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They want to fight Trump. Can they agree on what comes next?**

JOAN WALSH



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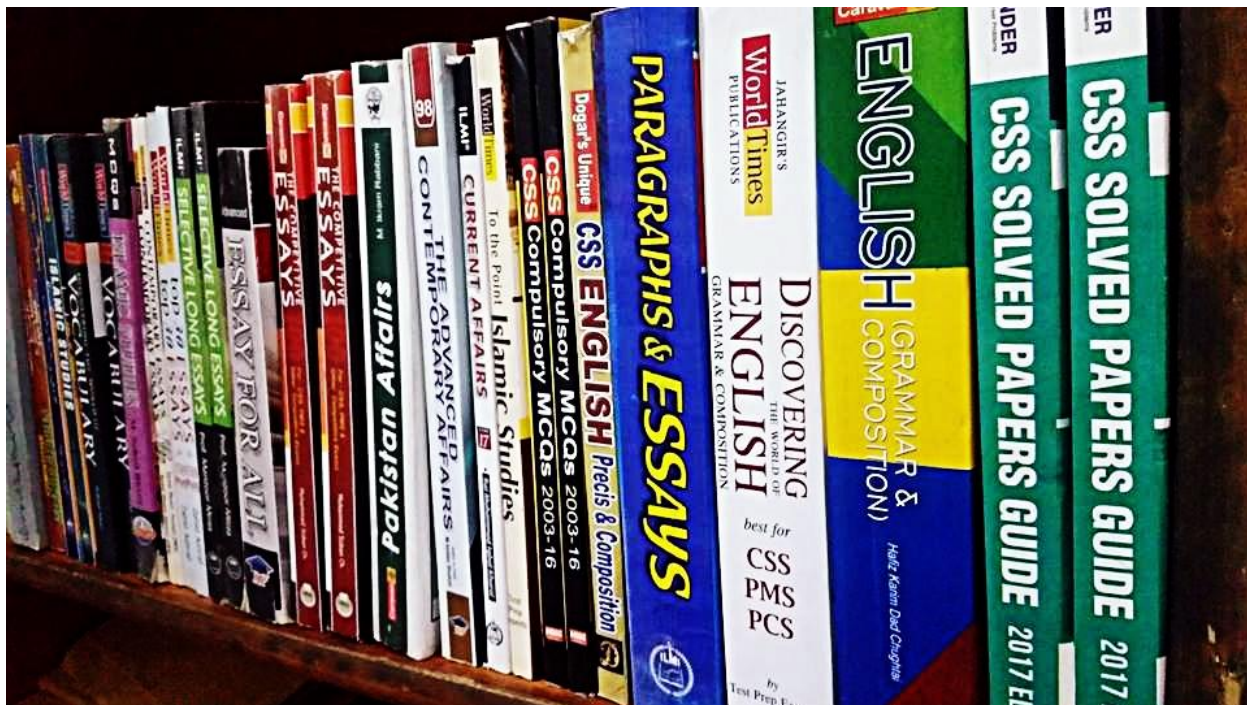
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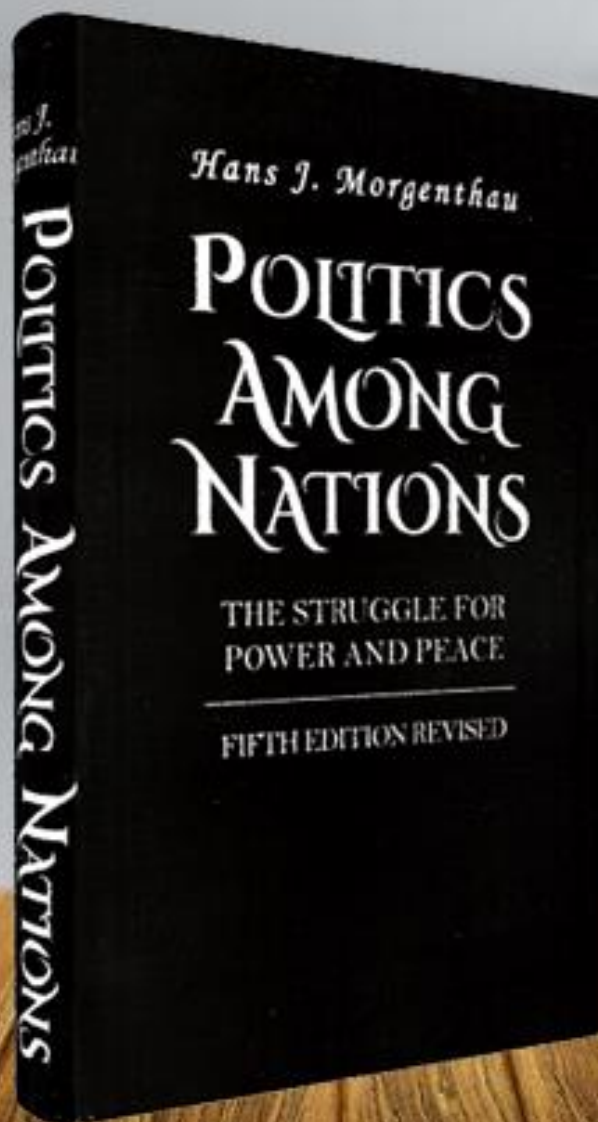
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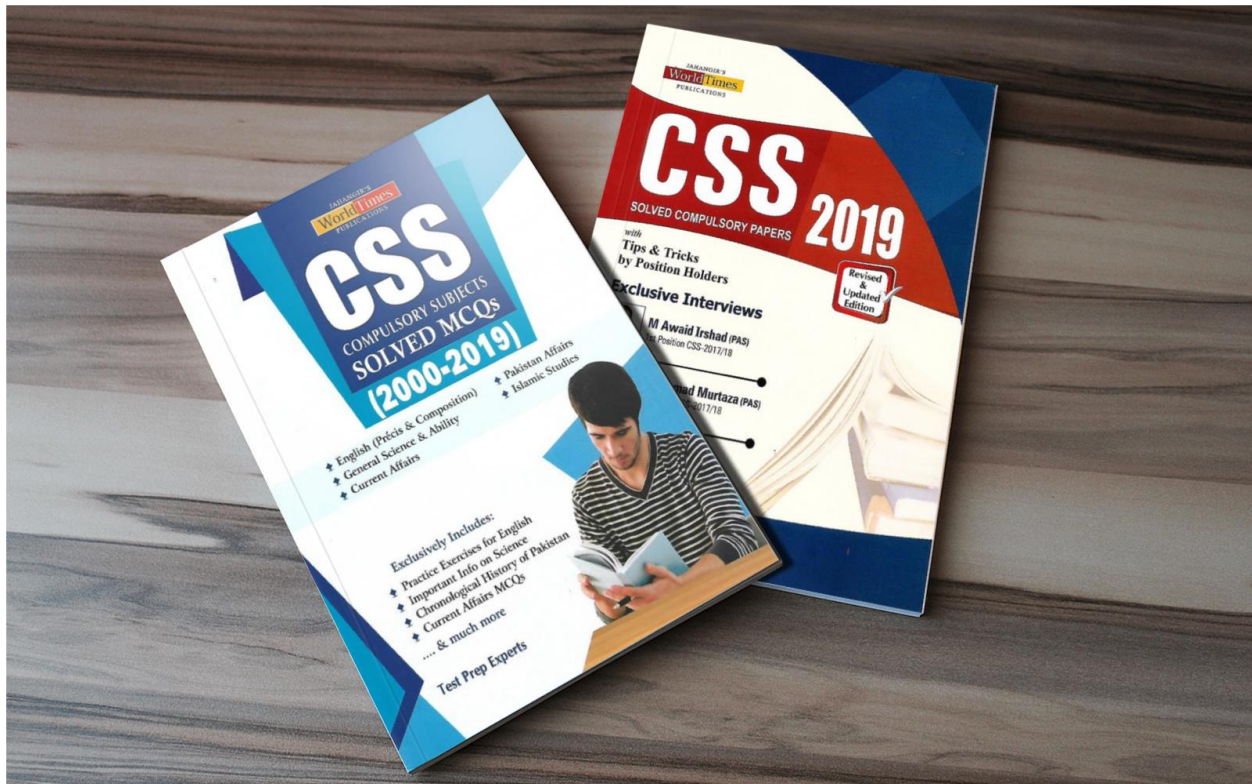
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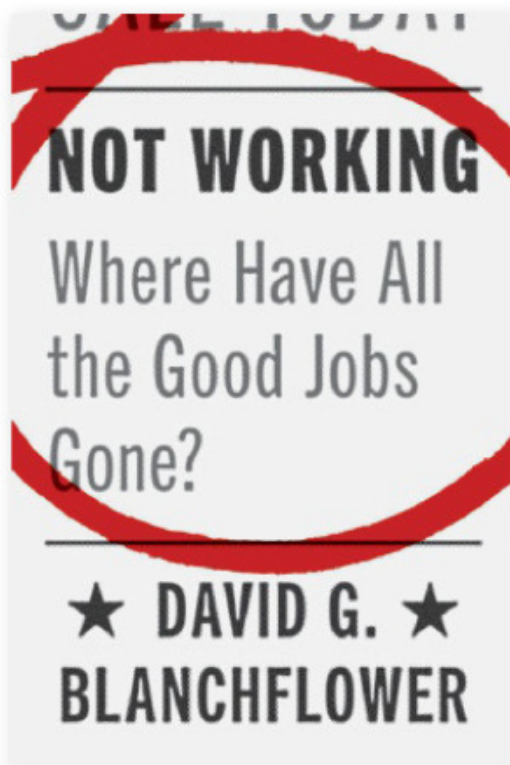
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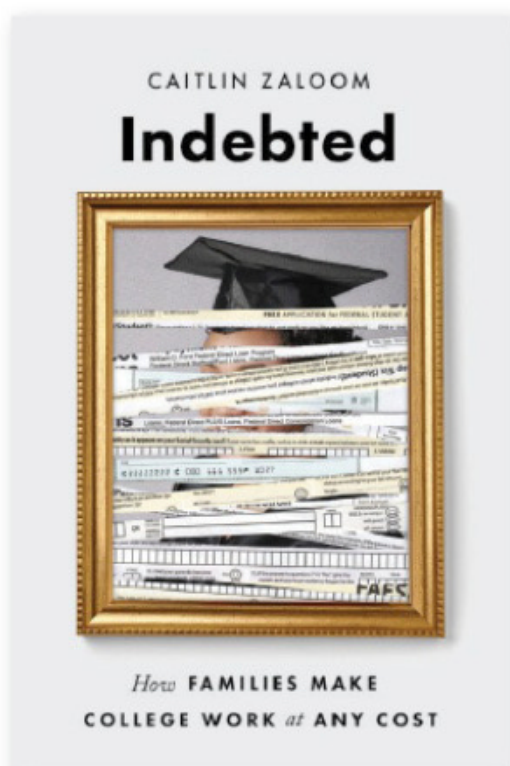
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There Is No Debate

I was surprised and saddened that several recent letters to *The Nation* [“The Imperfect vs. the Irredeemable,” July 29/Aug. 5; “Debating Biden,” Aug. 12/19] argued against criticizing Joe Biden’s record of opposition to desegregation busing, which one reader described as a “narrow issue.”

On the contrary, desegregation busing was perhaps the most important test of white America’s commitment to racial equality in the 1970s and of politicians’ willingness to uphold or betray the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It was a test that found Biden wanting. Pleas that his opposition must be understood in light of the historical context ignore the examples set by more courageous elected officials, such as Michigan’s Senator Philip Hart, who rejected the cruel fiction of “separate but equal” despite violent resistance.

The fact that most white Americans were complicit in allowing *Brown v. Board of Education* to be eviscerated does not absolve those elected “leaders,” like Biden, who aided and abetted the resegregation of American schooling. Their fateful choice haunts our cities to this day. **JOEL BATTERMAN**
DETROIT

(Re)imagined Communities

I am writing this from a small nursing home in rural Pennsylvania, sitting in a chair by my 84-year-old husband’s bed while he is sleeping. He is in hospice care right now for several chronic ailments.

But Atossa Araxia Abrahamian’s superb article “No Man’s Land” [Aug. 12/19] allowed me to transport myself temporarily to a region I will never see. Her conclusion touched my heart deeply as a woman who has been fighting the environmental fight

for more than 50 years and who is acutely aware of the climate crisis.

It was wonderful accompanying you, Atossa. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, curiosity, insights, and love for our home, the earth, which truly needs no borders.

IONA CONNER
SHADE GAP, PA.

Facing Fear—and Difference

As an African American father, I disagree with the advice Liza Featherstone provided to the white mentor of a black child in her “Asking for a Friend” column [Aug. 12/19], “Adulthood While White.” The issue is not racial identity but fear. The child is afraid of peer pressure and harassment for befriending a person who is other. Children must always acknowledge and communicate with all family and friends. We should try to raise our children to control their fear and practice courage. Featherstone’s advice may only encourage the child to believe that capitulation to her fear is acceptable. Also, the mentor may be left allowing herself to be disrespected, which can lead to more and more negative feelings.

My advice to the mentor would be to have a discussion with the child and her parents regarding this issue. The child should be informed that she and her mentor are in uncomfortable situations. But if both feel the relationship is worthwhile, then they will overcome that discomfort and acknowledge each other publicly in all situations. The child can also be advised to reply to her peers that the mentor is a family or personal friend or to respond more aggressively by asking the questioners to mind their own business. If she’s harassed by her peers after this, then anti-bullying protocols should be enforced. **HARRY E. KINGSLOW II**
UNION, N.J.

letters@thenation.com

Prison Murdered Epstein

The conspiracy theories made sense. It was utterly plausible that something fishy happened with the death of Jeffrey Epstein. He died in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, which reports to the Department of Justice, which reports to Attorney General William Barr, who has been a dishonest

hack since he took the job. No reasonable person would believe a single word out of Barr's mouth; he has forfeited his right to the benefit of the doubt.

But was Epstein *murdered* by powerful people who wanted him dead? From the beginning, the biggest hole in the conspiracy theory was that those with the means and opportunity to see it done had no motive to get their hands dirty with the wet work. If the wolves in federal lockup didn't get to him, Epstein was likely to die from mere exposure to the elements of the American prison system. And so he did.

On August 16, the New York City medical examiner announced that Epstein died by suicide, dispelling the made-for-TV theories that had been swirling since his death and revealing a much larger, if less sensational, conspiracy: the US prison system itself. The horrors of this system were well cataloged by a *New York Times* investigation that exposed the inhumane conditions Epstein was likely subjected to during his final days in the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in Lower Manhattan—*isolation, filth, humiliation, with only the rodents and roaches to complain to. These conditions, it's important to remember, are the same ones faced by all prisoners. He was not singled out for special tortures because of the disgusting nature of his alleged crimes. If anything, the Times revealed, he was better off than most prisoners because he could pay lawyers to visit and "consult" with him for half the day.*

We do this to people. We throw them into places like the MCC because they've committed or are suspected of committing heinous acts—or, just as often, because they committed lesser offenses while black or brown. Once they've been captured, we allow the system to go on mistreating and neglecting those who cannot afford the lawyers and the appeals necessary to fight mass incarceration. As long

as the inhumanity is happening to nonwhite people, law-and-order types seem OK with it.

Barr has expressed shock at the "irregularities" that led to Epstein's death. Yet again, Barr is misrepresenting reality: Epstein was subjected to entirely regular conditions in our prison system. Suicide is the leading cause of death in American jails. Anybody remotely aware of what happens in our prisons and jails can tell you horror stories of

inmates who have died from mistreatment, neglect, or violence. In New York, activists have been trying to sound the alarm about conditions at the MCC for years, much as they have been protesting conditions at the Metropolitan Detention Center, the federal facility in Brooklyn that lost heat during some of the coldest days last winter. In fact, as Barr well knows, President Trump has made conditions worse by cutting funding to

prisons, and Barr's recent shake-ups—he reassigned the warden of the MCC and removed the head of the Bureau of Prisons—suggest he thinks the problem is operational, not systemic.

Epstein's death was not a shocking outcome; it was the likely outcome. The only question is why it was allowed to happen to such a high-profile prisoner—and how Epstein managed to die before the system was done with him. Epstein still had value; most people in prison are treated as if they do not. We throw most prisoners away and do not wrestle with the moral implications of what that means. Usually, those who die in the bowels of the American justice system have long since been forgotten by the outside world.

There's a saying in the black community: White people could not handle being treated like black people for a single week. Epstein barely made it a month.

ELIE MYSTAL FOR *THE NATION*



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VOLUME 309, NUMBER 5,
September 9/16, 2019

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BY THE NUMBERS



43

Times that Donald Trump has used the phrase “the hell out of our country” at his rallies since 2017; in virtually every case, he was referring to undocumented immigrants

286

Times that Trump has said “criminal,” “animal,” “predator,” or “killer” when talking about immigrants at his rallies

241

Times that Trump has tweeted that he is the victim of a “witch hunt” since January 2017

9

Mass shootings since Trump’s election that have proven links to white nationalism

70

People who have died in white-nationalist-linked mass shootings since Trump’s election—twice the number of such deaths in the four years prior

—Alice Markham-Cantor

Statute of Limitations

For child sex abuse victims, late is better than never.

A Catholic friend once told me that as a child, she knew which priest to stay away from. The savvy kids, the self-confident ones could tell there was something off about him. He went after the sad ones, the lonely ones, the naive, obedient ones.

We’re told that child sex abuse is a secret crime, hidden by shame and fear, and it too often is for the victim. Yet it’s striking how often the abuse is known to others—employers, supervisors, employees, colleagues, friends, family—who do little or nothing to stop the abuser. Priests were moved to a different parish. Teachers were fobbed off on another school. Prestigious physicians like USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar and Rockefeller University pediatrician Reginald Archibald molested young patients for years and years, and despite people’s complaints, nothing happened. They were too respected, too valuable. There are, it seems, lots of Jeffrey Epsteins.

This turning a blind eye to child sex abuse should not surprise us, given our society’s general lack of interest in the suffering of children (though we pay it much lip service) and, for that matter, in justice for the adult victims of rape and abuse. Until recently, victims who attempted to get justice as adults found that their way was blocked by statutes of limitations that did not recognize that it can take people years to overcome this type of abuse sufficiently to take action.

New York used to have a particularly narrow statute of limitations for child sex abuse. Both criminal and civil cases generally had to be filed before the plaintiff turned 23, with some exceptions; civil suits against institutions, for example, had a cutoff age of 21. For over a decade, the insurance industry and the Catholic Church lobbied strenuously against legislative efforts to change those deadlines—the church spent around \$3 million in lobbying—and thanks to a Republican-controlled state Senate, they were successful.

Now, with Democrats in charge of both houses in Albany, a new law called the Child Victims Act raises the survivor’s maximum age under the statute of limitations to 28 in criminal cases and 55 in civil suits. It’s about time.

The CVA has received a lot of attention because it provides for a one-year look-back window, in which anyone shut out by the previous statute of limitations may file a civil suit. On August 14, the first day the window was open, 439 cases were filed, led at 12:01 AM by Jennifer Araoz, who claims she was raped at age 15

by Epstein. The Catholic Church got hit with the most suits, with at least 104 cases filed against the diocese of Buffalo alone, followed by the Boy Scouts and Rockefeller University. (Archibald died in 2007.)

Not everyone is happy about the new law. “There’s a reason for statutes of limitation,” said author and activist Judith Levine, who sits on the board of the National Center for Reason and Justice, a nonprofit that supports people charged with what it deems false child molestation accusations. “Memories fade, and evidence gets lost.”

