped foot and the echo of a familiar hashtag: "Soon after that the poet got cancelled and, soon after that, me too." Smith is a bit young to be slipping into "kids these days!" shtick. But then she's always been wise beyond her years.

When Smith is good, she's superb. Besides "The Lazy River," three previously unpublished stories—"Sentimental Education," "Kelso Deconstructed," and "For the King"—show her full capabilities. The first distills a novel's worth of time into a handful of pages, a loving portrait (of the artist herself?) that contrasts young adulthood with less-young motherhood. "Could it be? Had she slept with three people in twelve hours? The things we put young bodies through!

And because you can't remember forward, she would have to wait a long, long time to find a faint future echo of this extremity: breastfeeding one child, then a few hours later, lying next to another till it slept."

In "Kelso Deconstructed," the author fictionalizes the 1959 murder of Antiguan immigrant Kelso Cochrane, telling it at a slant. Kelso and his wife, Olivia, go to listen to the ranting at London's Speakers' Corner and there encounter Toni Morrison ("a woman not unlike her own grandmother: the same lion's face, the same wealth of hair"); later a doctor called Rooney (Sally, I guess?) gives the ailing Kelso a prescription in the form of an e-mail sent from YoungIrishWriter@gmail.com. This doesn't feel ironic or overwrought or distant or cold. It feels like a gamble that pays off.

Let's be realistic and admit that most story collections contain a handful of good stories. That's enough; that's an accomplishment. A bad story or two or three doesn't wholly undermine the endeavor. It's not the less successful stories that made *Grand Union* a disappointment to me; it's that they were symptoms of a bigger problem. She writes in "Downtown," "Of all the living painters he is the most livingiest and also the most painterly." And here's the issue: When a writer is

full of jokes, the reader begins to wonder whether he or she might be the butt of them.

Too many of the stories here just don't yield or seem to require the reader at all. Sometimes, Smith is still willing to make herself vulnerable through pure sincerity. I think this is a necessary ingredient. In "For the King," in which a woman meets with an old friend to catch up over dinner, Smith writes, "Our lives are so different on the inside. We can never express their full particularity and strangeness in public, their inner chaos and complexity. There are always so many things it proves impossible to say!" This is straightforward—maybe even a little mawkish—but it's quite beautiful. Sincerity is a risk, much harder to pull off than a joke.

A couple of years ago, I saw a video on Instagram of Smith performing a song at New York's Carlyle Hotel. It somehow did not surprise me that she has a beautiful singing voice. She is just one of those rare people who are good at so many things that it doesn't seem quite fair. It's fine to see her falter; I do not question her talent. Lamenting her turn toward the arch or the experimental is as fruitless as regretting Joni Mitchell's dalliance with synth-pop or jazz. Still, I find myself hoping that Smith's next song will be a little sweeter. ■

“A book for our current times and beyond.”

