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# SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 VOL. 21 NO. 1



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# Money for War

## U.S. arms sales soar and bipartisan militarism thrives amid COVID-19 pandemic

BY KENNY STANCIL

The United States sold more than \$175 billion in military equipment to foreign governments in the fiscal year that ended September 30, Pentagon and State Department officials announced Friday—a 2.8 percent increase compared to 2019, when weapons exports totaled just over \$170 billion.

The latest figures on arms transfers were released one day before President Donald Trump said that “military offense...is the most important thing a president can do,” during his meandering speech at the Republican Party’s Saturday night rally on behalf of Senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue of Georgia who are facing Democratic candidates Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, respectively, in runoff elections next month that will determine which party controls the U.S. Senate.

Although he spent most of the evening repeating unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud in the November election and baselessly asserting that Democrats will “cheat” again, Trump on Saturday still encouraged rallygoers to support the two GOP lawmakers at

the polls on January 5 to avenge his loss in the “rigged” presidential contest.

“At stake in this election is control of the U.S. Senate and that really means control of this country,” the president said. “The voters of Georgia will determine which party runs every committee, writes every piece of legislation, controls every single taxpayer dollar.”

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**“That we can find the money for war but not for coronavirus relief exposes the moral rot at the center of U.S. politics...”**

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Trump’s rationale for backing Loeffler and Perdue came in the form of a warning: “If the radical Democrats...get power, they will...ram through the most extreme left-wing agenda ever conceived while at the same time, destroying our military through a lack of funding.”

Whereas Trump portrayed congressional Democrats as eager to pursue “draconian military cuts,” journalist Sarah Lazare argued last week that “the annual approval of the gargantuan U.S. military budget,” which she called “one of the most reliable rituals in Congress... is so ordinary and overwhelmingly bipartisan, it’s barely considered newsworthy.”

The U.S. “...has by far the biggest military budget on the planet, spending more than the next ten countries combined,” Lazare continued. “There is no indication that U.S. lawmakers plan to reverse this trend any time soon: For six consecutive years the military budget has either increased or stayed roughly the same, taking inflation into account. As the National Priorities Project pointed out in June, the military budget in 2019 accounted for 53 percent of the federal discretionary budget.”

While millions of the country’s working-class households—battered by the Covid-19 pandemic and corresponding economic crisis—await a new relief package that ameliorates widespread hardship, “Congress had no problem passing legislation to continue U.S. military violence,” Lazare added.

She pointed out that the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed on July 23 in a vote of 86–14, while the House version was approved on July 21 by a margin of 295–125. The NDAA was subsequently approved last week by both chambers of Congress.

Lazare wrote that while it is “entirely routine at this point, it’s useful to highlight on the eve of yet another massive Pentagon handout how the budget for war could instead go toward life-preserving social goods.”

“That we can find the money for war but not for coronavirus relief exposes the moral rot at the center of U.S. politics, a rot that must be dug out and expunged if we are to get through this crisis,” she added.

—Common Dreams, December 6, 2020

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/12/06/money-war-us-arms-sales-soar-and-bipartisan-militarism-thrives-amid-covid-19>



U.S. Air Force F-16 Thunderbirds fly in formation at the Thunderbirds Airshow in Malaysian Air Force Base on October 3, 2009 in Subang, Malaysia. (Shutterstock)

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## Finding the Road to Utopia

Through the death throes of capitalism

By BONNIE WEINSTEIN

To say the whole world is in crisis is not an exaggeration, it is a statement of fact. Not only are we on the verge of a world-ending environmental crisis, we are in a worldwide pandemic under a system of vast economic and social inequality. Working people across the globe are being squeezed by the same capitalist austerity program that is being carried out in every country, except for Cuba, whose austerity is forced upon them by U.S. government sanctions.

Every decision that is made by world capitalist rulers is made to increase their own wealth at the expense of workers and the environment—nothing to them is sacred except themselves and their private wealth.

They are parasites who have outgrown their hosts and there are no other hosts but us—the working class. So, they will continue to feed off of us as long as we let them get away with it. But it doesn't have to continue. We do

have the power to stop this downward-spiral back into barbarism or extinction. We have the power to create a paradise on earth for everyone if we unite together to create a socialist world of equality and justice for all.

### Obscene wealth

According to a November 18, 2020 article from *Common Dreams* by Brett Wilkins titled, “Billionaire Bonanza Continues”<sup>1</sup> which appears in this issue:

“Ten billionaire owners of ‘Delinquent Dozen’ companies have a combined worth of \$433 billion. Since March 18, their combined personal wealth has ballooned by \$127.5 billion, a 42 percent increase.”