It’s important to stress that the look-back window permits only civil suits. “No one is going to lose their liberty,” lawyer and retired New York state Supreme Court justice Emily Jane Goodman told me. (Indeed, the New York Civil Liberties Union abandoned its opposition to the CVA when the statute of limitations for

criminal cases was not raised above 28 years of age.) Moreover, “most of the cases will be against institutions, like the Catholic Church. Very few will involve individual defendants, unless they are very prominent or wealthy, because lawyers won’t do this for free.” Your uncle Bob can probably relax.

“The victim has the burden of proof,” said Marci Hamilton, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania and the founder of Child USA, which advocated for the CVA. “In criminal cases, that burden is very

high. If they have no corroborating evidence, it won’t go forward.” She is skeptical that innocent people will be convicted. “We have much more sophisticated methods of forensic questioning than in the day care cases of old.”

No innocents convicted? That seems unlikely, given the state of our justice system. But these errors probably won’t come from expanding the time during which cases may be filed by a mere five years.

“There’s always a risk of the wrong person being named in any kind of case,” said Goodman. “Before, child victims too often had no way to make their claim, so it’s a balance.”

What’s more, Hamilton pointed out that four states and the District of Columbia already have look-back windows, and the feared tsunami of new reports from earlier victims has not materialized.

“It’s basically to clear the decks,” she said, referring to the people who were shut out before. “Access to justice is the basic bedrock for civil rights.”

Hamilton added that #MeToo has been all about people making their experiences public—and while that’s important, stories can do only so much. “The focus has been on people telling their stories, and that’s fine,” she said. “But it’s not fair to ask child sex abuse victims to tell their stories if they can’t get justice.”

KATHA POLLITT



At last: Joanne Schoonmaker, right, is one of the people who filed suit under the Child Victims Act.

COMMENT

There are, it seems, lots of Jeffrey Epsteins.

Q&A BERNIE SANDERS

A few miles outside Orient, Iowa, along an unpaved road, sits the farm where Franklin Roosevelt's second vice president, Henry Wallace, was born in 1888. In a room filled

with memorabilia from the days when FDR and Wallace championed an Economic Bill of Rights, Senator Bernie Sanders spoke with me about the need for the Democratic Party to be as bold as it was in Roosevelt and Wallace's day. —John Nichols

JN: You have made it a mission of this campaign to renew the Economic Bill of Rights, to take this 75-year-old idea and bring it to the present. Why?

BS: The answer is that we have to rethink politics in America. What Roosevelt said back in 1944 is we have a Bill of Rights, which protects our political freedoms, and that's important. But we have nothing to guarantee economic freedoms. The question, in essence, that Roosevelt was asking is: If today you're making \$9 an hour, if today you have no health care, if today you can't afford a higher education, how free are you, really? And that's the discussion we need. What does freedom mean?

JN: How do you answer that question?

BS: Freedom does not mean that you're sleeping out on the streets. Freedom does not mean that you're \$100,000 in debt because you went to college. Freedom does not mean that you can't go to the doctor when you're sick. We have to redefine what freedom means, and that's what fighting for an Economic Bill of Rights is about.

All that we are saying—and this is not radical, some of it already exists in other countries—is this: Health care is a human right. The United States has got to join every other major country in guaranteeing that. If you work 40 hours a week and you can't make it on \$10 an hour, then we have to raise that minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour and make sure that workers can join a union. All over this country now, we have a housing crisis. It's not just half a million people sleeping out on the streets. It's people paying 50 to 55 percent of their incomes on housing. Freedom means that you have decent housing at a cost that you can afford. Freedom means that when you turn on your faucet, the water that comes out is drinkable.

JN: In 1944 and 1945, Wallace was saying that an Economic Bill of Rights had to protect people of all races and backgrounds. That was, at the time when the Democratic Party had a segregationist bloc, considered radical.

BS: They had segregationists leading the party!

JN: In many cases, yes. And I would argue that the Democratic Party compromised its vision. For a long period after Roosevelt and Wallace, the party

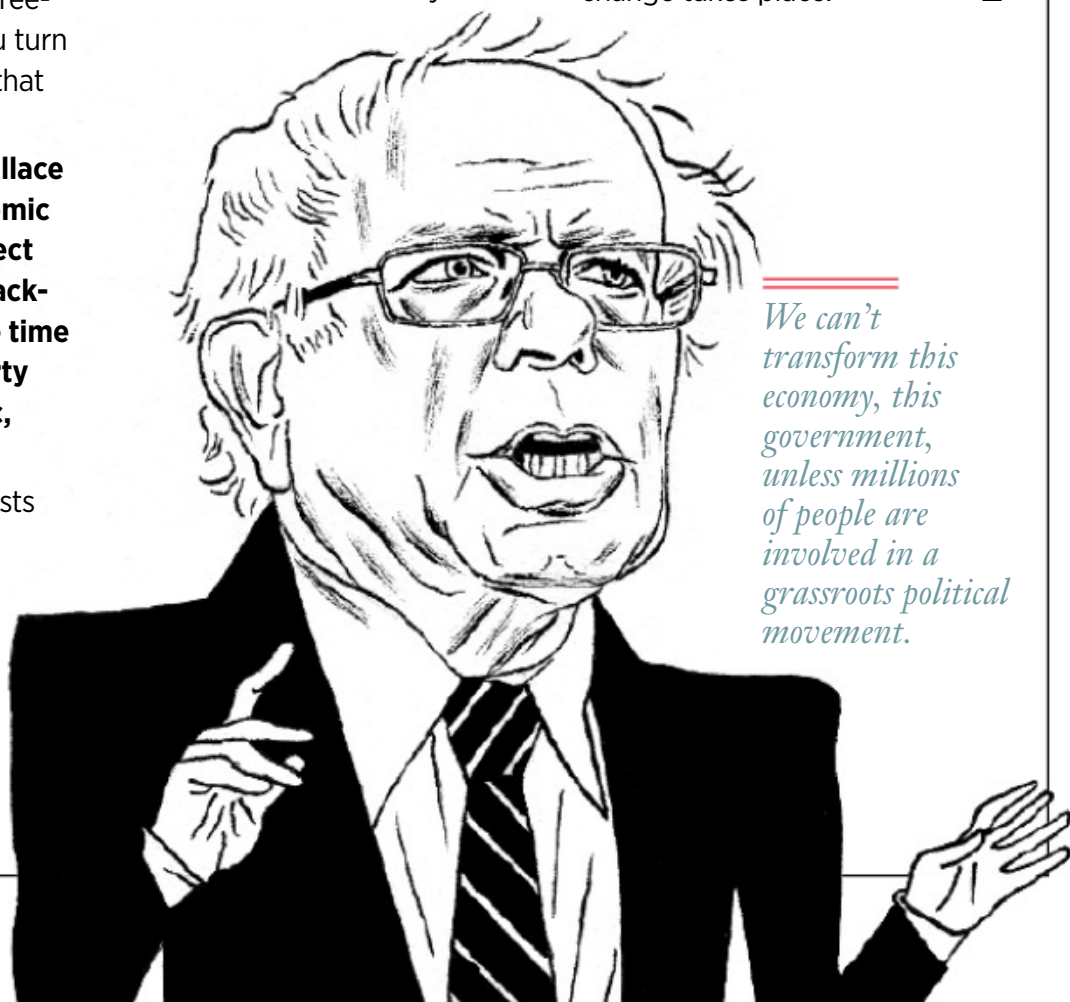
pulled its punches. It strikes me that when you talk about a political revolution, you are using FDR as a touchstone and saying: Come on, let's be a party with a bigger vision.

BS: If you want to reach back to Roosevelt, you reach back to 1936, [when FDR said he] welcomed the hatred of the economic royalists. What Roosevelt understood is that you have entrenched economic interests—he called them economic royalists, we call them the billionaire class—who will do anything to protect their wealth and power. You cannot bring about real change unless you are prepared to confront these people.

Everybody except Donald Trump understands that climate change is an incredible threat to our planet. But we're not going to transform our energy system unless we have the courage and the movement capable of taking on the fossil fuel industry.

One of the points of this campaign is to ask questions the corporate media will not. Where is the power in America? Why aren't things changing? I want to force discussions on those issues because—I've said it a million times, and I'll say it again—no president, not Bernie Sanders or anybody else, can do it alone. We can't transform this economy, this government, unless millions of people are involved in a grassroots political movement to challenge the power structure of this country.

So this campaign is about two things. It's certainly about winning here in Iowa and winning the nomination and beating Trump. But it is also about transforming America. The way we do that is through a movement not dissimilar to the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, the labor movement. That's how change takes place. ■





IN MEMORIAM

Ice, Abolished

On August 18, about 100 mourners hiked two hours to gather at the foot of what was once Okjökull, a glacier in Iceland. They were marking the fifth anniversary of the world's first known climate-change-induced death of a glacier—now known simply as Ok. (*Jökull* means “glacier” in Icelandic and was axed when it lost that status.) Children, scientists, and politicians participated in the ceremony, which involved poems, eulogies, and moments of silence. Locals spoke of their early memories of the glacier. Youth activists carried signs, and one teen promised to pass the memory of it to her grandchildren.

One participant, Rice University professor Dominic Boyer, told Reuters that the memorial service should serve “as a prototype for other communities around the world who are interested in finding ways to come to terms emotionally, and intellectually, with the loss of glaciers, as with climate change more generally.”

Attendees installed a metal plaque with an inscription by Icelandic writer Andri Snær Magnason. “Ok is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier,” the plaque reads in English and Icelandic. “In the next 200 years, all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path. This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and know what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it.”

The memorial service occurred as hundreds of massive fires burned across the Arctic and days after scientists declared July the hottest month ever recorded.

—Mary Akdemir

Ann Snitow, 1943–2019

Remembering the feminist activist and writer.

For 50 years, beginning in 1969, after she bolted from her PhD program in literature at the University of London to leap into the flames of the burgeoning women's liberation movement in her native New York City, Ann Snitow was a founding member of one crucial radical feminist group after another. In many of them, I was her lucky comrade.

After becoming a founding member of New York Radical Feminists in 1969, Snitow cofounded the Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA) in 1977; No More Nice Girls, a feminist street theater group that focused on abortion and sexuality, in 1981; the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT), which opposed the extreme tactics of the feminist anti-pornography movement, in 1984; and Take Back the Future, a feminist anti-war action group, in 2002. All this, besides cofounding the women's studies program at Rutgers University in 1972 and twice founding gender studies programs at the New School (1993 and 2010), where she taught for three decades.

In 1990, when the demoralizing anti-feminist right-wing backlash of the 1980s was wearing down US radicals, Snitow shifted her focus to

postcommunist Central and Eastern Europe, where a world undergoing transformation offered new opportunities for feminism. Cofounding the Network of East-West Women, she linked European and US feminists in a vibrant new movement.

When it came to activism, Snitow's style was bold, experimental, dogged. Her bywords were “Why not?” and “Let's do it!” Once she organized a group, she immersed herself in the mundane details. When No More Nice Girls members traveled to Washington, DC, for a mass abortion protest, she was the one in the chaotic railway station holding high a giant placard to gather our strays, pinning our pink sashes on our backs, distributing train tickets, and handing out the posters we'd lettered on the floor of her downtown loft.

Snitow's bywords were “Why not?” and “Let's do it!”

The essay collections Snitow co-edited were part of her generous activism, filling holes others noticed but preferred to step around. *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (1983) makes the case for sex-positive feminism in response to the notorious sex wars of the early 1980s that split the movement over the issues of sexuality, pornography, and prostitution. *The Feminist Memoir Project* (1998) preserves for posterity the ephemeral memories of more than 35 aging early activists.

But in her own writing, Snitow's intellectual style took a strikingly different turn. The hallmark of her essays, collected in *The Feminism of Uncertainty* (2015), was ambivalence, open-mindedness, flexibility. As she writes in her introduction, “Feminism is a sensibility, subject to constant revision, but very portable. Even as you change you can take it with you.” Snitow was one of those rare activists who tried to understand rather than demolish her adversaries. In the first piece in her collection, the groundbreaking 1989 essay “A Gender Diary,” which anatomizes the often harsh divisions within feminism, she presents both sides of each divide as sympathetically and evenhandedly as if they were all



Ann Snitow (back row, right) with Alix Kates Shulman (front row, right) and others in their consciousness-raising group, which was active in New York City from 1974 to the 1980s.



US CIVIL RIGHTS: ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Jackson, Little Rock, Memphis, Selma, Birmingham, and Montgomery

FEBRUARY 23–MARCH 1, 2020

The civil rights movement is one of the most significant chapters in our country's history. Over a half-century after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is time for our nation to reflect on how far we've come and how much remains to be accomplished. While we confront increasingly racialized violence, emboldened white nationalists, and a morally bankrupt president, we can look back to the victories of the past and to the hundreds of thousands of brave Americans who fueled this history-altering movement, fighting—and too often dying—for the cause of equality.

For those working toward social justice today, there are great lessons to be learned from the civil rights movement, in which a profound demonstration of commitment and courage succeeded against all odds. In the words of Dr. King, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Join host **André Robert Lee**, acclaimed filmmaker and educator, and travel in the company of like-minded progressives on this journey to **Jackson, Little Rock, Memphis, Selma, Birmingham, and Montgomery**. Along the way we will visit iconic sites and meet people who were directly involved in the historic civil rights movement.

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her own. In her final book, *Visitors* (coming in spring 2020), a memoir of her quarter-century of networking with feminists in Central and Eastern Europe, she repeatedly illustrates the ways ever-changing circumstances require adaptation of one's approach and even one's ideas.

For 15 years, beginning in 1974, she and I were in an unnamed weekly consciousness-raising group in which we became the closest of comrades, collaborators, and friends—so I'll switch here to calling her Ann. The original purpose of the group was to figure out how to fight the depressing backlash that had diluted the radicalism and quashed the momentum of early women's liberation. But no matter how bad things got for feminism during the subsequent years, our weekly meetings kept us optimistically committed. Every member had a unique personality and presence. Ann's contribution was to complicate the

Snitow was one of those rare activists who tried to understand rather than demolish her adversaries.

conversation, always consider one more facet, view the topic from yet another angle. And each time we decided to extend consciousness-raising into action, she was right there with her organizing skills.

In her remembrance of Ellen Willis, the radical feminist writer and the first member of our group to die (of lung cancer in 2006), Ann, who had a gift for friendship, wrote, "What a privilege it was to meet with her—and with each other—once a week for fifteen years. We were a generation of women who had the good luck to love each other as comrades, as people who shared a public as well as a private world. This love was our luck, a gift from a great social movement."

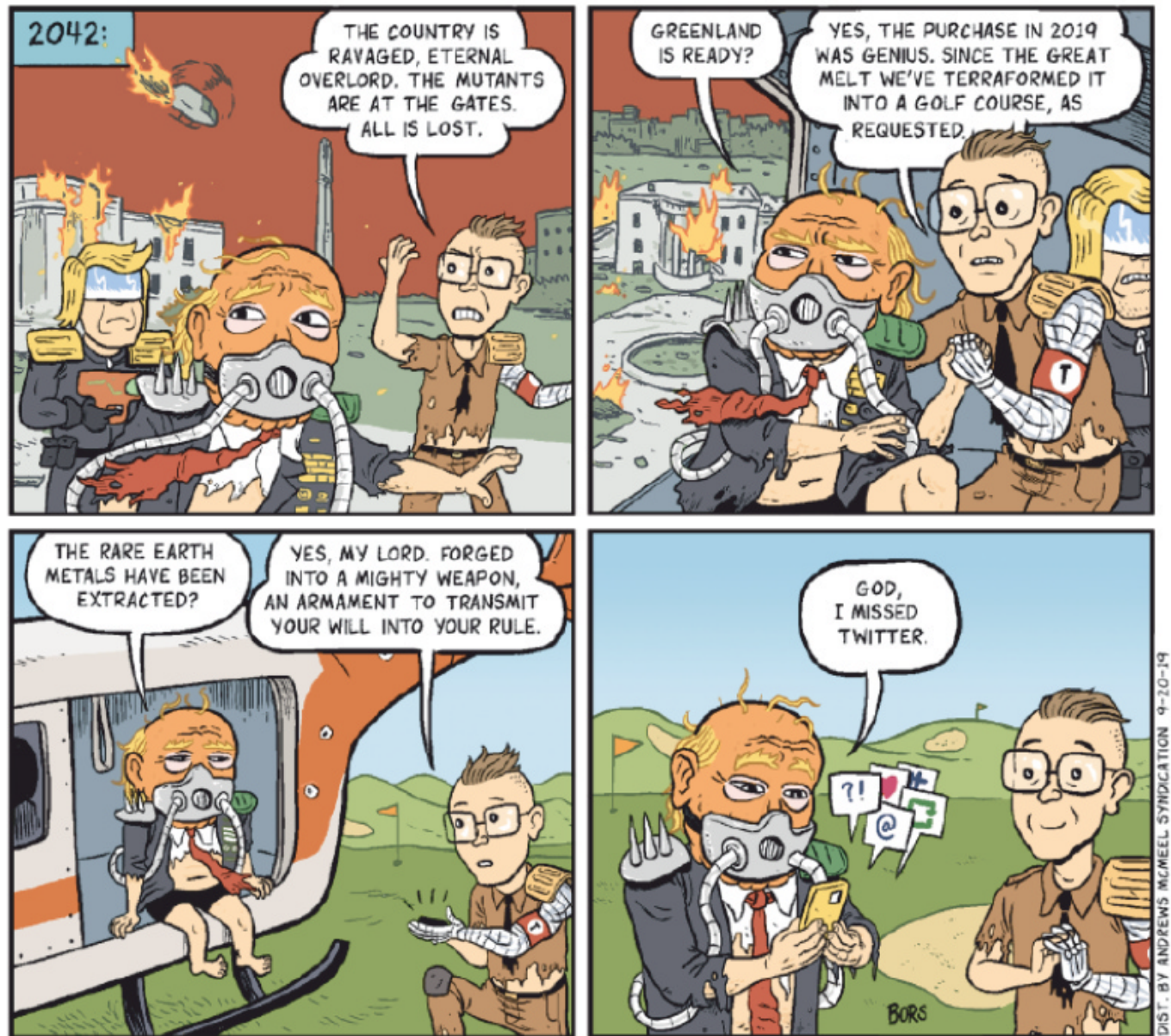
Just so was it our luck, and the world's, to have the gift of Ann Snitow, loving, organizing, and teaching us.

ALIX KATES SHULMAN

*Alix Kates Shulman has written more than a dozen books. Her 1972 best-selling debut novel, *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*, will be reissued on October 1.*

COMIX NATION

MATT BORS



NATION NEWS

Change and Growth

Sharp-eyed readers might have noticed some changes to *The Nation's* masthead besides the new name at the top. Jeet Heer, a writer of extraordinary range and depth, has joined us as a national affairs correspondent covering politics, culture, and the many crossovers between them. In addition to catching Jeet several times a week on *TheNation.com*, his fans will also find him in these pages and on Twitter @HeerJeet, where his B sides would be a full body of work for most of us.



And because we realize that

there is a great deal more to politics than winning elections or passing legislation—

crucial as those are—we are delighted to welcome Jane McAlevey as our strikes correspondent. A longtime contributor to *The Nation*, brilliant organizer, and trenchant observer of organized labor, Jane was recently appointed senior policy fellow of the Labor Center at UC Berkeley. She is the author of *Raising Expectations (And Raising Hell)* and *No Shortcuts*, and her next book, *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing and the Fight for Democracy*, will be published in January.