— IAN BREMMER, Eurasia Group and GZERO Media

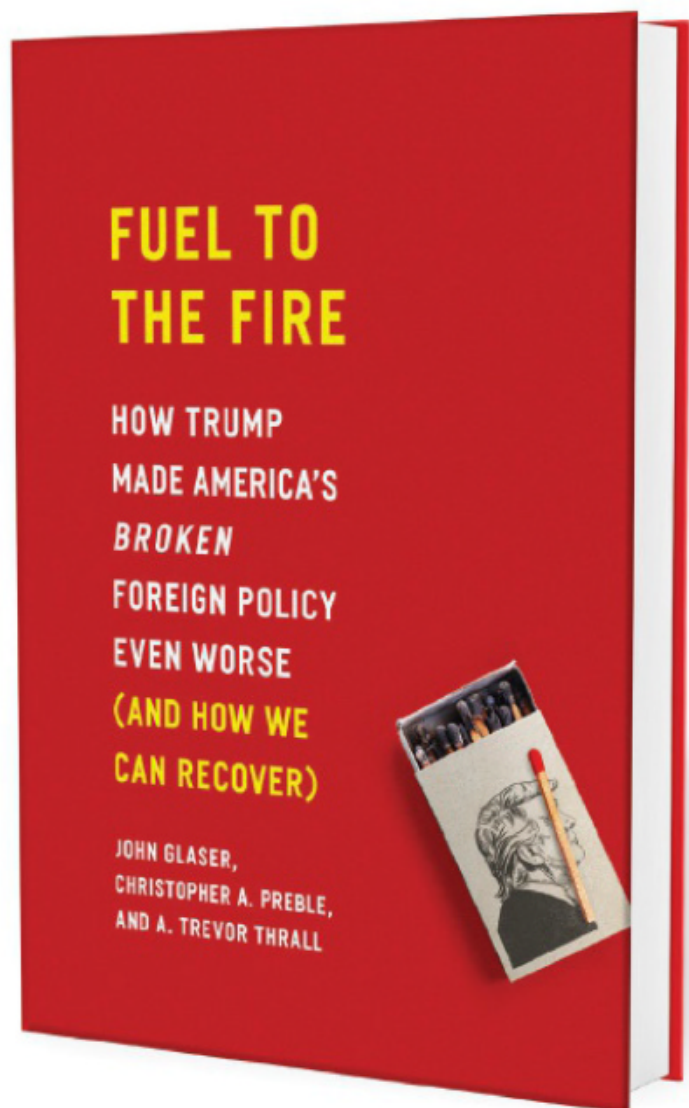
As a candidate, Donald Trump declared U.S. foreign policy “a complete and total disaster.” He vowed his administration would put American interests above all other considerations.

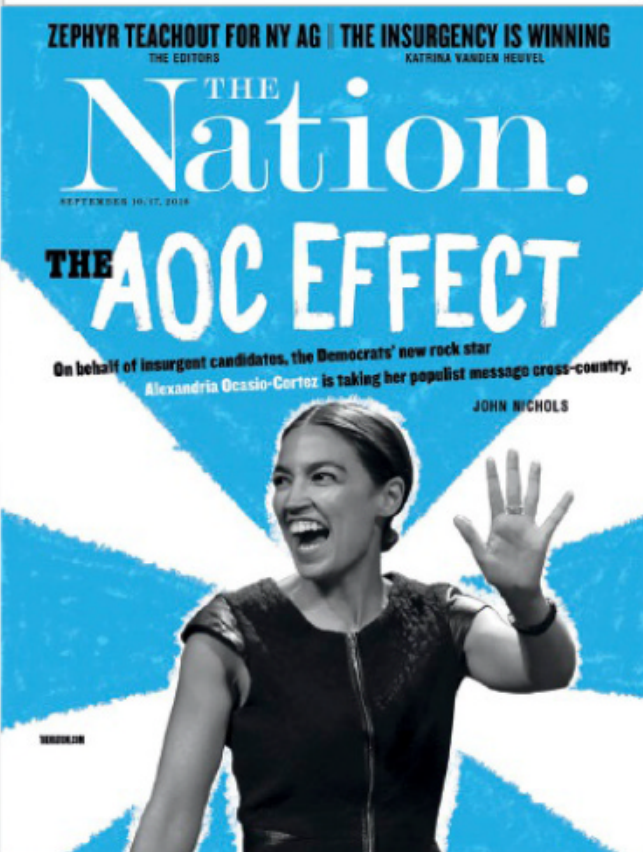
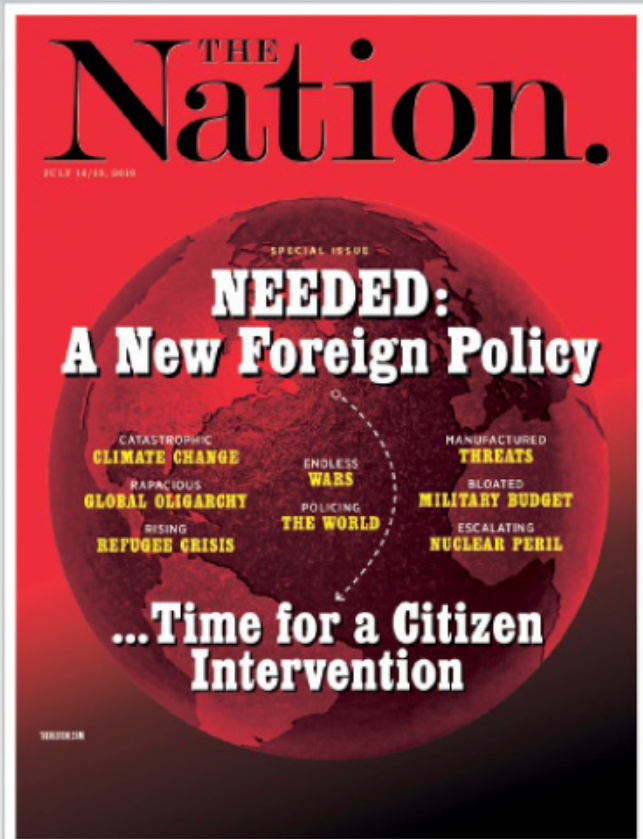
But the Trump administration has doubled down on the misguided, overly militarized policies of the last three decades.