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### We get nothing but air without the need to pay for it.

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To underscore that fundamental inequality in the age of COVID-19, a December 7, 2020 article in the *New York Times* titled, “Want Vaccines Fast? Suspend Intellectual Property Rights” by Achal Prabhala, Arjun Jayadev and Dean Baker about the costs of developing the Moderna vaccine for COVID-19 points out:

“...the novel technology at the heart of the Moderna vaccine...was developed partly by the National Institutes of Health using U.S. federal funds. Moderna then received a total of some \$2.5 billion in taxpayer money for research support and as preorders for vaccines; by the company’s own admission, the \$1 billion contribution it received for research covered 100 percent of those costs.”

In other words, we, the working class, paid lock, stock and barrel for the development of that vaccine—and all the others coming down the line. And Moderna, and all the other pharmaceutical corporations which stand to earn billions from the sale of the vaccines, pay nothing! Then they will sell those vaccines back to the government who will pay for the so-called “free vaccines” with our tax dollars. So, we workers already have paid twice for the vaccines—not counting the cost of our own health insurance—if we’re lucky enough to have it.

### And what is the reward for our sacrifice?

As one example of our sacrifice, according to a December 6, 2020 *New York Times* article by Christina Goldbaum and Will Wright titled, “‘Existential Peril’: Mass Transit Faces Huge Service Cuts Across U.S.” about drastic cutbacks in public transportation across the U.S. due to COVID-19:

“Around 2.8 million American workers in essential industries like healthcare, grocery stores and pharmacies used public transit to get to work in 2018, according to an analysis of census data by the TransitCenter. That was 36 percent of all transit commuters in the U.S. work force that year, the group said. ‘We have been the ones that have kept the economy of this country afloat because we do not have the luxury to work from home,’ said Mayra Romero, 43, a restaurant worker in Boston who travels by bus from her home in nearby Chelsea, Mass. ‘We have been the ones who have been risking our lives and exposing ourselves.’”



William Dudley ‘Big Bill’ Haywood

In other words, walk, bike or skate to work this winter or starve and be homeless!

### **You haven't seen anything yet!**

To point out another tragic example of the current social crisis, our children no longer have viable public education.

With schools shut down, very few children are able to learn completely on their own. Perhaps if they had the educational material at their fingertips, highly educated parents or free tutors available on a moment's notice, and, of course, secure housing and enough food—children would be able to succeed and learn virtually. But now, they are on their own without even housing, or food security. They aren't even able to play with each other in person. And many have no access to computers or the Internet.

Their parents are struggling just to pay the rent, the gas and electricity bill, the water bill, the garbage bill—let alone pay for health insurance, the Internet and private tutoring for their kids. And even though they may still be working at “essential” low-paying jobs or collecting temporary unemployment insurance—that income has never been enough to survive on.

And, of course, most workers can't afford to pay for the things they need when they need them, so they must pay for them using high-interest credit cards, leaving them in lifelong debt.

### **All calamities under capitalism are weaponized**

No matter what catastrophe befalls the world, the working class will be held responsible and will have to pay for it—be it climate related disasters, pandemics, wars—the capitalist class will find a way to make us pay while they rake in the profits. We get nothing but air without the need to pay for it.

Economic inequality is the most powerful weapon they have to control us—to keep us begging for handouts instead of demanding what is rightfully ours—all the wealth we work to create.

We pay for environmental cleanup, keeping up the infrastructure, the bank bailouts, the pharmaceutical industry bailouts, the bonuses for corporate executives and shareholders. We pay the bill to keep the White House in silks and marble.

Workers do the work and pay the taxes that pay the bills for the capitalists—the capitalists keep all the profits.

### **Capitalism can't make things better for workers**

Capitalism can no longer support even a small, well-paid working class. Fewer and fewer workers are earning livable “union wages” or higher-paid professional and technical salaries. The money is flowing up, not trickling down. And now, with COVID-19, we are experiencing mass unemployment.

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## **Workers do the work and pay the taxes that pay the bills for the capitalists—the capitalists keep all the profits.**

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The capitalist politicians and their media, while they may acknowledge the growing environmental crisis—the pan-

demic, racism, sexism and economic inequality—never take responsibility for it. In fact, they blame us for it—we drive too much, we want nice clothes, new cars, cell phones, Internet service—things that make us comfortable. What nerve!