But a magazine is more than a collection of writers or articles—especially in the digital age, when the pages you hold in your hand represent just a small fraction



of what we publish. So I'm particularly pleased to announce the appointment of Anna Hiatt as our executive digital editor. Most recently a cofounder and the editorial director of *The War Horse*, which published stories written by veterans of our forever wars, Anna also helped found *The Big Roundtable* (recently renamed *The Delacorte Review* and now based out of Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism), dedicated to narrative nonfiction. At *The Nation*, Anna's brief includes managing all of our digital content, helping to set the strategic direction of our digital coverage, growing our audience, and helping us integrate digital and print. Welcome, all! —D.D. Guttenplan



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Eric Alterman



Destructive Debates

Misplaced trust in the mainstream media has repeatedly derailed Democrats.

IMMIGRATION

‘Moral Terrorism’

The Department of Homeland Security’s new “public charge” rule will lead to mass denials of green cards and visas. Starting in October, the Trump administration will begin rejecting those immigrants it deems “likely” to rely on benefits like food stamps, housing subsidies, and other forms of government assistance.

The revamped “public charge” legislation will especially harm noncitizen US residents and migrants with disabilities and will force many into a horrible choice: legally remain in the US or try to access medical care.

The Trump administration will penalize immigrants with disabilities who are the primary beneficiaries of programs like Medicaid or are supported by a household member receiving cash benefits—even if that beneficiary is a US citizen. As a result, health care enrollment will almost certainly decline among the 19 million children of immigrant parents. The advocacy group the Arc calls the proposal “unfair, dangerous, and blatantly discriminatory,” adding that “the rule would exclude people from this country simply because they have a disability.”

Eliot Fishman, the senior director of health policy for Families USA, said the rule “threatens our public health, it threatens citizen children, it threatens noncitizen children, it threatens seniors. Fundamentally, this is an act of moral terrorism.”

—Shirley Nwangwa

About 25 years ago, I asked Paul Begala, then an adviser to Bill Clinton, how the Democrats failed to pass a health care bill when they controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress. Begala identified the party’s fatal mistake as follows (I paraphrase from memory): “We were depending on the media to explain the plan to people, and they had no interest in doing that.”

The Democrats’ misplaced trust that the mainstream media would allow them to make their case to the public above the din of right-wing misinformation continues to derail their legislative and electoral success. It’s as if party leaders have bought into the lie that the media has a liberal bias and so expect at least a fair shake when they present their case to the voters. This repeated triumph of hope over experience has a pathetic quality to it, not unlike, say, Charlie Brown with Lucy and that football.

Forty years of right-wing working the refs has so intimidated members of the mainstream media that they put on kid gloves when dealing with conservative politicians. In 2015, Fox News sponsored the first Republican presidential primary debate, and the network’s lies and fantasies were embedded in the questions. That’s not surprising, considering that most of the nonsense the candidates were peddling originated on Fox. But when the GOP’s candidates agreed to appear in another debate on CNN—which would eventually turn itself into a virtual nonstop infomercial for Donald Trump’s candidacy—the network capitulated to Republican demands by having right-wing huckster Hugh Hewitt among the moderators. In one question, Hewitt told Ben Carson that (I kid you not) “people admire and respect and are inspired by your...kindness” and then asked if he was up to the job of “order[ing] air strikes that would kill innocent children by not the scores but the hundreds and the thousands.”

In their presidential debates, Democrats naively continue to put themselves at the mercy of reporters and pundits who are eager to prove that they are not the liberal patsies Republicans say they are. During the 2016 election, for instance, the Democrats invited PBS anchors to moderate a primary debate. Right-wing talking points dominated the evening. Judy Woodruff began by

informing Bernie Sanders that voters were asking, “How big a role do you foresee for the federal government? It’s already spending 21 percent of the entire US economy. How much larger would government be in the lives of Americans under a Sanders presidency?” Does anyone recall ever meeting a single Democratic voter who professed to care about this? When Sanders put the question in the context of the “massive transfer of wealth going from the hands of working families into the top one-tenth of 1 percent,” Woodruff doubled down. “My question is: How big would government be? Would there be any limit on the size of the role of government?” Incredibly, her colleague Gwen Ifill stuck to the same line of questioning, complaining to Hillary Clinton that she too had “proposed fairly expansive ideas about government” and then twisting polling data to make it appear that people cared. In doing so, the PBS pundits were demanding that Democrats buy into a Tea Party-

inspired talking point about big government—one, by the way, that ceased to apply once Trump took over the GOP and increased government spending far beyond what all those Tea Party types had been complaining about.

The debates so far this year have repeated the Democrats’ pattern of assisted suicide by debate moderator. *The Washington Post’s* Margaret Sullivan quoted the pollster Matt McDermott summarizing CNN’s debate questions as follows: “Why does your health care plan screw the middle class? Why are you taking health care from hard working Americans? Why are you for open borders?” The moderators elevated former representative John Delaney, whose chances of winning the nomination don’t even rise to between slim and none, in order to create the illusion of drama and discord. When Jake Tapper invoked Delaney in his question to Sanders—“You support Medicare for All, which would eventually

It’s as if Democratic Party leaders have bought into the lie that the media has a liberal bias and so expect at least a fair shake.



take private health insurance away from more than 150 million Americans in exchange for government-sponsored health care for everyone. Congressman Delaney just referred to it as bad policy, and previously he has called the idea political suicide that will just get President Trump reelected. What do you say to Congressman Delaney?”—the correct answer should have been, “Who the hell is this Delaney fellow anyway, and why don’t you ask me something substantive about how my plan meets the health care crisis that Donald Trump is deliberately stoking?”

During the debate, NBC News took an easy shot at its rival network on its live blog, writing, “Tapper points out that Trump and Bernie both say they’re against military intervention soooooo naturally given the nature of this debate, asks how voters can tell them apart because, ya know, no nuance.” But this was throwing stones from inside a glass house, since the NBC/MSNBC-hosted debates were hardly much better. How dare Lester Holt require the people running for president to answer a question by simply raising their hands like guilty schoolchildren? And has there ever been a stupider debate question than Chuck Todd essentially demanding, “You: Biggest threat to America. One word. Go!”

The purpose of a presidential primary debate is to educate voters about both the issues and the competing candidates. Media conglomerates have no interest in this; they seek only to promote their brands, goose their ratings, and raise their shareholder profits. Why not honor Democratic constituents who are genuinely interested in the issues that the party seeks to address? Why not invite questions from those whose lives will actually be affected by the candidates’ answers? And why not stop playing by the rules of people who long ago ceased to act as honest refs and instead became partisans for nothing but their own profits? ■

SNAPSHOT /

MOHAMED NURELDIN ABDALLAH

Back on Track

People from around Sudan ride on a train to the capital, Khartoum, on August 17. They’re joining celebrations of the signing of a power-sharing agreement that establishes a transitional government and calls for new elections in 2022.

Calvin Trillin Deadline Poet

TRUMP PRESSURES ISRAEL TO DENY ENTRY TO TWO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

A president’s powers should not be employed
To get back at people with whom he’s annoyed.
But this one’s so eager to punish his foes, he
May next send the troops in to capture Pelosi.



INDIVISIBLE

**These activists have one thing in common:
They want to fight Trump. Can they agree on what comes next?**

JOAN WALSH



LEAH GREENBERG SAYS THE LEADERSHIP OF INDIVISIBLE, THE PROMINENT ANTI-TRUMP RESISTANCE GROUP SHE COFOUNDED in 2016, just wanted “feedback” on whether to endorse someone in the crowded 2020 Democratic presidential primaries when it surveyed supporters in March.

Instead, it got clapback: More than 30 local Indivisible groups, big and small, urban and rural, in areas blue, red, and purple, signed a letter asking the national leaders to stand down. “With such a large field of candidates, we run the risk of sowing discord and alienating members,” it read. In the end, Indivisible’s survey of 204 local groups found that only 18 percent of respondents thought a national endorsement was a good idea, 48 percent flatly opposed it, and the rest were unsure or divided.

“We got some... information,” Greenberg tells me, chuckling ruefully, in her Washington, DC, office a couple of months later with her husband and Indivisible cofounder, Ezra Levin. After the uproar, many endorsement opponents relaxed, considering the matter resolved. Endorsing in 2020 is “fraught with so many perils,” Martha Shockey, an Indivisible leader from suburban Atlanta, told me in May. “I think they heard us—and I was glad about that.”

But in a series of interviews with top national Indivisible leaders, I found the notion of endorsing a 2020 primary candidate remains very much alive. That became clear to the broader membership as over 300 Indivisibles (as they call themselves) convened in the DC area in mid-August for the first ever National Campaigns Network (NCN) meeting, where a leadership-selected roster of local group leaders brainstormed and debated the coming years’ plans. In an otherwise upbeat gathering, a potential endorsement was one of the few areas of significant disagreement. “Opinions were really mixed,” admits Indivisible New Jersey Fifth District coleader Madeline Trimble, who told me earlier that she opposed an endorsement. While no decision was made, members left the meeting clear that the issue is still on the table for national leaders.

Opponents continue to believe an endorsement will divide this grassroots movement, whose name is a tribute to the strength of progressive unity. “I’m now not convinced they have heard us,” says a disappointed Shockey, who didn’t attend the NCN convention but heard from colleagues who did. “We need to focus on the work ahead of us and not allow our organizing efforts to be sideswiped by the kind of bickering that happened in 2016.”

The endorsement wrangle is just one challenge in Indivisible’s ongoing effort to develop a productive relationship between the organization’s DC-based leadership and its scrappy local groups. Born of a Google document, Indivisible is among the best-known organizations to emerge in the “don’t mourn, organize” period after Donald Trump’s election, sprouting up to an estimated 5,000 affiliates, with, according to national leadership, at least one active local group in all 435 House districts. One early conference call to discuss how to fight Trump’s January 2017 Muslim travel ban drew 35,000 participants.

Indivisible and its local affiliates became key players in the successful congressional battle to defend the Affordable Care Act and in the blue electoral wave that surged after Trump’s election. “They were really important because they have membership in a lot of districts across the country,” says Representative Pramila Jayapal, a cochair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. “It’s a grassroots-led organization, but they’ve figured out

how to coordinate those grass roots around messages. Also, they are in places that other people simply are not. They have chapters in swing districts, while also moving a progressive agenda.”

Levin cosigns Jayapal’s description. “There’s not another model like this,” he says. “That’s not to say we invented grassroots organizing! But this distributed, group-based organizing, where you have a national organization supporting these local, independently led groups on the ground—that doesn’t exist anywhere else.”

Other progressive activist groups, from the Sierra Club to NARAL to the Bernie Sanders–inspired Our Revolution, might dispute that notion. But the complicating fact in Indivisible’s case is that many of its most active affiliates launched before the national organization staffed up in late spring 2017. The local groups signed on to fight Trump using a novel array of tactics; unlike chapters of the Sierra Club, they didn’t pledge fealty to an agenda. Indivisible’s grassroots groups and the national leadership have been evolving a new model of affiliation ever since.

Indivisible’s work has earned it enormous political capital; now its national leaders want to figure out how to use it. But since so much of that capital has been earned at the local level, the leadership has to be careful about spending it—and whether it is theirs to spend at all.

Indivisible is organizing “in places that other people simply are not.”

—Representative Pramila Jayapal

Fighting Trump’s agenda: Members of the Roanoke Indivisible chapter joined forces to protest Trump’s Muslim travel ban in 2017.



GREENBERG AND LEVIN were just two devastated people among millions of mourners in the wake of Trump’s victory in November 2016. They met friends for sorrowful rounds of drinks, attended meetings of the shell-shocked, and tried to figure out what would come next.

“We met at a bar with a friend in Austin, trying to figure out how to resist, and we thought, ‘Well, we’ll write a guide demys-

tifying how Congress works,” Levin recalls, recognizing that it could serve as a check on Trump’s agenda. He had worked for liberal Texas Representative Lloyd Doggett, Greenberg for Virginia Representative Tom Perriello. They’d witnessed the rise of the Tea Party. “What we knew as former congressional staffers is how Congress works, how it worked for the Tea Party, and how we could put those basic ideas to work for us,” Levin says.

With a group of friends, they launched the Indivisible Google document on Twitter less than a month later. “Please share w/ your friends to help fight Trump’s racism, authoritarianism, & corruption on their home turf,” Levin tweeted. The guide showed precisely how the Tea Party put pressure on local politicians, especially members of Congress. The Tea Party’s strength, it said, was in getting real people to haunt their representatives’ offices and town halls. “Aim high!” the guide advised. “Get people to commit to come—they’ll want to because saving democracy is fun.” “Fun”—that part was prescient.

The guide also pledged, “We’re not starting a new organization.” At the time, that was true. “We both had jobs,” Levin says. “We kept thinking, ‘We just have to do this one more thing before we go back to work,’” Greenberg says.

Just before the new Congress was sworn in, the group found a perfect inaugural issue: Then-Representative Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) was introducing a measure to gut the Office of Congressional Ethics. Greenberg and Levin wanted to fight this in Goodlatte’s district and checked their membership. “We saw we had someone signed up in Roanoke,” Greenberg recalls, still excited at the memory. Indeed, historian Ivonne Fuentes had registered her small group of despairing Roanoke resisters on Indivisible’s online “map” after reading the guide. When Greenberg called, Fuentes says, she couldn’t believe she was hearing from a real, live Indivisible leader. “They were so happy to have us here in Roanoke,” Fuentes remembers, “and we were so happy to find them there in Washington. It was crazy.”

The locals organized a meeting at Goodlatte’s office; heeding the Indivisible guide, they alerted local media and took their own videos at the scene. One of those videos wound up on Rachel Maddow’s show on MSNBC, in a segment on Indivisible featuring Levin. “It’s basically the thing you need to know about in politics right now if you are looking for signs of whether there will be a significant anti-Trump movement in this country,” Maddow told her audience.

That changed everything. “We had thousands of

groups in the next few days. It just caught fire,” Levin says. By March, they’d incorporated and begun to hire staff. Suddenly Indivisible was a national organization. Its leaders didn’t know what that meant yet—and they’re still figuring it out.

MY OWN INTRODUCTION TO INDIVISIBLE REFLECTS the way the movement organized locally early in 2017. I’d watched the Maddow segment, impressed. I ran into members carrying Indivisible signs at the historic Women’s March in Washington, DC, and at the huge protest against Trump’s travel ban in New York a week later. Indivisible affiliates turned out huge numbers at both gatherings. But the first time I recognized its grassroots power was covering the Jon Ossoff campaign in suburban Atlanta to fill Georgia’s Sixth Congressional District seat left vacant by Tom Price, who became Trump’s health and human services secretary.

Everyone watching saw the same thing: The GA-06 race was powered by women, especially middle-aged white women. When I reported on that race, I met two local Indivisible leaders, Amy Nosek and Louise Palmer, and they told me a story that, with slight variation, I would hear a dozen times over the next two years. They read the Indivisible guide and called a meeting at their local library in February 2017. “We expected 20 people,” Palmer said; more than 100 showed up. “We never intended to lead it. We’re not leaders.” Suddenly, they were leaders. The group drew a mix of activists who’d supported Sanders and Hillary Clinton; as with other local groups across the country, the Georgia activists took pains to make sure Indivisible healed rather than widened that 2016 divide.

Along with other new women’s groups in GA-06, Indivisible was becoming a way for these red-district progressives to find one another not only for activism but also, yes, for fun. Meetings morphed into drinks and dinner. Canvassing led to new friendships. “I knew very few people in my neighborhood, and it turns out there are two other gay couples,” recalls local activist James Brown, one of the few men active in the overwhelmingly female group.

Ossoff lost narrowly to Karen Handel that June. But the district’s Indivisible leaders kept working on state and local elections, winning a few, and just over a year later, many of the same activists would help gun safety advocate Lucy McBath defeat Handel.

Meanwhile, on the national level, Indivisible leaders and local groups focused on protecting the Affordable Care Act, a priority shared by both. Today they get massive credit for working with Democrats and successfully pressuring some Republicans to preserve Obamacare. At the same time, the movement worked in other high-profile, red-district special elections—not just the Ossoff race but also the one to replace Jeff Sessions as an Alabama senator in December 2017. Democrat Doug Jones won, thanks to the work of new Democratic grassroots groups, including Alabama Indivisibles. Dozens of Virginia Indivisible affiliates were crucial to state Democrats’ picking up 15 seats in the 2017 House of Delegates elections. Pennsylvania’s Indivisible movement got national attention for its work electing Conor Lamb in the state’s 18th Congressional

“We believe the choice not to endorse is a choice to let other people have more impact and power.”

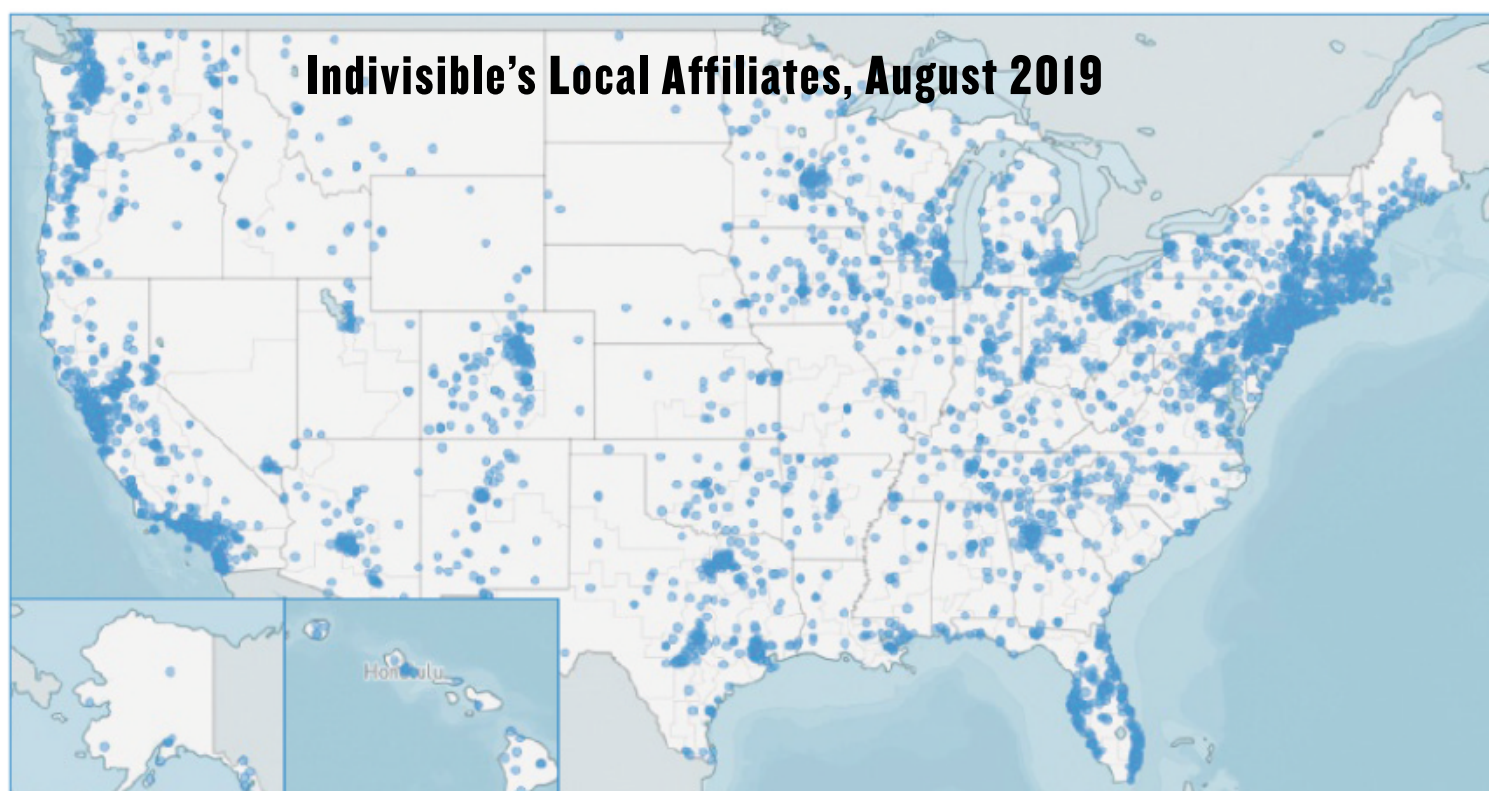
—Leah Greenberg, Indivisible

Activating the grass roots: Ezra Levin, right, founded Indivisible with his wife, Leah Greenberg, shortly after Trump’s election.