Fuel to the Fire explores the key elements of Trump's approach to the world, and explains why they have failed. The authors call for a new approach to advance American security and prosperity without embarking upon costly and counterproductive wars abroad.



AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS AND EBOOKS ARE SOLD.





THE Nation.

SUBSCRIBE FOR
LESS THAN

60¢

AN ISSUE

**ONLY \$20 FOR
AN ENTIRE YEAR!**

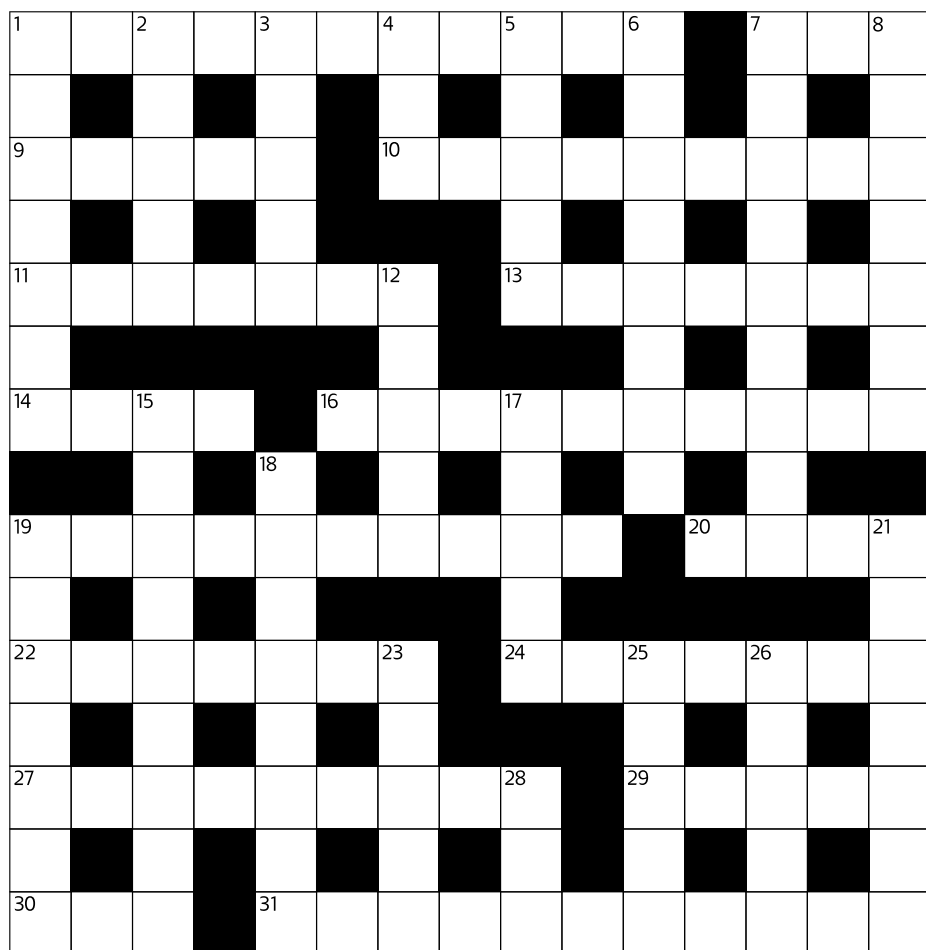
SAVE 90% OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE

ORDER TODAY

TO ORDER, PLEASE USE
ENCLOSED CARDS OR VISIT:
[THENATION.COM/ORDER20](https://thenation.com/order20)

Puzzle No. 3514

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 One who might botch e-phone reconfiguration? (11)
- 7 Touch, one way or the other (3)
- 9 Burn most of weighing device down (5)
- 10 Criminal gang and murder victim will finally seem familiar (4,1,4)
- 11 Upstart's bad pun getting extravagant rave (7)
- 13 Fish stew entails work (7)
- 14 Bath with a musical instrument (4)
- 16 Mother and child, with endlessly fleshy fruit (6,4)
- 19 Fifty-eight (in Spain) divided by 50, plus 1,000 over 500, equals a well-known Scottish number (4,6)
- 20 Easy bucks? They sometimes have it (4)
- 22 Athlete on the road put this thing in bill of cap (7)
- 24 Well-behaved set I can beat up outside (7)
- 27 Leaders of racist Immigration officialdom: terrible danger in part of the southern border (3,6)
- 29 Ultimately, you mix humdrum Guatemala travel with ancient Mayan city (5)

- 30 Play with front half of a car (3)
- 31 Brief amount of time found in seven pairs of consecutive Across entries (5,6)

DOWN

- 1 Drunkard to notice taste of sangria inside (7)
- 2 Tea and a bit of rum for facilitator (5)
- 3 Green stuffing, exposed with a gentle push (5)
- 4 For each hairdo, mostly (3)
- 5 Rogers holding in grunts (5)
- 6 Escapes invalidate one's visa (8)
- 7 Mass is involved in the demonstration using heat (9)
- 8 Greedy person maintaining large edge for wayfarer (7)
- 12 Remove weapons from lunar module (5)
- 15 Supports conservative's unstated biography (9)
- 17 Dropped a hot drink (5)
- 18 Chaotic cluster surrounding beginning of Obama's legislative procedures (8)
- 19 Young hare is allowed to 28 constantly (7)
- 21 Ed lucks out, is breastfed (7)
- 23 Going up a track, right about the kidneys (5)
- 25 Look around piece of unusual dressing (5)
- 26 Muslim boys concealing dance (5)
- 28 Consume beef or veal after commencement (3)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3513

ACROSS 1 COM + PLAIN 5 SP(IR)AL (rev.) 10 anag. 11 A + ESOP (rev.) 12 R + ARE 13 anag. 15 UPS(E)T (puts anag.) 17 [d]INAH + [c]URRY 20 anag. 21 EG + Y + PT 23 anag. 25 J + AVA 28 OVERT[he rainbow] 29 PRI(VILE)G + E 30 BE(SID)E 31 anag.

DOWN 1 COL + ORFU (anag.) + L 2 MO(T)OR 3 "leer" 4 INGE + NUIT + Y 6 anag. 7 RA(S + PB + ERR)Y 8 LA(PS)ED (deal rev.) 9 hidden 14 anag. 16 STA(IN)LES + S 18 anag. 19 STRA(TEG)Y (get rev.) 22 AB S'ORB (rev.) 24 T + APE 26 [a]-AHE-A-D 27 anag.



From Library to Legacy

“I’ve been reading *The Nation* since I was in college. It helped me with my political education. At that time I didn’t have a dime for any donations.... I got my copy at the library. Now I’m much older, retired, and can help groups such as *The Nation*. I’ll keep supporting *The Nation* as long as I can, in the realization that it can educate others and younger members of society.”

—Pat Allen, Calif.



Support what you believe in.

Bequests are by far one of the most popular and simplest ways to leave a lasting personal legacy. A gift in your will is a remarkably easy way to preserve *The Nation* as a fierce voice for truth. In as little as a single sentence, **let your legacy reflect your deep commitment to principled dissent** and ensure *The Nation’s* ability to hold the powerful to account for future generations.

THE Nation.

Visit legacy.thenation.com to get started.