We are bombarded every day with the message from the capitalist mass media that we are lazy, ignorant and unworthy—they tell us that *we* are the greedy ones for wanting even the tiniest fraction of what the capitalists have!

### **Making the connections**

It is clear that certain realizations are beginning to hit home to workers everywhere. Our economic system is unjust. Our social system is racist to its very core. Our wars are unjust and catastrophic to innocent people and to our environment.

### **The power of the working class**

William Dudley “Big Bill” Haywood (1869-1928), a founding member and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World and a member of the executive committee of the Socialist Party of America, famously said, “If the workers are organized, all they have to do is to put their hands in their pockets and they have got the capitalist class whipped.”

This is the power of the working class. We have the power not only to stop



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work, but fundamentally, with the unity and solidarity of the whole working class acting together, we have the power to take the very means of production out of capitalist hands, and redistribute all that wealth to those who created it, with our intellect, sweat, tears and blood.

By democratically taking control of the means of production we can produce the highest quality goods built to last as long as possible and available free to all, instead of designing them to break down so they must be constantly replaced. Producing quality goods will ensure that we are not wasting precious resources on creating future junk to pollute the planet with.

We even have the power to stop war. Through unity and solidarity of action in our own interests, we can convince

the ranks of the military—our sons and daughters—to stand by our side, to lay down their arms and help to transform the world from one devoted to war to one devoted to creating an abundant, peaceful, socialist world in the best interest of all life on earth.

### Foundation of a materialist utopia

“A utopia is an imagined community or society that possesses highly desirable or nearly perfect qualities for its citizens.”<sup>2</sup>

Marx and Engels defined utopian socialism as idealism in contrast to scientific socialism<sup>3</sup> which is based upon the materialist conception of history—the ability of the working class to transform the basic economic structure of society to meet the needs and wants of all—not just an imaginary paradise.<sup>4</sup>

I see utopia as a democratically organized, worker-powered construction of a near perfect world—an economic system of production devoted to satisfying the needs and wants of all instead of private profits for the few—a scientific, materialist and achievable socialist utopia.

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1 “Billionaire Bonanza Continues as Workers Pounded by Pandemic, Recession and GOP Relief Refusal,” By Brett Wilkins, November 18, 2020

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/11/18/billionaire-bonanza-continues-workers-pounded-pandemic-recession-and-gop-relief>

2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia>

3 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism:\\_Utopian\\_and\\_Scientific](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism:_Utopian_and_Scientific)

4 See “The ABCs of Dialectics,” by John Blackburn in this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

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## The ABCs of Dialectics

BY JOHN BLACKBURN

Leon Trotsky compared formal logic to dialectical logic as a still photograph to a movie. A photograph can provide a myriad of information about a particular situation as it was in the instant it was taken but that image is only one moment in a sequence of events. The photo doesn't tell us what has gone before, and we can only guess what happened next. A movie can show us the narrative sequence leading to that scene and beyond.

Marxists pay homage to formal logic and recognize it is necessary for all of us as we deal with the world in our domestic lives, work and to research in every branch of science.

A = A,

A is not = B

All of our systems of classification in every branch of study from astronomy to zoology and library book cataloguing employ these basic rules of logic. Humanity owes a great debt to Aristotle

(384-322 BC) who first identified the laws of logic over two millennia ago, that we employ constantly today.

However close inspection of every phenomenon in the natural world and human society reveals that the one constant in the universe is change.

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**...everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things...**

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A is not A forever.

“In nature nothing remains constant. Everything is in a perpetual state of transformation, motion, and change. However, we discover that nothing simply surges up out of nothing without having antecedents that existed before. Likewise, nothing ever disappears without a trace, in the sense that it gives rise to absolutely nothing existing at later times.

This general characteristic of the world can be expressed in terms of a principle which summarizes an enormous domain of different kinds of experience and which has never yet been contradicted in any observation or experiment, scientific or otherwise; namely, everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things” —quantum physicist and Marxist philosopher David Bohm.

In that sentence Bohm has summarized the essence of dialectical materialism.

Marx and Engels considered all of the early philosophers, particularly Aristotle, to be instinctive dialecticians but those predecessors did not have sufficient scientific knowledge to understand the motive forces of change. They lived in a world where the established view was that all change resulted from the behavior of capricious gods and other supernatural beings. Socrates (c470-399BC) would be condemned to death for suggesting that his students question that presumption. It would

take the accumulated experience of more than 2000 years of developments in society and science to reveal the forces driving the dialectical phenomena in the material world.