District, which went for Trump by nearly 20 points.

These early red- and purple-district races were, in some ways, an unlikely project for a group founded by blue-district progressives. While Indivisible has thriving affiliates in places like Brooklyn and San Francisco, Austin and Berkeley, it has done some of its most remarkable work uniting red- and purple-area activists who had been alienated from politics, and who used the Indivisible guide to find one another. “We wanted to do political work, but we also wanted to build community,” says Roanoke Indivisible leader Ivonne Fuentes. “It’s so red here.”



IT WAS THE LAMB RACE IN PENNSYLVANIA THAT SPARKED Harvard sociologist Theda Skocpol’s interest in the new forms of Trump-era political organizing. As she and Lara Putnam wrote in the journal *Democracy* shortly before Lamb’s win, they saw activism emerging where they didn’t expect it. “It is among...college-educated, middle-aged women in the suburbs that political practices have most changed under Trump,” they observed. Skocpol took field trips to eight midsize cities in North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin; she also surveyed resistance activists in three dozen local groups, including Indivisible, in Pennsylvania. In our interview Skocpol estimates that 70 to 90 percent of Indivisible activists around the country are white women, with an average age of about 55. (In my reporting on various Indivisible groups over the last two-plus years, I’ve heard someone from every group lament its whiteness, as well as from activists who’ve tried to change it. Indivisible identifies racial justice as one of its priority areas, but so far its demographic profile remains constant.) “The thing about these older women is they’re willing to compromise,” Skocpol says. “In the Conor Lamb race, we saw Indivisible women collaborating with union men, even if they disagreed with them on guns or abortion. They wanted to get him elected.”

Skocpol, who did some of the nation’s best research on the rise of the Tea Party, says she was surprised to find Indivisible affiliates in as many corners of the country as Tea Party chapters in the group’s heyday. To her, Indivisible’s geographical reach, especially in red and purple districts, is one of its greatest assets. She worries that an effort by national leadership to impose groupwide priorities could thwart organizing in such places. “An endorsement would be the worst thing they could do,” she tells me. “Indivisible comes as close as we’ve seen to having the top and bottom tiers”—meaning the Washington-based leadership and the local affiliates—“function well. But they’re still two fairly loosely coupled organizations.”

Levin does not disagree. “There’s Indivisible national, and then there’s Indivisible the movement,” he says. “The big question is: How does the organization interact with the movement?”

Indivisible everywhere: Harvard sociologist Theda Skocpol describes Indivisible’s geographic reach in red and purple areas as one of its greatest assets.

“Grass-top organizations don’t always understand how endorsements play out in the grass roots.”

—Martha Shockey, Indivisible affiliate leader in suburban Atlanta

NOW THERE EXISTS NOT JUST A TOP TIER (NATIONAL) and bottom tier (local) but also an organically grown group of roughly 470 affiliated local Indivisible leaders called Middle Tier, which objects to a 2020 primary endorsement.

Middle Tier began as an informal network of local groups through which organizers shared best practices, but as it has grown, it has facilitated a grassroots challenge to DC management. “We’re the family at the Thanksgiving dinner that doesn’t always agree with others about politics, but we’re still there,” says San Francisco’s Aram Fischer of the relationship between Middle Tier and national. “We love each other, and we believe in this family name, but our interpretation of what that family name means can be different.”

Greenberg acknowledges some strain but says, gamely, “One of the joys of organizing in a decentralized movement is there’s a lot of different coalitions through which Indivisible people come together to work with each other. Middle Tier is one of them. They have surfaced some really exciting innovations across the movement, and they’ve contributed to a collaborative movement.”

There’s no denying that leaders in Middle Tier have highlighted the discontent over a 2020 Democratic primary endorsement. Ever since the idea emerged, I’ve spoken with people about the controversy. Out of a dozen local activists—some suggested by national leaders, others by Middle Tier members, plus a few I found myself—only one favored an endorsement in the crowded field, and even she expressed reservations.

In Georgia, Shockey recalls that local endorsement battles rattled at least two of the state’s Indivisible affiliates in 2018; they wound up divided among McBath and other Democrats in that primary. The local group came back together after the bruising battle, but the experience left Shockey wary. “Grass-top organizations don’t always understand how endorsements play out in the grass roots,” she says.

Trimble, from New Jersey’s purple Fifth District, was also concerned about the impact an endorsement could have. “It’s not where Indivisible can have the most influence, and I’m sorry to see so much attention and money

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that's going to the 2020 race, by everybody, when we have so much to do at the state and local level." From Indivisible Kansas City, which straddles Kansas and Missouri, Leslie Mark says her group tries to avoid endorsements, which "are always problematic. We had six viable Democrats running for the congressional seat Sharice Davids won [in 2018]. We stayed out of it, except to have a town hall. So when she won, we were able to unify around her."

Even in New York, Indivisible's decision to endorse Cynthia Nixon over Governor Andrew Cuomo in 2018, while driven by some local affiliates, was divisive, with several powerful local groups publicly distancing themselves. "A big question has been the methodology—of surveys, of endorsements," Kelle Kerr, an Indivisible leader in New York's 16th District who is active in Middle Tier, tells me. "In New York, we just didn't know how they endorsed Nixon. Was it 500 people who voted from one superprogressive chapter? We asked, 'Can you tell us how many groups participated?'" Kerr didn't get an answer.

Indivisible's national leaders defend their attempt to develop a process that could lead to a primary endorsement. "Primaries are tremendous moments to broker our issues," national political director Maria Urbina, who worked for Harry Reid when he was in the Senate, told me in mid-June. "The candidates will be courting the grassroots communities—on immigration, climate, health care. Our moment of leverage is primaries, whether that's comfortable or not."

"We believe the choice not to endorse is a choice to let other people have more impact and power," Greenberg told me on the eve of the August NCN meeting. "But also, we think an endorsement has power only if it reflects genuine support for one candidate. So if there's not a lot of people behind one candidate and behind the idea of an endorsement, that wouldn't be useful at all. What we believe is this is a conversation our network should engage in and one that will evolve over time."

THERE WAS A LOT OF FEAR BEFORE the [NCN] meeting," Roanoke's Fuentes tells me, about whether and how hard national would push for a primary endorsement. (The gathering was closed to the media.) In advance, a group of local leaders active in

Middle Tier organized their own survey: Of the 1,300 members who replied, 77 percent opposed an endorsement, and only 10 percent favored it (with the remainder undecided). Almost three-quarters of respondents said they thought an endorsement would harm the local groups' cohesion.

At an NCN plenary session, opinion was more mixed, says New Jersey's Trimble. "I still lean against an endorsement, but I felt that the process was respectful and that we

were heard." Her group coleader, Anna Wong, wound up leaning toward some type of endorsement, perhaps of multiple progressive candidates, as "a way to acknowledge that, given how the primary schedule is organized, with so much decided by Super Tuesday, many of us aren't being represented. If there's a way to develop a process and find consensus around an endorsement, I think it could be positive."

The endorsement dispute underscored another issue Middle Tier has pushed: how the local groups and the national office share data. To the frustration of many locals, national doesn't funnel data from online sign-ups to local groups—yet it counts these

new sign-ups in polls and surveys.

In a recent poll about impeaching Trump, only about a quarter of respondents identified themselves as local group leaders or members; the rest said they were supporters who had given their contact information to national. Indivisible cofounder Angel Padilla defended their inclusion, saying, "Maybe they did a day of action. Maybe we put out a call to text politicians, and they did that. We consider that work valuable. Why wouldn't we try to stay in touch with them?"

Skeptics say they are concerned about the number of people unaffiliated with local organizing weighing in on the group's priorities, which could dilute the agenda-setting power of on-the-ground organizers. In the Middle Tier endorsement poll, by contrast, almost half the respondents were group leaders or coleaders, and 41 percent identified as local group members; 10 percent were unaffiliated with a local group.

Those who oppose an endorsement also note that Indivisible's internal polling has been all over the map. These polls are intentionally based on varying methodology, but in the survey of group leaders, Senator Kamala Harris was the favorite, backed by 29 percent (while 42 percent skipped the ques-

"There's Indivisible national, and then there's Indivisible the movement. The big question is: How does the organization interact with the movement?"

—Ezra Levin,
Indivisible

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tion or selected “other”). In a poll of Indivisible’s membership after the first debate, Senator Elizabeth Warren moved ahead, with 35 percent to Harris’s 31. A poll after the second debate saw Warren surge to 45 percent support, and Harris drop to fourth place—but 90 percent of respondents said they were considering more than one candidate. Indivisible leaders warn against seeing any of those results as conclusive, promising to develop a sound, transparent polling methodology only if they find widespread support for endorsing someone at all. Still, the surveys to date show significant volatility in the members’ presidential preferences and bolster worries that an endorsement will divide rather than unify.

THE ENDORSEMENT QUESTION WASN’T the only tough issue to come up at the August NCN meeting. As a member of the immigrant-rights Defund Hate coalition, Indivisible is fighting the policies of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection through the congressional debate over the agencies’ budget. In June the national organization urged House Democrats to vote against supple-

mental border security funding.

Before the NCN meeting, some local leaders worried about the group taking a stance too radical for their communities. These issues are not new. Indivisible blasted Senator Sherrod Brown and other senators in 2017 for refusing to use their power to shut down the government to protect kids in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. When Indivisible national leaders asked local leaders in Ohio to pressure Brown, they balked. “We...were working hard to ensure his reelection, and we worried that condemning him might hurt those efforts,” recalls Meryl Neiman, a leader of Indivisible Columbus.

“In Alabama, we might not talk about defunding ICE,” admits Susan Griffin of Indivisible Huntsville. “I mean, I’d be fine with ICE going away tomorrow, personally. But we are reaching people here based on the cruelty of children in cages. We are having to educate people that asking for asylum isn’t illegal.” In New York, Indivisible affiliates in purple districts helped elect two moderate Democrats who refused to vote down the June border security funding measure, as Indivisible was urging Democrats. “Do they want to find somebody

more radical who can win those upstate districts?” Kerr asks. “We actually need some conservative Dems here.”

At the lobby day after the NCN meeting, however, the participating groups were free to tailor their messages when visiting their congressional representatives’ offices; the moderate ask involved urging Republican or centrist Democratic members to resist Trump administration efforts to augment ICE’s budget by transferring money from other agencies. “We were pleasantly surprised,” says one member who didn’t want her name used. “That flexibility is important.”

Fuentes came away from the NCN meeting optimistic. “I thought it was transparent and it alleviated a lot of fears,” she tells me. Indivisible’s national leaders have “developed a national name they can leverage,” she says. “But the national leadership structure has to give enough autonomy to locals to address local issues on the ground.” Still, she calls the tension “real and generative.”

Fuentes thinks everybody needs to look beyond the 2020 presidential race. “The real test is if people are still knocking doors locally five years from now,” she says. “That’s what we’ve accomplished, and that’s what we still need.” ■



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A black and white photograph of an industrial facility at night. In the foreground, a small, single-story house with a porch is visible. Behind it, a large industrial complex with several tall towers and a central chimney emitting smoke is illuminated. The sky is dark, and the overall atmosphere is somber and industrial.

TO STAY OR GO?

Besieged by petrochemicals,
a community in Louisiana
faces a wrenching choice.

Mara Kardas-Nelson

THE SUNSETS FROM SHARON LAVIGNE'S HOME IN ST. JAMES, LOUISIANA, ARE OTHERWORLDLY. IN THE EVENINGS, THE 67-YEAR-old can look out from her porch onto the 20 acres she inherited from her grandfather, the land bathed in orange and pink light. Once farmland, today it is mostly grass, which gives off a sweet, earthy smell as the heat leaves with the day.

Interrupting the quiet murmur of cicadas is the steady clank and hum of machinery. Tall metal tanks are visible from Lavigne's property, with twisted pipes running between them and plumes of white smoke curling above.

St. James sits smack in the middle of Cancer Alley, a series of communities, mostly majority African American, that line the banks of the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. For decades, oil, gas, chemicals, and plastics have been produced here, and for an equally long time, residents have said they've faced significant health issues because of the plants. St. James Parish (the equivalent of a county) has a population of 21,000 and 32 petrochemical plants—one for every 656 residents. Industry is even more concentrated in the parish's Fifth District, where Lavigne lives, which is 86 percent black. (The parish overall is 50 percent black.) The community has 2,822 people and 12 petrochemical plants—one for every 235 residents.

Last fall, Lavigne heard that two new companies were looking to build major industrial facilities in St. James. Formosa Petrochemical, a Taiwanese company, plans to build a \$9.4 billion plant in the Fifth District to produce polypropylene and other compounds used in plastic products like bottles and grocery bags. According to Formosa's application for an air permit, the facility will become one of the state's largest emitters of ethylene oxide and benzene, both of which are known carcinogens. In the Fourth District, directly across the river from Lavigne's home, a Chinese company, Wanhua Chemical Group, plans to build a \$1.85 billion plant to produce a different compound widely used in plastics.

Lavigne is a devout Catholic, and one evening after she heard the news, she went to her porch to pray. She already felt hemmed in by industry; the addition of other facilities struck her as an existential threat to the vitality of the town her family helped make, a town that people and businesses have been leaving slowly but consistently for decades as the petrochemical companies moved in.

"I said, 'Dear God, do you want me to give up my land, my home?'" she recalls. Then a red bird flew into her yard, and she knew she had an answer. "He said, 'No.' I said, 'What do you want me to do?' He said, 'Fight.'"

Taking inspiration from her late father, who was a local NAACP leader, Lavigne founded a group she called Rise St. James, with the goal of blocking the two new plants.

The group faces a tough political landscape. St. James's seven-member Parish Council green-lit Formosa's plan a few months after Rise was created, and now the company is applying for an air permit from the state. Hundreds of public comments have been submitted in opposition. The same trajectory was expected for Wanhua until Rise pushed back. The company's application, initially approved by the Parish Council, has now been kicked back to a planning commission, putting a kink in Wanhua's plans.

Lavigne has support from environmental groups in New

"People with young kids don't want to live here anymore. They're worried they'll get sick."

—St. James resident Sharon Lavigne

The fighter: Lavigne founded Rise St. James after she heard that two new petrochemical plants were planned near her home.

Orleans and across the country, which have helped with everything from filing lawsuits against the parish to taking her to Washington, DC, for public presentations and meetings with members of Congress. But she doesn't have as much support as she'd like from her fellow St. James residents. On paper, there are about two dozen Rise members, but some who say they'll go to meetings don't show up. "Even after all these months of fighting, some people still tell me it's a done deal," she says.

While Lavigne is deeply committed to the land her family has lived on for generations, some of her neighbors have said they feel fed up and hopeless—and they're seeking buyouts that could help them move to a less polluted area. Beneath her struggle to organize is a question that often goes unspoken: When a place is as polluted as St. James is, should its residents stay and fight—or make plans to leave?

OVER THE YEARS, LAVIGNE HAS SEEN HER NEIGHBORS do one of three things: get sick, die, or move away. When she was growing up, St. James had several grocery stores, a family doctor who made house calls, a few restaurants, and multiple post offices. Many of the businesses were black-owned. Many families farmed—mostly sugarcane, sometimes rice, cultivating land that was worked decades before by enslaved people.

Driving along Highway 18, which runs in a thin line beside the Mississippi, Lavigne points out house after house that is no longer occupied. There's Burton Lane, which mainly has elderly residents and a few families, since most of the younger people have left. Freetown, a neighborhood founded by a community of former slaves in 1842, is being reduced to a single road by a steady invasion of oil tanks.

As the people left, so did the businesses. Today, the most prominent family operation is a



little shack that sells sno-balls (Louisiana's version of the snow cone) on the side of the highway. The closest grocery store is a Walmart in Donaldsonville, about 12 miles away.

Clyde Cooper, who represents the Fifth District and is one of three black members on the Parish Council, says there have been a few attempts to open stores in St. James, but the question is always "Are there enough people to support the business?" He continues, "Industry isn't uplifting the community. It's really tearing the community down. People are moving out of the parish, and those who still stay are hurting."

The Fourth and Fifth districts provide the majority of the parish's property tax revenue but haven't reaped the rewards of the industrial facilities they host. In the 2019 budget, for example, the Fifth District has \$105,100 allocated for its recreation budget, plus \$10,400 for construction. The First District, meanwhile, has \$600,000 allocated for improvement of its ball fields. And the Fifth District will provide even more tax revenue in the coming years, thanks to a 2014 land-use plan approved after limited public input. The plan designates the district as a "residential/future industrial" area, while keeping other, whiter parts of St. James designated strictly for residential growth.

The district has been left with a dwindling number of schools, a limited evacuation route, and only one park, which consists primarily of a parking lot, some covered picnic tables, and a small playground surrounded by views of petrochemical plants. It has no health center, which is a problem because residents say they are dealing with significant health issues because of all the industry in area. On our drive along Highway 18, Lavigne points out the houses of those who have been diagnosed with or have died from cancer. "That family—the mother and daughter both have cancer," she says, shaking her head. "That one, the wife died of cancer." Lavigne's brother, who lives down the road from her, is also a cancer survivor.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH INDUSTRY IS RESPONSIBLE for these illnesses is a matter of fierce debate. Dozens of chemicals released from the area's petrochemical facilities are known carcinogens, and in two census tracts in St. James, the cancer risk from air pollution exceeds what the Environmental Protection Agency says is the

A new plastics plant in St. James will be one of the state's largest emitters of the carcinogen ethylene oxide.

Hollowed out: As pollution forces residents out, activists are asking for an end to new petrochemical plants along Cancer Alley.

"upper limit of acceptability." But the Louisiana Tumor Registry, a state body, has said there's no evidence of an elevated cancer risk along the New Orleans–Baton Rouge corridor, calling Cancer Alley a misnomer.

Wilma Subra, a chemist and technical adviser for the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) who received a MacArthur "genius" grant in 1999, has been working with the state's industrial communities for decades; she notes that, until recently, the Tumor Registry reported data only on a parish level. That meant no distinction could be seen across towns in the same parish even if they had different exposure to emissions—which could water down the results concerning possibly elevated cancer rates. She and others advocated for that practice to change, and now the registry reports rates for each census tract.

But Subra says it's still difficult to demonstrate increased cancer rates because most people who have insurance go outside Louisiana to receive state-of-the-art cancer care—adults to Houston, kids to Tennessee. As a result, their cancers are reported out of state, even if they're residents of Louisiana.

There are other problems. In St. James, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality monitors ozone but not volatile organic compounds, the primary toxic substances released by industrial facilities. The DEQ could require companies to do fence-line monitoring to measure pollution at their sites. Despite repeated requests by residents and other environmental groups, the DEQ has required this to be done at only one plant, in a parish down the river from St. James. Data collected there shows that residents have been exposed to emissions that can reach 765 times the levels considered safe by the EPA.

While proof of causality may be hard to come by, the perception that poor health is linked to the petrochemical industry is enough to shake residents. It's a primary topic of conversation for Lavigne and her family and neighbors: This person had a stroke, that person has respiratory problems, someone else's neighbor now has throat cancer. The threat of ill health has pushed some of Lavigne's children and grandchildren out of the parish. "People with young kids don't want to live here anymore," she says. "They're worried they'll get sick." The two grandchildren who have stayed often have trouble breathing St. James's air.

ON SUNDAYS, LAVIGNE TUCKS A STACK OF yellow Rise St. James flyers into her gold choir robe. She hands them out before services at the 200-year-old St. James Catholic Church, where she's worshipped since she was a child, sharing information about Wanhua and Formosa and encouraging neighbors to lobby the Parish Council in opposition to the companies' plans.

After a service in March, she takes the flyers to a backyard barbecue, where a man is frying chicken in a metal vat. Oil tanks sit behind him, just beyond the house's fence. The chef, Kirk Carey, has worked in the petrochemical industry for years, at a plant outside the parish. His wife works at a plant, too. Industry jobs can



easily pay six figures, especially those that are more technical, like engineering positions. But “no one gets jobs in the parish,” Carey says. “Everybody’s got to go outside to get work.”

Nearly a dozen residents across St. James echo the complaint about jobs, insisting that most of them, especially the well-paid ones, go to outsiders—“because this parish is a club,” says Carey’s friend Gregory Clayton. Rubbing a finger along his arm, he continues, “You get in by the color of your skin. It’s been like that for a long time.” (Employee information is protected by law, and in Louisiana, a right-to-work state, there are few unions that could verify the racial composition of the workforce.)

Louisiana is the second largest petrochemical producer in the country, after Texas, thanks in part to its natural resources and proximity to the Gulf of Mexico—and also to its friendly corporate climate. Since the 1930s, Louisiana has allowed industry to skirt local taxes through the Industrial Tax Exemption Program. While the state’s Democratic governor, John Bel Edwards, has reformed the program so that local governments can now impose some property taxes on petrochemical facilities if they wish, the Formosa and Wanhua plants were proposed before that change was made, so tax exemptions will be grandfathered in. “St. James Parish currently has almost exactly as much industrial property exempted as the entire state of Texas—\$2.1 billion,” says Broderick Bagert, an organizer with Together Louisiana, a statewide network of religious and civic organizations. “After the Formosa and Wanhua deals, St. James will be giving away at least six times more in property tax subsidies than all of Texas.”

Nor are the plants likely to receive significant regulatory oversight from the DEQ, which is responsible for enforcing state rules as well as the regulations written by the EPA. Andrew Jacoby, an environmental lawyer based in New Orleans, says that the DEQ lacks adequate funding from the state, barely flexes its regulatory muscle, and has an ingrained pro-industry mentality. “We have regulatory capture that’s almost absolute,” he says. “Every level of government is pro-industry—which isn’t necessarily bad, but it is a problem if communities’ interests are compromised. And government’s actions suggest a total lack of interest in the health of these communities.”

Several St. James residents, including Lavigne, say they’ve called the DEQ to register complaints about industrial emissions multiple times, only to see a department representative several days later or not at all. A 2011 EPA study noted that “Louisiana has the lowest enforcement activity levels” in its region, which includes Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Among other things, the study cited “a culture in which the state agency is expected to protect industry.”

Local government could put up significant restrictions on new industry or at least require stronger environmental protections. But several of St. James’s Parish Council members, including the president, are current



Rising up: Activists with Rise St. James have staged protests, spoken at public meetings, and filed lawsuits against local and state governments.

“My family has been in Freetown for at least 100 years. That’s a long time for us to live here and give it up.”

—Eve Butler, St. James resident

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Mara Kardas-Nelson is a freelance journalist based in Berkeley, California.

or former employees of the petrochemical industry. “As the government, our first priority should be the safety and protection of our citizens,” says the Fifth District’s Cooper. “But I don’t think that’s first and foremost the interest of this council. There’s just this mind-set of more, more, more.”

Under an awning at the barbecue, Lavigne chats with a woman while continuing to hand out flyers. “Come out tomorrow night. There’s a council meeting,” Lavigne says. The woman responds that she’s heard about the new plants, it’s awful, and she’d like to attend—but she has other plans.

A FEW DAYS LATER, I MEET EVE BUTLER IN A Baptist church in the Fifth District. She is waiting for me inside, taking shelter from a midday rain. She tries to avoid such showers, she explains, because “in 2016, I was caught in the rain, and my face peeled pink from the chemicals. It was like a really bad sunburn.” She has been especially sensitive about health issues since being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017. She’s in remission now, but the treatment made her too sick to work.

Like Lavigne’s, Butler’s family has lived in St. James for several generations. She moved back to the area in 2008 after serving in the military and working in towns across the country and now lives with her mother and sister on Freetown Lane, surrounded by industrial facilities.

Several years ago, Butler joined Humanitarian Enterprise of Loving People (HELP), a group whose original aim was to restart local businesses. (Lavigne is also a member.) The focus quickly changed to environmental concerns. “Children are having asthma, kids are having cancer, young women are having miscarriages,” Butler summarizes. “House foundations are shifting with all the construction.”

While Lavigne is fighting to stay in the parish, Butler is now trying to leave it. She decided it was time to go after the council announced its new land-use plan,

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CLAMPDOWN IN BRAZIL

Under far-right
President Jair
Bolsonaro, the
assault on
grassroots
movements is
growing.

MICHAEL FOX



“Housing is a right”:
The 9 de Julho
building in São
Paulo, a showcase of
the city’s Homeless
Movement of the
Center (MSTC).

IT'S 6:30 AM ON MONDAY, JUNE 24. THREE PLAINCLOTHES POLICE OFFICERS from the São Paulo criminal investigations department walk up to the apartment of Janice Ferreira da Silva. She is a leader of São Paulo's Homeless Movement of the Center (MSTC), the host of the weekly *Free Lula* news bulletin, and a well-known singer and cultural activist in the city. Her nickname is Preta, which in Portuguese means "black," the color of her hair and skin.

Her sister answers the door, and the officers are quickly inside, talking fast and barking orders. They wake up Preta and two other sisters and order them to sit in the living room while they hurl questions at them. "Where are the drugs? Where are the guns?" the officers ask. They turn the place upside down, rifling through closets and drawers. They find nothing.

Preta, 36, and her seven brothers and sisters largely grew up in housing occupations in São Paulo, which has one of the highest numbers of building occupations in the world. Most of the siblings are now activists or social workers. They are used to dealing with the authorities, but they say they've never been subjected to anything like this. Across town, police are also raiding the apartments of their brother Sidney and two other housing activists, Edinalva Silva Pereira and Angélica dos Santos Lima, from the Movement of Housing for All. The officers confiscate Preta's laptop and several documents. A few hours later, she's in jail, and so are Sidney and the other two activists, all accused of extortion and improper collection of rent.

A photo taken at the moment of her arrest shows Preta wearing a gray and black sweatshirt. Her thick black hair is pulled back. Her right hand forms an "L"—for Lula. This has become the symbol of the Brazilian left over the past year, which is demanding the release of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. A hero of Brazil's lower classes, he is in prison on a corruption conviction handed down with scant evidence by a biased judge, as revealed in recent leaks by *The Intercept Brasil*.

It would be two days before Preta's and Sidney's lawyers could get information about their cases. As we go to press, the four activists are still in jail, and arrest warrants have been issued for eight others, including Preta and Sidney's sister Liliane and their mother, Carmen.

It's a sign of the times in Brazil under far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who was elected last year on the promise of fighting crime and ending corruption—and destroying the left. "We're going to end activism in Brazil," he vowed late last year. "You criminals from the MST [Landless Workers' Movement] and the MTST [Homeless Workers' Movement], your actions are going to be labeled as terrorism. Either fall in line and submit to Brazilian laws, or you are going to end up like that drunk [Lula] in Curitiba."

São Paulo Governor João Doria, from the right-wing Brazilian Social Democracy Party, echoed Bolsonaro's sentiments during his campaign last year, promising to crack down on occupations if elected. Bolsonaro has been slow to make good on that particular promise, but many fear that these recent arrests are a leap in that direction.

São Paulo could be considered the heart of Brazil's movement for housing and urban reform. With a population of more than 12 million, it is the Western Hemisphere's

largest city. From an airplane, high-rise buildings along the city's iconic main drag, Paulista Avenue, seem to push into the sky like a row of nails. Miles away, past gridlocked highways, on the outskirts of the city, brown cinder block homes in the favelas stretch over hillsides in every direction. It can take favela residents a couple of hours to travel into the city center by bus.

Poor residents have been pushed to the edge by market forces and powerful interests, which have resulted "in huge social segregation between rich and poor neighborhoods," says Anderson Kazuo Nakano, a professor in urban architecture at the Federal University of São Paulo. "When you live in the center, you're not going to see the biggest poor neighborhoods unless you take the Metro and travel to the periphery of the city." For decades, housing activists have been fighting to change this state of affairs by demanding urban reform and their right to housing, as enshrined in the 1988 Constitution.

Building occupations have multiplied in downtown São Paulo. They are easy to miss, though, if you don't know what you're looking for. At least a dozen movements coordinate more than 70 buildings there, in which as many as 6,000 people live. "Today a family that makes minimum wage cannot afford to pay rent. So the occupations are a solution for families making low wages, to hold on to their right to housing and maintain the minimum conditions for survival," says Osmar Borges, a longtime housing rights organizer in São Paulo.

THE SHOWCASE OCCUPATION OF THE MSTC, ONE OF São Paulo's most organized and vocal housing movements, is called 9 de Julho. In a 14-story Art Deco building that was abandoned in the mid-1970s, 9 de Julho shatters the misguided stereotype that housing occupations are grungy, rat-infested hellholes, plagued by drug abuse and criminals.

A grandmother brews communal coffee over a massive 10-burner stove in the middle of the large collective kitchen. Down the hall, a man in a black T-shirt and frizzy gray hair pushes a slab of wood through a table saw in the building's workshop, which produces furniture and other products for this and other occupations. Children browse a large occupation library or kick around a soccer ball in an outdoor court that is adorned with colorful graffiti art of flowers, women dancing, and what looks like an African queen holding a small child.

Upstairs, potted plants are set cozily outside many of the apartments. Framed children's drawings line the walls. The halls are spotless, and the occupation is managed with a dedicated militancy. One family on each floor sweeps up and throws out the trash each day. Major decisions are decided in monthly assemblies by the more than 120 resident families. Women are in almost all key positions of power. A handwritten sign in Portuguese reminds residents of the stark reality in the municipality of São Paulo: "Housing is

"We're going to end activism in Brazil. You criminals... your actions are going to be labeled as terrorism."

—President Jair Bolsonaro

A Lula continua: Preta Ferreira da Silva, a leader in São Paulo's homeless movement, giving the "Free Lula" sign upon her arrest.



CLAMPDOWN IN BRAZIL

a right. More than 600,000 vacant properties. More than 396,000 homeless families. Occupy, resist, construct, live.”

For Preta and several of her brothers and sisters, 9 de Julho is home away from home. They don't live there, but they are intrinsically connected. Just two days before she was arrested, she helped to organize a “diverse cities” festival at 9 de Julho, which was held the day before São Paulo's massive LGBTQ Pride Parade. Thousands of people attended the 9 de Julho event, with music, food, and a dance celebrating gender diversity. Preta sang. Her voice is powerful; her lyrics, political. A YouTube clip of her recent release “Minha Carne” (“My Meat”) pays homage to black and indigenous women's struggles in Brazil. It was partly filmed at the 9 de Julho occupation.

Residents tell stories of the scores of famous Brazilian artists and musicians whom Preta has brought to visit their occupation. They say much of the vibrant graffiti covering their home was thanks to Preta, who helped organize teams of artists to bring color to the space.

Her connection there runs deep. When she was 14, her mother moved her and her seven brothers and sisters from the state of Bahia to a previous occupation at 9 de Julho. (There have been at least three since the late 1990s.) Carmen, who had arrived before them, learned of the homeless movement after sleeping on the streets and in shelters. The family lived in 9 de Julho for six years before residents moved out in an agreement with the city.

Carmen eventually became one of the key leaders in the MSTC and the city's homeless movement. She successfully led the occupation at the former Hotel Cambridge, which the residents won from the city in 2016 and is now being renovated and converted into permanent housing. She, too, recently faced accusations of extortion, which were thrown out by a judge in January.

The accusations against Preta and her fellow activists stem from an investigation in the wake of a fire at a building with no connection to the MSTC. Housing movement leaders say the city used the fire as justification to crack down on occupations. It shut off electricity for months to at least two occupations and opened a criminal investigation, accusing 19 leaders of several housing movements of extortion, criminal organization, and forcing residents to participate in mobilizations in support of the Workers' Party or the occupation of other buildings.

Preta's and Sidney's lawyer Iberê Bandeira de Mello calls the accusations against the MSTC worrisome and completely false. “It's insanity,” he says. “We live in a moment now in the country where you start from the principle that someone is guilty and you carry out the whole investigation based on this principle. So it's easy to make someone look guilty if you think they are.”

The testimonies against Preta allege that she collected monthly maintenance fees from residents at the Hotel Cambridge occupation. The residents of the MSTC's five occupations, including 9 de Julho, do not pay rent, but they do pay a \$50 monthly maintenance fee, which the movement uses to cover the costs of keeping up the buildings, security at the front gates, and utilities in

São Paulo: The Western Hemisphere's largest city is at the heart of Brazil's movement for housing and urban reform.

“It's an extremely serious moment. You could almost say that we are living in a police state.”

—human rights lawyer
Benedito Roberto
Barbosa



Movement martyr: Marielle Franco, the Rio city council member who was murdered last year.

buildings where electricity and water are regulated. This fee, written into the movement's statutes, was approved by all residents in the occupations.

PRETA'S AND SIDNEY'S ARRESTS, MANY RESIDENTS say, are a means of attacking the occupation, the movement, and Carmen. “Why are these people in jail? Carmen has two children in jail. They are destroying her family. And they want to destroy the lives of hundreds of families. That's what the government is doing,” says Claudete Lindoso, who has lived at 9 de Julho for the past three years. She is originally from the poor northeast of Brazil and, like most of the residents, is poor and black. “There is no extortion here. There are no criminals here. There are no vandals or bums. All of the people here have jobs, and they are just trying to make things better,” she says.

Preta's younger sister Lorena chokes back tears during an interview at the 9 de Julho occupation. She wears dark-rimmed glasses and a brown sweater over a black dress. On the wall behind her is a poster for a movie made about the Hotel Cambridge occupation and a large hand-drawn picture of Marielle Franco, a black lesbian city council member from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro who was outspoken against police violence in poor neighborhoods and was assassinated in March 2018 by gunmen with links to Brazil's security forces.

“What kind of a threat is Preta to society? What, is she going to kill someone with her music? Kill them with all of her love? With that amazing voice of hers?” asks Lorena. “And Sidney, he was going to start a new job on July 1. He has a little girl. He's a single father. Black. Is that the problem?”

Preta's and Sidney's arrests have worried the residents of 9 de Julho and other MSTC occupations. Many are afraid the authorities are just one step away. In May, Bolsonaro directed federal agencies to allow the eviction, without the approval of a judge, of occupied buildings' residents. In the lawsuit against Preta and Sidney, prosecutors call for the immediate closure of all occupations in the center of São Paulo.

“We have to fight,” one person told an assembly of fellow residents packed into the downstairs meeting room at 9 de Julho on a cold July evening. “Today it's Preta and Sidney. Tomorrow it could be any of us.”

Just a few days before, Benedito Roberto Barbosa, a human rights lawyer with the Union of Housing Movements and a housing leader in São Paulo, traveled to Brasília to meet with other members of the National Committee of Human Rights Defenders, who have witnessed an increase in attacks, threats, and criminalization of grassroots movements across Brazil. He says São Paulo's housing move-



ments have always been criminalized but now “it’s even worse—an increasing agenda of hate and attacks.” He adds, “It’s an extremely serious moment. You could almost say that we are living in a police state, a state of exception. We never know if our cell phone is being tapped or if we are being investigated. It’s a very scary situation.”

State security forces have been increasingly monitoring the left’s organizing. In the most recent case, on August 3 in São Paulo, military police invaded a meeting of female organizers involved in the Socialism and Liberty Party. Officers demanded documents and said they were “monitoring those present.”

Bolsonaro’s violent, discriminatory rhetoric has unleashed a rise in attacks on marginalized populations—in particular, LGBTQ and indigenous communities. Several leading leftists fled the country this year after receiving multiple death threats. Among them was the country’s only out gay congressman at the time, Jean Wyllys.

Disturbing memories of Brazil’s unresolved past loom large. Under the military dictatorship from 1964 to ’85, hundreds of people were disappeared, thousands imprisoned, and roughly 30,000 tortured. This was a time that has been celebrated by Bolsonaro, who served in the military during the dictatorship. He has often praised officials from that period and ordered the military to mark the April 1, 1964, coup with celebrations this year.

The Intercept Brasil’s recent bombshell leaks revealed how bias in the judicial system helped to convict Lula and block him from running in last year’s election, opening the door for the Bolsonaro presidency. The movement to free Lula has become a key organizing tool for the Brazilian left since last year. As the host of the *Free Lula* news bulletin, Preta has been a prominent face of this movement. Her arrest and incarceration are likely no coincidence. “The grassroots leaders have suffered the principal impact [of the criminalization] because they are on the front lines,” says Federal University’s Nakano. “They are more visible. They are well known. They are in media. They are in public debates, and they are speaking out. And when they start to be seen as criminal actions, the first targets of repression are these leaders.”

Housing activists have responded to the arrests, creating a committee to fight for the release of those in jail. In mid-July, hundreds marched to a criminal court in São Paulo to deliver thousands of signatures from occupation residents demanding that those leaders be freed. A judge is expected to rule in the coming weeks on whether to release the activists while reviewing their cases. In the meantime, their lives are on hold.

“They are criminalizing the movements because we are bothering them and making noise. If the government did its job, we wouldn’t need a movement or an occupation,” Lorena says. “You can lock up one, two, or three people, but the struggle will continue and grow. You can lock someone up, but another 500 or 1,000 will come.” ■

Michael Fox, an independent multimedia journalist based in Brazil, is a former editor of the NACLA Report on the Americas. More of his work can be found at mfox.us.

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which designates part of the Fifth District as industrial. “My mother’s family were slaves, and my family has been in Freetown for at least 100 years,” she says. “That’s a long time for us to live here and give it up. But I don’t think it’s going to improve. There’s just too much industry, too many chemicals. Formosa will be 1.25 miles from the elementary school. Then there’s South Louisiana Methanol, NuStar, LOCAP, Plains, and YCI,” she continues, ticking off the neighboring facilities. “There’s no buffer zone between us and the plants. *We* are the buffer zone.”

Butler has worked with LEAN and with other residents advocating for a community-wide buyout. That would, at least in theory, allow neighbors to move with neighbors, family members with family members, keeping together some of the bonds that have formed over a century.

In a statement submitted to the St. James Planning Commission in February, LEAN notes that some residents, including Butler, “have repeatedly requested the opportunity to relocate due to the development that has surrounded their community that they believe impacts their health and safety on a daily basis.... The Parish must [provide] relief through voluntary relocation and/or other considerations as dictated by those impacted populations.” Michael Orr, the communications director for LEAN, points out that even before the Wanhua and Formosa plants were proposed, “some residents felt as though their community was so degraded that they wanted to leave, to be bought out.”