When we wish to investigate nature in more detail or over time it soon becomes clear that everything is changing so that the logic of  $A = A$  no longer applies.

$A = A$  and to non- $A$  at the same time.

$A$  is becoming into  $B$ .

It is this contradiction to formal logic which is at the heart of dialectical logic.

This is the law of “the unity of opposites.”

Everything is at once itself and in the process of becoming something else.

The changes in the natural world are not beyond human understanding. They have characteristics and patterns which are recognized and classified into the laws of science. It was the German philosopher, Georg Frederick Hegel (1770-1831) who, basing his studies on 2000 years of philosophical speculation, scientific progress and influenced by the revolutionary political climate during his young life who identified the general laws of dialectics that are in operation everywhere in nature and society. (Warning: Hegel is not an easy read.)

For Hegel, all of nature was a manifestation of the original “notion” or “Absolute Idea” which finds itself through progressive development in the material world to result in absolute self-knowledge. Hegel was an idealist. For him the idea came first and material reality its product and means of self-realization. For materialist Marxists the external world is primary, and our thinking is the product of the activity of our brains absorbing through our senses, integrating, processing, analyzing and reflecting on the information it is receiving. Dialectical thinking is derived from the dialectical nature of reality.

We think using the principles of formal logic as they are true most of the time and are necessary and suffi-

cient for many activities. But nature is not static and other methods of thinking are needed to understand how and why changes occur. That method is dialectical materialism.

It is necessary to start by considering how we obtain and verify our knowledge. Marx and Engels solved this issue in philosophy by recognizing that the source and confirmation of knowledge is human social practice. In the process of carrying out the tasks necessary to live, humans have always acted collectively whether it be as hunter gatherers or in modern high-tech industries. Knowledge of the world is obtained collectively through the senses of individuals, but humans have always lived in social groups so that knowledge and practical techniques have always been shared communal products, transmitted down generations and preserved collectively.

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**“The laws of logic are  
the reflections of the  
objective in the  
subjective consciousness  
of man.”**

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Marxists start with the view that our knowledge of the material world is fairly accurate. Scientific research and practical experience are continually expanding and refining our knowledge and deepening our understanding of every aspect of nature. In just over two centuries our knowledge of the universe, its origin, history and future developments have been elucidated in considerable detail from the detailed internal structure of the atom back to the beginning of time with the Big Bang. We know the evolution of our solar system and its context in the Milky Way galaxy and how our own planet has changed over the past 4.5 billion years has left evidence that has been unraveled by science charting the universe as it has evolved in 13.7 billion years.

In September 2020 after a four-year mission a human made satellite collected material from the surface of an asteroid, named Bennu with a diameter of 500m, 200 million miles from Earth traveling at more than 100,000-km-per-hour. Having orbited, photographed and mapped Bennu, an arm projected from the satellite collected material from its surface and is returning with it to Earth for analysis. This was a massive collective human undertaking and a monumental tribute to our knowledge of the universe, our engineering and mathematical prowess.

### **Evidence of dialectics**

Wherever we look in nature, history, sociology and even our daily lives we will find evidence of the laws of dialectics that Hegel systematized in his “Logic.” It is knowing what to look for.

As a trainee microbiologist I learned to use the compound microscope. My first experience was overwhelming and exciting as I looked into a world I didn’t know existed. I had to learn how to set up the microscope and to focus on specimens. With years of experience, I learned to identify different microorganisms, hundreds of different cell types and to distinguish healthy from diseased tissues. Electron microscopy would lead me to recognize intra-cellular structures, organelles and viruses.

So, too, with dialectics. Once the basic laws are known we can recognize them in operation wherever we find them and with practice, our skills as with any activity will improve and be refined.

“The dialectics of things produces the dialectics of ideas not *vice versa*.” Lenin taught “The laws of logic are the reflections of the objective in the subjective consciousness of man.”

Trotsky warned of this too:

“You can’t just foist dialectics on facts but must derive it from the facts, from their nature and their development...”

We cannot impose dialectics on nature or science or any field of investigation—they are either there or they are not. Yet we find dialectics wherever there is change. However, once we are familiar with dialectics and science, we realize that dialectics are the logic of evolution.

### Dialectics and the triad

The concept of dialectics goes back to Plato (437-327 BC) where contradictory points of view are presented in a debate. We know of Socrates views only through Plato where he presented debates between Socrates and opponents in a backwards and forwards exchange of opinions. As a result of this dialectical debate views change and a deeper level of understanding of philosophy will emerge.