In the absence of a coordinated strategy, residents eager to leave have unwittingly engaged in a race to the bottom. As more industry has moved in and more residents have left, property values have tanked. Across the parish, the median value of a home is \$136,400, \$26,000 less than the median value across the state and \$81,200 less than the median value nationally. Orr estimates that the houses in Freetown and Burton Lane, which are closest to the industrial plants, are worth much less than the parish average. “Even if you paid two or three times what they’re worth, [the homeowners] still can’t get enough money to buy a house anywhere else.” (LEAN advocates for the homes to be bought at or above the state median.)

Residents in some of Louisiana’s most polluted towns have obtained buyouts. In 2011, people in Mossville were offered a voluntary relocation package from the petrochemical company SASOL, which was expanding a chemical plant. Many in the environmental movement have criticized the buyout, which was taken by nearly every community member, suggesting that those who didn’t want to go faced peer pressure and that residents didn’t receive adequate compensation. Orr counters that residents received 160 percent of their home’s value, plus moving expenses.

The criticism hasn’t been only about money. Stacey Ryan, one of the few Mossville residents who has stayed, explained his decision in a 2015 interview with the Sierra Club as a commitment to the history of a community founded by enslaved people. “I have not been offered a fair price for my property, and I refuse to give it away,” he said. “I am not someone who seeks the limelight, but I’m aware of my heritage and the ways in which

“I see the writing on the wall. It’s just going to get worse. I’d sell in a heartbeat.”

—Milton Cayette,
St. James resident

industry can erase history.” Buyouts in other parts of the country, particularly by the fracking industry, have been criticized for being, in essence, a relatively cheap and easy way to keep communities quiet.

Orr makes it clear that LEAN supports whatever the community members decide, whether it’s fighting new plants or obtaining a buyout. But he wonders to what extent the renewed effort to stay is being influenced by outside groups—including the Sierra Club, 350 New Orleans, and several religious organizations—that see St. James as part of a larger struggle against petrochemical development. In June many of these groups marched alongside Rise St. James to Baton Rouge in order to demand, among other things, that no new petrochemical plants be approved in Mississippi River parishes.

Regardless, the fact that the residents of St. James now face a devastating choice is not the fault of environmentalists: It’s the result of decades of industrial pollution and a lack of support from government. Scott Eustis, the community science director for Healthy Gulf, a New Orleans–based organization focused on Louisiana’s wetlands, describes the fight against the new plants in St. James as “a climate issue, a racism issue, a Mississippi River pollution issue, a waste issue. If people care about the Green New Deal, about green jobs, about environmental issues, then they should care about Sharon [Lavigne].” He isn’t against buyouts, but he argues that instilling hope through more organizing could rally people to stay in the parish. “I think if we had more resources, more support, we could get people talking about these things together and push back together.”

It’s difficult to tell what community members really want. Butler notes that many people say they want to leave in private but then clam up in public, reluctant to offer what could be seen as criticism of an industry that promises jobs. Lavigne points out that people can change their tune depending on who they’re talking to. But she says that since Rise St. James started, more people have told her they want to stay and victories like the one that saw the Wanhua application kicked back to the planning commission show their efforts may be paying off. “Even people in industry, they come up to me and say, ‘What you’re doing is right, because the plants are killing us.’” Lavigne says residents have been advised to stay by others who left and are struggling to make it in new, more expensive places. “They say it’s just not worth it.”

For a long time, Lavigne’s brother, Milton Cayette, was among the residents who felt torn. Retired after more than 30 years at Shell Oil, he goes to as many Parish Council meetings as possible, where he and Lavigne wear matching “Rise St. James” T-shirts.

“I’m against Formosa. I’m against all the plants coming in. We hope and pray that that won’t happen,” Cayette says. But his children, who have left St. James, are worried about his health. He says that even if the Formosa and Wanhua facilities are not approved, there will be other plants—and he’s decided it’s time to leave. “I see the writing on the wall. I think this is a losing battle. It’s just going to get worse. I’d sell in a heartbeat.”

Lavigne understands the impulse. “Everyone wishes me good luck, because they say they would be so happy if they could stay. But if the plants go through, they’re ready to go,” she says. She hasn’t yet thought about what she’ll do if Formosa and Wanhua are approved. If she moves, she’ll be cut off from the church that she and Cayette have attended since they were children—a prospect that she finds devastating. “There’s no way I’m leaving that church,” she says. “That is my home.” ■

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Books & the Arts.



OUR SHARED FATE

Carolyn Forché's memoir of the Salvadoran Civil War

by SUZY HANSEN

This past winter, after the Trump administration appointed Elliott Abrams as its special envoy to Venezuela, Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota reminded him during a hearing that he once described US foreign policy in El Salvador in the 1980s as a “fabulous achievement.” At the time, Abrams was an assistant secretary of state in the Reagan administration, which was funneling weapons, aid, and advisers to El Salvador’s right-wing government during

Suzy Hansen is the author of Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World.

the country’s civil war. Referring to the 1981 El Mozote massacre, one of the worst episodes of the conflict, Omar asked, “Do you think it was a ‘fabulous achievement’ that happened under our watch?” Abrams reacted with outrage: “That is a ridiculous question, and I will not respond to it. I am not going to respond to that kind of personal attack, which is not a question.”

Many politicians and pundits rushed to defend him, mostly (but not always) Republicans. And in any case, Democrats have been responsible for many similar foreign policy evasions. What seemed to shock many was Omar’s perspective—and her memory. As Ben-

What You Have Heard Is True

A Memoir of Witness and Resistance

By Carolyn Forché

Penguin Press. 400 pp. \$28

jamin Wallace-Wells wrote in *The New Yorker*, Omar was saying to Abrams and the rest of the world that “the overseas crimes of America’s recent past would now be interrogated from a victim’s point of view. If Abrams had been associated with some of these crimes and nevertheless thrived in Washington, then that should not operate as a defense of him but as an indictment of us.” Even in an era of failed interventions in foreign countries and a devastating migrant

crisis emerging from Central America on our own border, many Americans still have little collective memory of the civil war in El Salvador or those responsible for it, let alone the ability or motivation to see the war from the victims' point of view. In fact, they have no sense of the victims at all.

El Salvador was ruled by a repressive military dictatorship for 50 years. Over time, the peasants and rebels who had been organizing against the regime banded together to form the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The United States saw the conflict only through the prism of the Cold War and sent economic and military aid to the government, resulting in the loss of 75,000 Salvadoran lives and horrifying human rights abuses. According to the journalist Raymond Bonner, writing in this magazine, the United Nations Truth Commission found that "more than 85 percent of the killings, kidnappings, and torture [in El Salvador] had been the work of government forces, which included paramilitaries, death squads, and army units trained by the United States." One such unit was the Atlacatl Battalion, which in early December of 1981 brutally tortured, raped, and murdered nearly 1,000 people in and around the village of El Mozote. Yet even after the massacre received prominent coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, the Reagan administration decided to continue military aid to the Salvadoran government. As Mark Danner wrote in *The New Yorker* more than a decade later, "That in the United States [the massacre] came to be known, that it was exposed to the light and then allowed to fall back into the dark, makes the story of El Mozote—how it came to happen and how it came to be denied—a central parable of the Cold War."

It was also a central parable of American life in general: how we allow the architects of our foreign policy, no matter how criminal or disastrous, to remain in the influential circles of government, business, and society and continue to conduct themselves with the same immorality and incompetence. The celebration of former UN ambassador and secretary of state Madeleine Albright in feminist circles despite her statement that US sanctions against Iraq were worth the price of 500,000 Iraqi lives is just one of the more glaring examples of this amnesia.

The problem of historical memory, however, is not just one of forgetfulness and the passage of time. It also has to do with the absence of a more complex moral architecture, with an unwillingness to dis-

cover and confront the most horrific details of US intervention in foreign countries to the point that those countries and their people become part of one's own life.

The effort to both discover and confront American citizens' responsibility in their country's foreign policy is at the center of the poet Carolyn Forché's extraordinary new memoir of the war in El Salvador, *What You Have Heard Is True*. "It took me that long to mature and to process my experience," she explained in a recent interview. "I had to think about it and have some distance on it... I always wondered, will I ever finish this and are these events receding and far in the past? Will they still matter?" They did. After spending time in El Salvador during the conflict, Forché was transformed into what she would call a "poet of witness," and her memoir gracefully traces her evolution from an ignorant but curious young American to a writer committed to documenting in her poetry the horrifying details of war.

What You Have Heard Is True also describes another evolution, that of a young American beginning to reckon with her connection to suffering in other parts of the world. As her guide to the Salvadoran Civil War, Leonel, says of Americans, "You believe yourselves to be apart from others and therefore have little awareness of your interdependencies and the needs of the whole." Forché's memoir is an attempt not only to illustrate those connections but also to provide readers with a path to a similar kind of moral evolution.

In 1977, Forché was a divorced 27-year-old poet living in California and teaching at a university. The previous summer, the daughter of Nicaraguan Salvadoran poet Claribel Alegría had invited her to stay with her family in Mallorca, where Forché had the opportunity to translate Alegría's poetry. Forché was drawn to the poetry because of these friends and familial connections, but her interest had not yet extended to the countries where Alegría had roots.

That soon changes when, one day in California, a man comes knocking at Forché's door, she writes. His name is Leonel, he tells her, and he is also related to Alegría. With two young daughters in tow, he invites himself in but doesn't explain why. Out of politeness, Forché welcomes him in, and before long, Leonel has spread blank sheets of paper all over her dining room table, drawing maps to help him illustrate El Salvador's complicated history. He dis-

plays a clear sense of purpose, as well as a sense of entitlement. He is soon addressing the poet by his nickname for her and saying things like, "What are you thinking, Papu? You have a tendency to drift off. You have to learn to pay attention." For her part, Forché appears helpless in the face of this pedagogic home invasion.

Leonel seems particularly obsessed with the mysterious death of an American man, Ronald Richardson, who had been living in El Salvador before he was murdered, Leonel says, "while in the custody of the Salvadoran government." As he explains, "under orders of Colonel Chacón, Richardson was taken, along with a few political prisoners, for a short helicopter ride over the Pacific, and they were tossed alive into the sea." Chacón, he continues, is stealing American aid to continue his gruesome activities. It seems odd that a man like Leonel, whose obvious concern is the oppressed people of El Salvador, would express such anguish over the death of one American. But Leonel—who we eventually learn is a human rights activist who may or may not be supporting the rebellion—has a very good reason for his concern: If a Salvadoran officer can kill an American without the United States investigating the murder or changing its policy toward the government, then that means anyone can be killed in El Salvador. "Do you understand what it means for a man like Chacón to receive such a message?" he asks. Leonel has other reasons for wanting to understand American intentions at this particular point in history. One year earlier, Jimmy Carter was elected president, in part because of his stated commitment to human rights in foreign policy, which Leonel and many of his fellow activists had hoped might mark a turning point in US support for El Salvador. "The highest ministers of the military government, and especially the president, made money through kickbacks and theft of American aid," Leonel tells her. He is attempting to determine whether Carter's commitment to human rights actually means anything in practice.

To Forché, Leonel's motives are not entirely clear at first; she is not even certain who he really is. He calls himself a coffee farmer, "and later," she writes, "when they took his coffee farm away, he would describe himself as a social critic and political exile and, finally, an investigator of crimes against humanity...and an adviser to politicians, Catholic priests, Carmelite nuns, diplomats, labor leaders, and at least one guerrilla commander." But he is in pursuit

WITHOUT ONLINE ACCESS, YOU'RE ONLY GETTING HALF THE STORY.

(SOUND FAMILIAR?)

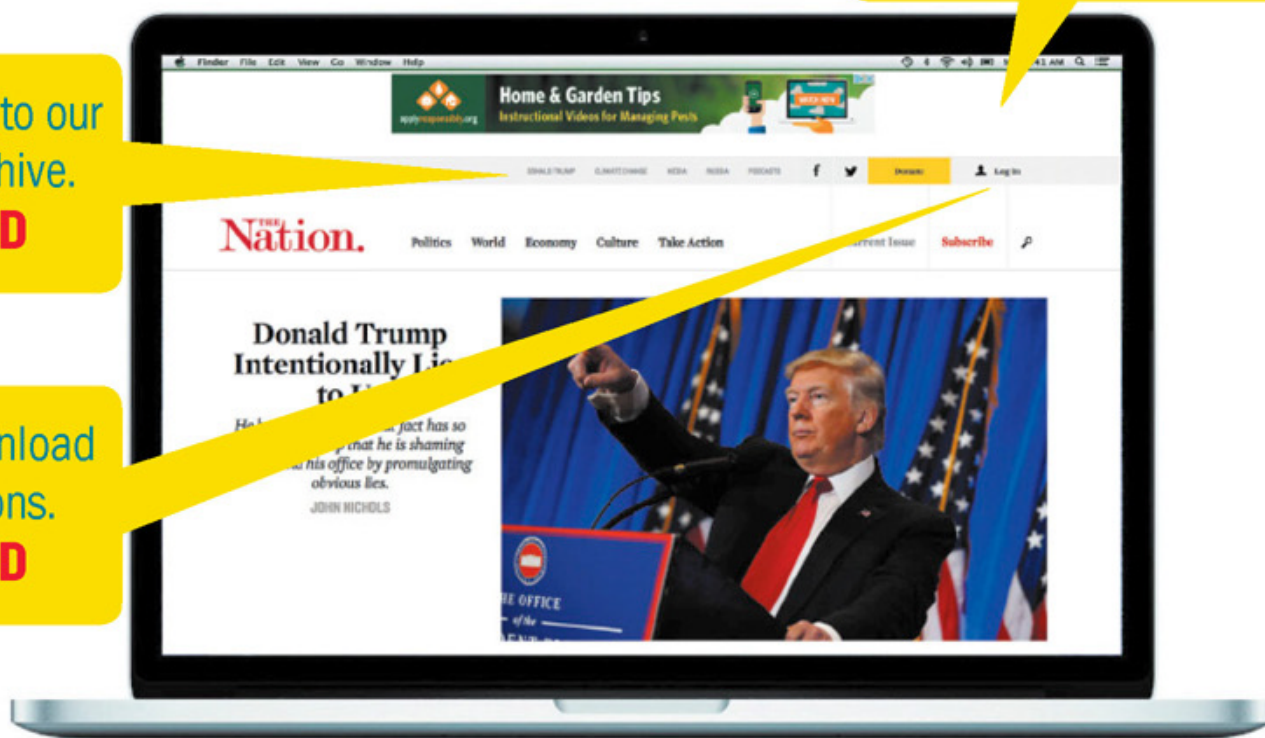
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of something else as well. By giving Forché the historical background of his country, Leonel hopes to entice her to visit El Salvador. “If you’re going to translate our poets, don’t you think you should know something about Central America?” he asks.

Leonel wants her to accompany him not only to understand what is going on in El Salvador but also to help document it as a poet. Forché decides to go. In a way, Leonel’s visit represents all of the ways in which mysterious foreign events impinge on some American lives, almost as side thoughts or annoyances. She seems to have grasped that Leonel might teach her not only about El Salvador but also about her own country.

Once they’re in El Salvador, Leonel sets up a regimen for Forché. In the mornings, he picks her up to meet with activists and priests but also former military commanders. “Be careful,” he warns her outside the house of some murderer she never asked to meet. In these early parts of her memoir, Forché captures her disorientation by not giving readers much insight into why she is meeting with these people. In one instance, she and Leonel meet a former general and paramilitary leader, Chele Medrano, but her Spanish isn’t good enough to allow her to grasp much of the conversation, and so we too feel as if we’re, somewhat terrifyingly, in the dark. (Leonel later admits he took her as a cover so that he had an excuse to speak to Medrano and ask about Richardson, the dead American.)

Leonel also takes her to meet some campesinos, to see for herself their abject poverty. “Eighty percent of the country lives that way, without a decent place to take a shit,” he says. He makes Forché squat over one of these makeshift toilets—putrid holes in the ground writhing with insects. To understand a country, he explains, one cannot just know its history; one must live as its people do. Leonel warns her that Americans will say “you must view conditions here in a context. What they mean is that poverty in countries such as this should be considered normal, the way of the world, something that cannot be helped.” Some of these poor people, after all, will one day become the enemies of the government against whom the United States will wage war. He wants her to understand the conditions that would inspire a rebellion in the first place.

Over time, Leonel begins to slip in the first of what will eventually become a steady accumulation of violent details

about the military dictatorship’s methods. “There might be other things you don’t know,” he tells her one day. “Such as when these sons of bitches interrogate someone, they tie the man to a chair, put his hand on a table, cut off one of his fingers, and they flush it down a toilet before asking the first question.” As usual, Forché hasn’t asked to know such details, but Leonel continues. “And our Colonel Chacón has a friend he works with, and this friend claims to be a doctor but I don’t know. The doctor injects the spine of a victim with anesthetic, then he slices through the person’s abdomen with a scalpel, reaches in, and starts pulling out guts while the person is conscious and can see what is happening. And then the colonel gets to his first question.”

Forché is terrified by these images, but she also slowly starts to convert them into the prose poetry that builds throughout her book. She writes of “thawed human limbs in the mouths of dogs,” and that “no one wants to eat the fish from Lake Ilopango anymore the fish have been eating the dead,” and that “if you want to find a corpse, people say to watch for vultures or schoolchildren as both are drawn to corpses.” When Leonel takes her to one of the prisons—his access is made possible by his old ties to a warden there, as well as the lie that Forché is related to one of the inmates—her final transformation takes place. What she sees is so awful that when she returns to the car, she immediately vomits. “I want you to pay attention now, and feel what you are feeling, really pay attention because you can learn from this,” Leonel says. “This is what oppression feels like.”

At this point, Forché’s memoir undergoes a transformation, too. The conventional narrative disappears into snippets from her notebooks; the horrors of El Salvador become more pressing, more immediate. “The woman who went into the prison in Ahuachapán,” she writes, “left herself behind in a barrio called La Fosa, the grave.” Forché is, after all, now inhabiting a different reality as a different person. Leonel makes such a witness out of her that when she gets ill, her delirium merges with the images of violence she’s seeing and hearing about:

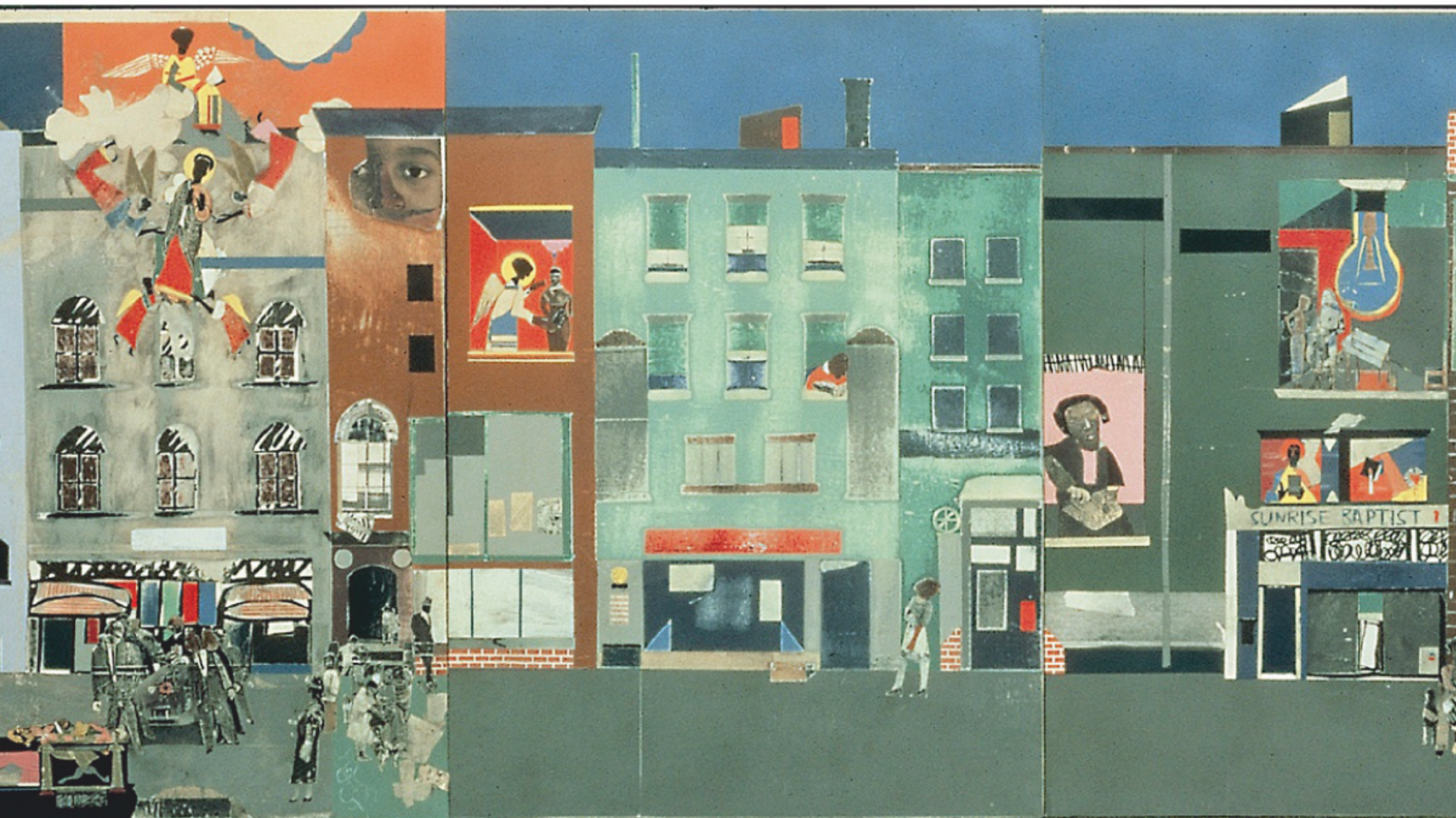
I awoke lying on a bed of ice like a fish or a corpse, the window flickering day, then night, then day.... On the ground in front of me there is a skull with the lower half of the jaw

missing and beside it an empty jug that once held cooking oil. There is a picked-clean skeleton splayed flat as if it were dancing with the ground. A shoe filled with blood. He’s going to ask me if I know where I am. Yes, I do know. This is where they throw the bodies.

For Forché, the American and the Salvadoran and the fate of both their countries have become one. “If a thing exists in one place, it will exist everywhere,” she writes, quoting the Polish poet and Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz. That statement is one reason her book about El Salvador could come out in 2019 and still be as relevant as it would have been 35 years ago.

There is another reason as well: The violence in El Salvador continues. A peace agreement was signed in 1992, but throughout the ’90s, US-sanctioned policies ravaged El Salvador’s economy, exacerbating inequalities and increasing gang violence. As a result, the population of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States has tripled. Last year, as the Trump administration started separating families at the United States’ southern border, few media outlets recalled the historical connection between American foreign policy and the chaos in El Salvador today. It may be too much to expect that Americans—or the British, French, or Belgians, for that matter—will ever feel a moral obligation to allow migrants from the countries that their own nations attacked, occupied, or subjected to unjust and punishing economic sanctions.

But what is more bewildering is the reluctance even to acknowledge the policies that created this desperation or to call out the kind of rhetoric—such as Abrams’s “fabulous achievement”—that erases their criminal failures. Forché’s memoir is so meticulous and specific in her documentation of what war is—children staring in frightened fascination at corpses, a torture victim’s severed fingers flushed down the toilet—that her book becomes a necessary corrective to the cold, bureaucratic language of US politicians. No one would expect a country that endured such horrors to recover easily, and no one should be surprised that, nearly four decades later, its people might still be suffering from that devastation. A book like *What You Have Heard Is True* challenges us as Americans to see the people arriving at our border not only with empathy but also with the knowledge that their arrival is a manifestation of a shared history—of our shared fate. ■



CONSTANT EVOLUTION

Romare Bearden's art

by NELL PAINTER

Mary Schmidt Campbell begins *An American Odyssey*, her formidable new biography of Romare Bearden, in the middle of his career, when the civil rights ferment of the 1960s prompted him and other black New York City artists to form Spiral, an artists' association that they hoped would help them play a role in the era's moment. After years of working as an abstract artist, Bearden returned at that time to figuration, themes from black life, and collage, hoping his art might better confront the world around him.

For Campbell, the distinguished art historian, former director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and current president of Spelman College, starting with this turning

point in Bearden's intellectual and artistic life is important, because central to her book's aims is the effort to root him in his social and political contexts. By doing so, Campbell is able to offer her readers a story about Bearden's times as much as his life, tracing his network of collaborators and friends and providing a study of the many "dilemmas," as she puts it, black artists faced in 20th century America. "By his own account," Campbell writes, "Bearden was first and foremost a student of painting," and she does all of this while being careful to offer close studies of his compositions, palettes, and techniques.

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1911, Bearden was the son of well-to-do parents who moved, in the face of tightening racial segregation, to New York City in 1914. His mother, Bessye, was the first black woman elected to

their local school board and wrote for *The Chicago Defender*, becoming a well-known public figure. His father, Howard, kept a lower profile, finding work as an inspector in the New York Health Department. And Bearden made art ever since he was a child, often finding inspiration in New York's uptown and downtown art scenes.

Bearden's college years were peripatetic. He began his studies at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and then spent two years at Boston University before returning to New York, where he graduated from New York University in 1935. His time in college coincided with the Depression, and while a student and in the years that followed, he applied his considerable talents to political art, drawing social realist cartoons for NYU's student magazine and the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper as well as a cover for *Opportunity*, the National Urban League's journal. While taking classes at

Nell Painter is a visual artist, a historian, and the author; most recently, of Old in Art School: A Memoir of Starting Over.

the Art Students League, Bearden found a mentor in the Expressionist George Grosz.

After completing his studies at NYU, Bearden became a social-services case-worker for the city, a job he would hold for decades, but he directed much of his free time to making art, joining Augusta Savage's Harlem Artists Guild and growing close to a group of artists meeting in the studio of his cousin Charles Alston.

As a member of these two circles, Bearden came to know the city's black arts intelligentsia, including Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Robert Blackburn, Ernest Crichlow, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Alain Locke, and Katherine Dunham. During the 1930s, Bearden began to exhibit his work—mostly composed in the social realist style—taking part in group shows in Harlem before he mounted a solo exhibition in 1940.

Bearden's burgeoning career as an artist was put on hold during World War II, when he served in the Army. But upon his discharge in 1945, he picked up where he'd left off. Soon the Kootz Gallery engaged him, along with other midcentury modernists like Alexander Calder, Robert Motherwell, and Carl Holty, and Bearden became an important figure in New York's art scene.

In the late 1940s, he established the intellectual and work habits that would stay with him for the rest of his life. During the day, he studied the works of Duccio, Giotto, Rembrandt, Manet, and Matisse—and began to adapt their styles to his own. Bearden learned from the old masters through imitation, in particular their styles of composition and use of color. As Campbell discusses, he was always engaged with the formal properties of a wide range of visual art. While he never lost sight of what she terms the “chain of debates about racial identity and art,” in the 1940s and '50s he began to appear alongside his nonblack contemporaries at venues like the Kootz Gallery and the Whitney Annual Exhibition.

After the war, Bearden focused more on writing, wrestling with the challenges facing black artists as artists and as black Americans. In “The Negro Artist's Dilemma,” published in *Critique*, he defended the autonomy of the artist's work: “The Negro artist,” he concluded, “must come to think of himself not primarily as a Negro artist, but as an artist. Only in this way will he acquire the stature which is the component of every good artist.” (He would later revise this severe sentiment.)

Bearden's career continued to rise until 1949, when the Kootz Gallery shifted to-

An American Odyssey

The Life and Work of Romare Bearden

By Mary Schmidt Campbell

Oxford University Press. 441 pp. \$34.95

ward Abstract Expressionism and let him go, precipitating a nervous breakdown. During these wilderness years, he turned away from art, writing popular songs with modest success, including “Seabreeze,” which the popular crooner Billy Eckstine often performed. Bearden found love late, marrying Nanette Rohan, a model and dancer, in 1954. She helped him make his way back to painting—this time as an Abstract Expressionist.

As with so many black Americans, the civil rights movement proved momentous for Bearden, prompting an urgent rethinking of both his art—its subject matter and composition—and the role that artists should play in public life. In an era of struggle for civil rights, black artists needed to make their voices heard on behalf of freedom.

Bearden and his New York City colleagues did not participate in the March on Washington in 1963, but they did come together as a group in those years, not only to publicize the demand for civil rights but also to advance the cause of black artists within the larger art world. The association they founded, Spiral, lasted only two years, wracked by internal disagreements over aesthetic tactics and subject matter. Nonetheless, its members helped establish a network that did more than just make their work more visible in New York (which, by then, had displaced Paris as the center of the art world); they also helped Bearden conceive a signature style characterized by figuration and collage, what Campbell calls his distinctive “visual vocabulary.”

In the late 1960s and early '70s, this vocabulary transformed Bearden's work through the production of hundreds of collage-based pieces. Many were made from photographs cut or torn from magazines and used to create vivid narratives of black life and black history, mostly on a small scale. Soon he would be building epic portraits through photostatic enlargement. (Before the age of xerographic reproduction, photostats used a camera to produce a large negative image of a smaller object on sensitized paper. The negative could then be photostatted again to produce a positive image.)

Bearden called this sequence of enlarged photostatic pieces *Projections*, which first appeared in a major exhibition at the Cor-

dier & Ekstrom Gallery in 1964. *Projections* was an immediate success, vaulting him to the forefront of contemporary artists in the United States and making him one of the best-known African American artists of his generation. Besides fine art, he now undertook graphic design—covers for *Time*, *Fortune*, and *TV Guide*—and public art commissions for Times Square, the New York City subway system, and the Berkeley, California, City Council chambers.

Bearden's art changed over time as he embraced motifs drawn from a wide array of sources, including Greek mythology and the vivid palette inspired by his new home in St. Martin. He continued to create using a variety of methods and materials—watercolors, pen and ink, fabrics and miscellaneous items, even bits of metal—with collage as his main process, in works he composed until shortly before his death in 1988.

Campbell's extraordinarily rich biography offers its readers many rewards. Nowhere here is the awkwardness of critics unfamiliar with the history of black art or who isolate it from its frames of reference or consider only how black artists ought to criticize race in America. Hers is a self-confident study of an artist's life in all its contexts.

The assurance of Campbell's narrative and the strength of her critical insights stem from the depth of her experience as an art historian and her leading roles at the Studio Museum in Harlem and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She also has the advantage of having known and corresponded with Bearden for years, even curating an exhibit, “Mysteries: Women in the Art of Romare Bearden,” in 1975. Campbell's proximity to Bearden allows her to capture his generosity as a colleague and mentor as well as his larger role in the art world. (She tells us that he urged her to apply for the directorship of the Studio Museum in Harlem and continued to encourage her as she helped transform it into a pioneering black arts institution.) Her thorough knowledge of his and his peers' work allows her to capture the larger settings in which so much of it was composed and received.

One example is her discussion of “Prevalence of Ritual,” which was a breakthrough for MOMA as well for Bearden. It was only the second retrospective that the museum mounted for a black artist. (The first, in 1937, was for the folk sculptor William Edmondson.) The exhibition helped bring Bearden's work to a wider audience, even though the curators also did it a disservice:

As Campbell notes, although throughout his career Bearden drew on motifs and visual strategies learned from his immersion in the history of art, MOMA showed only those pieces in which he focused on black life. Ignored were the ones inspired by Renaissance painters as well as his engaged depiction of poor and working-class people of all ethnic backgrounds. Thus, a complex body of work was narrowed down to its racial themes, as though a black artist's work could be seen and appreciated only if it was presented as clearly and recognizably black.

Nearly 50 years later, the impulse to constrict the work of black artists into the single task of representing black life has not subsided, for black as well as nonblack curators and audiences. Thankfully, Campbell's account of Bearden—and especially his study of art history, from Europe to Asia and Africa—helps to underscore the far wider range of themes and techniques that inspired his art. She shows him as a strikingly inappropriate artist for narrow-minded critique.

Bearden never renounced his identity as a black artist, even in those moments when he refused to show in racially exclusive exhibitions. Yet he also reworked a wide chronological range of European and African masterpieces, and his work was always inspired by Cubism's flatness. His use of photostatic reproduction was in itself evocative of a whole body of art and a tradition of artistic composition. He always balanced his visualization of black life with canonical influences, creating a many-layered art that cannot be reduced to one tradition alone.

Campbell writes in the spirit of *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present*, which Bearden and his friend Harry Henderson wrote and which was published in 1993. We learn of his collaborations with artists like the printmaker Robert Blackburn (who deserves a biography of his own) and writers like Derek Walcott and Ntozake Shange. We also learn what this profoundly intellectual painter thought about artists, art history, and the role of artists who are black Americans.

In this particular moment of need for more art critics of color, Campbell demonstrates the intellectual richness that comes from deep cultural and historical engagement. She can show Romare Bearden as an extraordinary 20th century modernist and, at the same time, discuss the networks of colleagues and the lifelong study that enriched his singular art. And she can do something else as well: offer a compelling portrait of the artist in a state of constant evolution. ■



WHY DID YOU VOTE?

Untangling the roots of 2016

by RYAN COOPER

Ever since Donald Trump attained the presidency with his signature combination of nativist xenophobia and half-baked economic populism, the leftward side of the political spectrum has argued furiously over the origins of his support. The typical debate frame thus far has been economic anxiety versus racism, with moderates stressing the latter and the left emphasizing both.

Identity Crisis, the new book by John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, attempts to settle this question once and for all. Like Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels's *Democracy for Realists*, the book argues that people do not vote out of economic self-interest. Instead, they vote in response

to things like race and religion—as was the case in 2016, when Trump supporters voted out of a sense that white Christians have lost ground in today's multicultural America. “Trump’s exploitation of divisive race, gender, religious, and ethnicity issues accounted for his win,” Jane Mayer wrote in *The New Yorker*, summarizing her understanding of the book. Paul Krugman said the book shows that “what distinguished Trump voters wasn’t financial hardship but ‘attitudes related to race and ethnicity.’”

Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck do not advance quite such a strong version of this thesis in their book. Despite their caveats, *Identity Crisis* does make the case that economic concerns played a far smaller role in the 2016 election than many have claimed. Trump’s support, the authors insist, stems primarily from an identity-based prejudice

Ryan Cooper is a national correspondent for The Week.

among white voters. While their evidence about the racism of many American voters appears indisputable, their attempts to discount the role economics plays both in this racism and in voting behavior in general are unconvincing. There is no question that Trump's rise is directly linked to his appalling racism, nativism, and xenophobia. It is rooted in a variety of economic factors as well—and acknowledging the role of both, not just one or the other, will be central to defeating the reactionary threat he poses in 2020.

First, the good parts of their argument: Skilled political scientists, Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck argue persuasively that the mainstream media failed horribly at portraying the basic choice in the 2016 election. Trump was unquestionably the more corrupt and scandal-plagued candidate, yet “there was more coverage of [Hillary Clinton's] scandals than there was of Trump's.” A careless lapse over e-mail security protocols while Clinton was at the State Department—not nothing, of course, but not remotely in the same league as Trump's alleged tax evasion, sexual assaults, defrauding students and contractors, or a half-dozen other potential scandals—became one of the most covered topics of the entire campaign.

Indeed, the attention paid to Clinton's scandals surrounding her e-mails and her family's foundation “not only was more extensive than coverage of Trump's scandals but arguably created a more coherent narrative,” they write. That's an important lesson about perspective for both big-shot political journalists and candidates wishing to avoid the same kind of media treatment that she received. Repetition and sustained coverage are central to public perception, and many news outlets are responsible for focusing so much of their coverage on Clinton's scandals but not on Trump's.

Even so, the authors develop a strong case that when the media did turn its focus on Trump, that hurt him politically as well. The role that the media played in influencing the election, the authors argue, likely cut both ways. So what *was* the tipping point, if it wasn't the media's coverage? For Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, the answer is racism. Using data from surveys conducted in 2011 and 2016, they show that support for Trump was strongly correlated with negative views of black and Muslim Americans that existed before the election. During the primaries, Trump far outstripped his Republican opponents among voters who

Identity Crisis

The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America

By John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck

Princeton University Press. 352 pp. \$29.95

previously expressed negative views of black people, immigrants, and Muslims.

This is vitally important and conclusive data that the American public cannot ignore. As recent events in El Paso, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere remind us, we live in a country with a deep undercurrent of violent racism. That fact must be squarely confronted and its long historical legacy rooted out. But this doesn't mean that the economic policies and growing inequality of the past 30 years did not also play a role in the 2016 election.

At times, Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck's own data seems to point to this. In a 2016 survey that they cite, Trump did about twice as well among those in the under-\$30,000 income bracket as Ted Cruz, but his margins decreased as incomes went up, and Trump did about three times as well among people who were convinced the economy and their personal finances were getting worse.

A defensible conclusion here would be that Trump's supporters included a number of conditional voters—say, the roughly 8 million people who voted for Barack Obama in 2012 but broke for Trump in 2016—who were likely motivated by economic reasons, among others, as well as committed Republicans. Instead, the authors flatly conclude that “assessments of the economy and one's personal finances did not appear to be the primary drivers of Trump's support.”

This isn't the only problem with their analysis. In fact, there is a deeper one. Their methodological individualism—the theoretical framework stipulating that political behavior is linked to individual circumstances—causes them to consider only the ways in which economic changes affect a single voter, not how they affect a community. “Whether white voters were concerned about their finances, about losing their job, about not making their rent or mortgage payment, or about not being able to pay for health care should have more strongly influenced their choice between Trump and Clinton,” the authors write.

The problem here is that direct pocket-book effects are not the only route by which someone's politics might be changed as a result of shifting economic conditions. For one thing, even if an individual is doing fine, that person's friends or family might not be.

More broadly, general economic malaise can make communities seem troubled and thus change a person's political views, even if his or her paychecks keep coming. Likewise, an economic crisis on the scale of the 2008 financial meltdown might discredit traditional politicians and policies and raise the stature of outsiders peddling unorthodox solutions. It might also drive people toward cultural prejudice, including a politics of tribalism and racism, in its wake.

Focusing on voting behavior alone in their study, Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck leave out almost all of the truly worst-off people in society—the chronically homeless, felons, people in extreme poverty, addicts—who rarely vote. (A prosperous middle-class community might have a population similar to one in a severe depression, but they will likely vote very differently.)

County-level studies provide decently strong evidence for the hypothesis that Trump's support in 2016 stemmed from these kinds of larger social effects related to economic change. Compared with Mitt Romney, Trump did much better in places with serious declines in manufacturing jobs, particularly in the Rust Belt. As one study found, “Counties in which life expectancy stagnated or declined saw a 10-percentage-point increase in the Republican vote share between 2008 and 2016.” Another study determined that Trump support was correlated with the “chronic use of prescription opioid drugs.” And in the 2018 midterms, an analysis by the Brookings Institution found that of the 20 poorest congressional districts, all but five went Republican.

Humans are inherently social creatures whose reasoning process always has a strong collective aspect. We do not vote simply out of economic self-interest; often, we also vote out of the perceived economic interest of our community. The point of this very book is that American politics is in a state of crisis precisely because people have abandoned democratic reason in favor of instinctive communal loyalty. And yet when it comes to collective behavior around economic factors, the authors suddenly embrace a Margaret Thatcher-style individualism. “Counties do not vote,” they write. “People do.”

There are still other problems with *Identity Crisis*. Suppose we grant, for the sake of argument, that Trump's support stems primarily from racial animus. Does this rule out the possibility that the racial animus itself may be fueled by economic problems? On the individual level, when times are hard, people can

resort—and often have—to bigotry and racial prejudice. In such circumstances, demagogic politicians may emerge to heighten and exploit those feelings, scapegoating minorities for economic troubles and stoking the underlying racism. (Note that the opinion surveys discussed earlier collected their data after the 2008 financial crisis.)

A recent paper by Nicholas Sambanis, Anna Schultz, and Elena Nikolova studying the effects of austerity-induced mass unemployment in Greece contends that they discovered just such a trend. “We find a strong relationship between job loss and decreased generalized solidarity,” the authors write. “We find evidence of in-group bias and the bias becomes more pronounced due to exposure to austerity policies.” Another paper by Thiemo Fetzer examining the United Kingdom found that support for the far-right UK Independence Party was “strongly and causally associated with an individual’s or an area’s exposure to austerity since 2010.” The authors of *Identity Crisis* bring up this angle briefly, noting that “when economic concerns are politically potent, the prism of identity is often present.” But this potentially fruitful line of inquiry goes almost completely unexplored. In their analysis, racism seemingly exists outside the social and economic forces that might give it strength and never plays its own role in bolstering a political or economic system.

There is also the internal dialectic of Republican Party politics. The GOP has long coupled its racist politics with a laissez-faire economic program calling for low taxes, free trade, and deregulation. The 2008 financial crisis hugely dented the credibility of such a policy, even among the right’s voting base, and so as the GOP’s economic policies have lost popularity, the party has, consciously or unconsciously, ramped up its racism and culture-war bigotry in order to compensate.

A similar pattern has been seen in much of the North Atlantic. A 2015 paper co-authored by Manuel Funke, Moritz Schularick, and Christoph Trebesch that examined 140 years of political history in 20 advanced countries (including more than 800 elections) found that financial crises are associated with a 30 percent rise, on average, in the vote share of extreme-right parties. It’s impossible, of course, to establish a perfect causal explanation for such a huge data set, but are we really to believe that every single one of those countries had a purely coincidental postcrisis outbreak of racism and extremism? The study’s authors certainly think otherwise, writing that these

crises likely fueled racist scapegoating: “Voters seem to be particularly attracted to the political rhetoric of the extreme right, which often attributes blame to minorities or foreigners.”

Indeed, with the most notable case from the past century—Nazi Germany—virtually every historian agrees that the desperate economic conditions after World War I and the 1929 crash played a key role in the rise of Adolf Hitler, for more or less the reasons articulated above. “It is extremely unlikely that Hitler would have become Reich Chancellor without the impact of the Great Depression,” the historian Ian Kershaw argued.

All of these considerations pose a powerful challenge to the argument in *Identity Crisis* that the economy had little to do with voting behavior in 2016. At one point, the authors even argue—contrary to one of the firmest rules in political science, that the party in power during an economic collapse gets swept out—that bad economic times could only benefit the Democrats:

Rising unemployment has historically favored the Democratic Party in presidential and gubernatorial elections, perhaps because Democrats are perceived as caring more about the issue of jobs and employment than do Republicans. If anything, then, the Great Recession should have driven the voters experiencing economic hardship to Obama and the Democratic Party.

Yes, perhaps if unemployment had been 100 percent on Election Day in 2010, the Democrats would have won every seat in Congress!

It remains a bit of a mystery why the authors of *Identity Crisis* are so fixated on trying to prove that there were not multiple factors that led to Trump’s election. No one is denying the roles that racism and the media played, but why can’t growing economic inequality and the difficult circumstances produced by the 2008 financial crisis have played a significant role as well? One reason may be that the broad liberal professional class—including much of academia—was heavily invested in Clinton’s candidacy and felt profoundly humiliated when she lost. Arguing that Trump won because of media malpractice and an embittered white America alleviates them of the need to do any other soul-searching. They do not have to ask whether the Democratic Party chose the wrong candidate or ran a poor campaign; they do not have to wonder if, by abandoning working-class

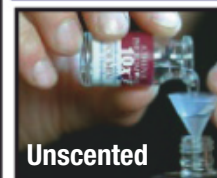
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Americans—white, black, and brown—over the last several decades, the Democrats have managed to turn voters away. Another reason may be the development of an anti-populist ideology within political science, as in the aforementioned *Democracy for Realists*, which argues that policy of any kind is almost totally irrelevant to electoral outcomes because voters are too ignorant and tribalist to understand how programs might benefit them personally.

Whatever the reason, books like *Identity Crisis* offer a potentially dangerous analysis of American politics, especially in the run-up to the 2020 election. At the end of their book, the authors raise the possibility of a continuing doom loop of identity resentment and counterresentment, with only a weak chance that human contact and better elite choices might oppose the trend. At no point do they consider the possibility that broadly beneficial economic policies might scramble the identity coalitions enough to create a sustainable Democratic majority.

Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck are certainly correct to say that social and cultural identity form a very important axis of political discussion, and they are right to highlight the venomous role that racism has played in American public life and in the 2016 election. But where they go wrong is in largely ruling out the way that economics can be an equally important factor in shaping voting behavior. Along with ethnic, religious, and racial identification, class can be one of the most meaningful motivators when it comes to political preferences, and it is one that cuts across other identities. In 2018, for example, Missourians voted two to one to block a union-busting measure passed by the state legislature, while Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill went on to lose her reelection bid.

Whatever the sources of the recent myopia among political scientists, it is very important for the Democratic coalition not to lose sight of the political value of progressive economic policy or the political danger of failing to deliver it in times of economic crisis. If we consider the outbreak of extreme-right politics around the world over the last decade—from Brazil and the United States to the European Union, Turkey, and beyond—it simply beggars belief to conclude that the worst financial crisis in 80 years and the badly botched response to it that followed were not somehow involved. There is a good book to be written about the complicated links between financial crises, bigotry, and racism. *Identity Crisis* is not it. ■



ON THEIR WAY

Megan Thee Stallion's and Jai Paul's two visions of summer

by BIJAN STEPHEN

This July was the warmest month in recorded history, nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the earth's 20th century average. Around the world, temperatures soared, permafrost melted, and people sweated. Closer to home, Megan Thee Stallion (government name: Megan Pete) declared it a "Hot Girl Summer"—her way of encouraging everyone, regardless of race, creed, or gender, to live life to the fullest, whatever that might mean for you. In her own tweeted words, "Being a Hot Girl is about being unapologetically YOU, having fun, being confident, living YOUR truth, being the life of the party etc," which feels unexpectedly

pure and wholesome in light of the worsening news around the globe. The term spread like wildfire in a drought-stricken forest. Suddenly it was on everyone's lips, from the actress Jada Pinkett Smith to the singer Miley Cyrus, who filmed herself twerking to one of Pete's songs.

The 24-year-old rapper is undoubtedly having one of the best summers of her life. Her latest mixtape, *Fever*, was released in May and reached No. 10 on *Billboard's* Top 200 chart; she's played at shows with artists like Meek Mill and Cardi B; she's used her newfound fame to organize "hottie beach cleanups," inviting fans to pick up trash with her as a way to promote awareness of

what humans are doing to the earth. “I’m about to get on my hot girl shit and start using less plastic,” Pete said in a live Instagram video before the cleanups, in response to a fan asking her if she could talk more about global warming. Real hot girls care about climate change.

Fever, on the other hand, is less about the impact that our actions have on others than it is about how we should live—which is to say it’s unapologetically about the pursuit of pleasure, the ways we take and find it. Which is probably why Pete’s tone is almost teacherly; she leads by example. She wants money, jewels, and suitors wrapped around her finger, and she wants her listeners to attain those things, too. “I don’t wanna talk / Meet me at the bank, show me what you really ’bout / Niggas ain’t real when the shit really count,” she raps, huskily, on “Realer,” *Fever*’s opening track.

Pete is a fantastic spitter, and her bars, complemented by her smooth alto voice, are playfully fluid. They’re well-constructed edifices, confidently placed. Also, she’s hilarious. On “Best You Ever Had,” a song about a happy, stable relationship, Pete’s sly humor comes front and center. “I be actin’ up right before he come to see me / He be like, ‘Why you always tripping for no reason?’ / Told him, ‘Cause you put it on me better when you’re mad’ / Hand around my neck, hit it hard from the back, yeah,” Pete jokes.

She’s from Houston, one of the cradles of American hip-hop. The region birthed stars like UGK, Pimp C, and Slim Thug, along with a number of styles, chopped and screwed among them. Pete clearly knows her elders, because her music feels very of the city: The beats are pure trap and the lyrics wonderfully filthy. “I don’t feel like we ever really had a female rapper come from Houston or Texas and shut shit down,” Pete told *Rolling Stone* in March. “So that’s where I’m coming from with it.” Hot girl shit.

Pete showcased all of these tendencies—toward cash and love and acclaim—on her 2018 EP *Tina Snow*, which featured the breakout track “Big Ole Freak,” a song that exemplifies the Megan Thee Stallion ethos. It’s about two people as obsessed with each other as they are with playing games. “We never show up together, but I text him when I’m ready to go / Ay, I had a couple of shots at the bar / I’m finna play with that dick in the car / I got him swervin’ and breakin’ the law / These windows tinted so nobody saw,” goes the first verse. Perhaps unconventional, never unrelatable.

Jai Paul, on the other hand, has made a home in the unconventional, in the gap between pop and what you might call the music of the spheres—something surprising and nearly celestial.

But for the last six years, the biggest story about Paul has been his disappearance. After releasing a pair of legendary singles—“BTSTU” and “jasmine (demo)” —in 2011 and 2012, respectively, the reclusive artist melted away to work on an album. The songs were instantly everywhere, or at least it seemed that way; it felt as if Paul had leveled a critique at pop just by the way he manifestly thought of the genre. “BTSTU” and “jasmine (demo)” sounded like nothing else, as though they were beamed in from an alternate dimension where popular music could be experimental, glitchy, and unvarnished.

That unfinished album, however, was illegally leaked in 2013 by a person or persons unknown and put up for sale on Bandcamp. Paul didn’t release anything else until this past June, when he dropped another pair of singles, “Do You Love Her Now” and “He.” Those new singles turned out to be just the B side to a full LP, *Leak 04-13 (Bait Ones)*—an official release, by XL Recordings, of the album that was leaked six years earlier.

“Do You Love Her Now” and “He” are not, strictly speaking, new. According to a letter that Paul wrote to accompany the new album, they’re both tracks that were in progress at the time of the leak, although they don’t really sound that way. “Do You Love Her Now” winds itself around a strummed bass chord in a pattern that’s echoed by the bass kick, and Paul indulges in melodic flights while a guitar sparkles nearby.

“He,” in contrast, sounds like an ’80s jam. It’s a midtempo, synth-driven love ballad. “I think about the time / It’s heavy on my mind / Still rowing in the dark / As the mountain climbs, because / All I can think about is I’ve been there / Trying to make sense of it,” he sings with feeling. Both songs are a reminder of why he was so electrifying in the first place: His compositions are eclectic and melodically advanced and sound like absolutely nothing else. They point in the direction that he might have taken had he not been derailed.

In the letter to his fans, Paul reveals that the leak prompted “a breakdown of sorts,” after which he sought help and then founded an institute to support musicians. (It also releases music from like-minded artists.) Discussing the experience is clearly

still painful for him. “It’s completely surreal to me that this music will now exist officially in this form, unfinished, and even sequenced by the people who leaked it!” he writes.

Yet even in this diminished form (because many of its samples couldn’t be cleared), *Leak 04-13 (Bait Ones)* is a triumph. At the time of the leak, many critics put it on their best-of-the-year lists. *Pitchfork* hailed it as one of the 100 best albums of the decade. While we’ll never know exactly how Paul intended his debut album to sound, the one we have is stunning nonetheless.

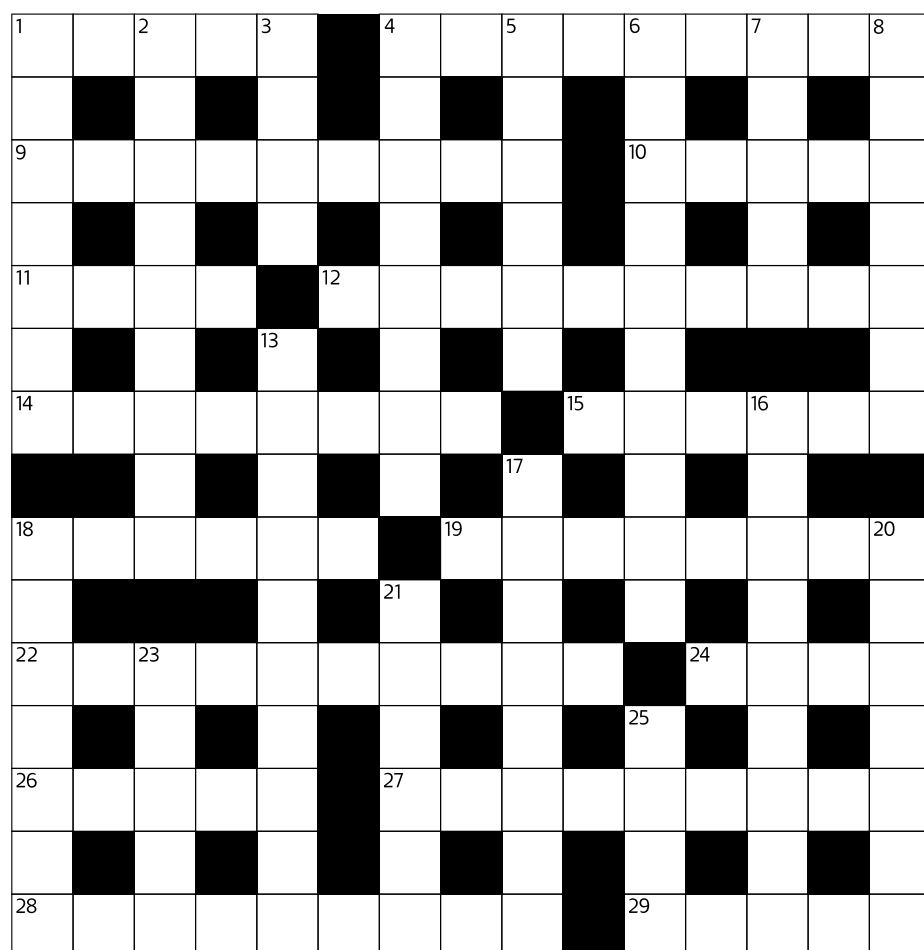
From the second track, “Str8 Outta Mumbai,” it’s clear that Paul’s distinctive style—fuzzed-out synths, chattering percussion, vocals almost buried in the mix, and a highly eclectic approach to sampling—is still light-years ahead of his pop-music peers, and the same can be said for his instincts. The question that recurs: What would pop sound like if Paul hadn’t taken his hiatus? Would it be anything like the moonstruck, spiky, yearning songs on this album? I can only wonder, even though those first two singles have changed the course of the genre. (It was no huge surprise that “BTSTU” was later sampled by Beyoncé and Drake.) The leaks have influenced everyone from Mura Masa to Nao, artists who are pushing against the popular conception of popular music.

If *Fever* is daytime music, then *Leak 04-13 (Bait Ones)* is a soundtrack for the dead space in a night out; it keeps the beat pounding. Lately I’ve found myself playing both, at the party and the party after that. It’s a rare thing when two such diametrically opposed albums share so much. In the past few weeks, I’ve found myself juxtaposing them in my own listening. Perhaps that’s just because it’s summer and these are hot-weather albums, but I think it goes deeper than that. These records are engineered for pleasure, to emulate the kind of heat that, in the middle of the season, dissipates only at night. For Megan Thee Stallion, it’s right there in the title. After all, you have a fever when your body is hotter than normal.

The word also describes a specific nervous excitement, the same kind you’d find in, say, a Jai Paul track. For him, the pleasure is in the song-making process itself. The tracks on *Leak 04-13 (Bait Ones)* feel woosily in love with themselves. They’re a document of a long-past moment in time when a leak hadn’t happened yet and they were still on their way to the world. ■

Puzzle No. 3507

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

- 1 Heard location makes sense (5)
 4 Vessels with a hint of serious trouble try to return filled with oxygen (9)
 9 Escape from reef? (5,4)
 10 Take too much in Asian politician's home (5)
 11 Discover logical argument that might go over your head (4)
 12 Irregular Orange County electronics firm brought back small electronic grid (10)
 14 Start of sexual relations, leading to thoughtless eruption on the body (4,4)
 15,18, 5D, and 21D Weak theater delivery person entered, shuffling six letters (6,6,6,4,2)
 18 See 15
 19 Possibly cold case lost in translation (8)
 22 Weight means I'm left with broken cane (10)
 24 Scandalous data provides cover for government agency (4)
 26 Pronounce vegetable as measure of fineness (5)

- 27 Weaving rug behind place for tartan (9)
 28 Shady, backward lair—it assumes an unpleasant look (4-5)
 29 Cook in Silicon Valley: “I would be shy” (5)

DOWN

- 1 Rubs parts repeatedly in surrounding areas (7)
 2 Like many a calendar copy held up by colossus, for the most part (9)
 3 Gate made of processed teak (4)
 4 Grant's boosted employment in New York city (8)
 5 See 15
 6 Raise surprise tailless reptile with second-rate snack food (6,4)
 7 Fruit from a company health worker (5)
 8 Varnish pouch outside bad spot (7)
 13 Moreno appears amid soft Debussy work in recession before a ceremony (10)
 16 Eddy Sahl's in retreat, following West London's leader (9)
 17 Cinderella, for example, hid gold deviously around chimney's opening (8)
 18 Insect's game (7)
 20 Mom's in the outhouse, drunk (7)
 21 See 15
 23 Bag of sheer stockings? (5)
 25 Oddly ambient support (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3506

ACROSS 1 SA(ULBE)LLOW (*blue anag.*)
 6 HAL + F 10 [h]EMP + TIER
 11 T(AUNTED) 12 K(V)ETCH
 13 CON + JUROR 14 2 defs. 16 BAG + EL
 18 HO + HUM 20 anag. 22 D(O)UB + LOON 24 AL(UM + N)I 26 VA + GUEST
 27 EXCE(R)PT 28 2 defs.
 29 STEP-LAD + DER

DOWN 1 S(PEAK)OFT + HE + DEVIL (rev.) 2 UMP + TEE(N)TH 3 BRIO + CHE 4 anag. 5 anag. 7 A + F + TER[m]
 8 FEDER(ALREGIST)ER (*liar gets anag.*)
 9 PUN + JAB 15 TIT + FORT + AT
 17 GLI[b] + MME + RED 19 rev. hidden
 21 FELI (anag.) + CIA 23 [s]-URGE-S 35 rev.



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