Hegel knew that the dialectical method was an essential to philosophy, but that Plato's ideas were insufficient. The opposites presented in a dialectical debate were not mutually exclusive but facets of the same thing, that contradiction was necessary and when resolved, a higher level of understanding is reached. For Marx and Engels,

the contradictions in ideas have their origin in the material world which is ever changing. The driving force of those changes are the real internal contradictory forces active in all things including nature and society.

Dialectics is frequently illustrated in the form of a general triad. Thesis + antithesis = synthesis.

A useful but simplistic example is:

Sodium—a highly reactive metal + chlorine—a poisonous gas together forms sodium chloride (common salt) an essential for life.

(The triad formula was never used by Hegel and I have not come across it in Marx or Engels either.)

This example can be useful as an introduction to the concept of the unity of opposites generating something qualitatively new.

### Contradiction

Contradiction or the “unity of opposites” is the fundamental motive force of all change.

The Big Bang first produced light (electromagnetic radiation) which has

no mass but has the properties of a particle and a wave and all physical matter from atoms to galaxies are products of light. Energy and matter—two opposites—are interchangeable in the natural world. ( $E=Mc^2$ )

From the simple to the highly complex from the inner workings of the atom to the expanding cosmos, to detailed investigations of life's processes inside organisms, the interactions between opposing forces and phenomenon are universal.

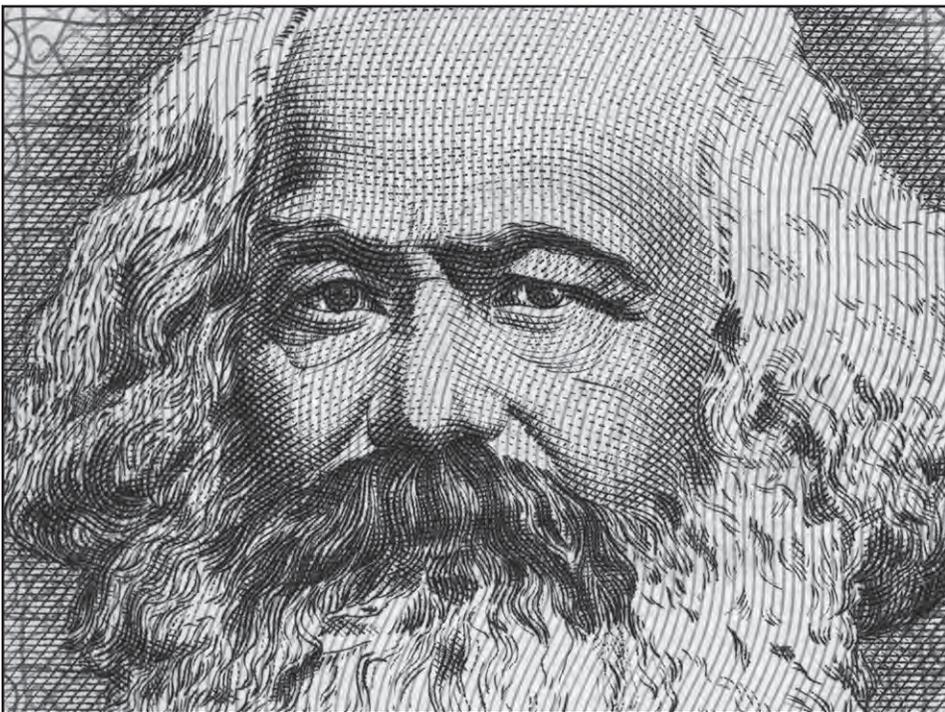
The components of the nucleus of an atom are massless electromagnetic radiation “condensed” into subatomic particles and some such as the Higgs boson acquire mass.

The unity of the positively charge nucleus with the negatively charged electron is the fundamental building block of all chemical matter while the exchange and sharing of electrons between atoms is the principal mechanism of chemistry.

A star is a dynamic equilibrium between gravity and the thermonuclear reactions at its core where hydrogen is being fused to form helium.

Eventually the hydrogen fuel will run out and the star will implode, then explode sending debris containing all the chemical elements of the periodic table up to iron into space. The dying stars create all of the chemical elements necessary to make planets like ours and water the most abundant chemical compound in the universe. From some combination of these inorganic materials life will emerge on Earth and from unconscious chemical matter eventually a combination will produce consciousness and the ability to reflect on the dialectics of its own nature.

Consider the chicken embryo developing within its shell of inorganic calcium compounds. Absorbing the nutrients from the yolk the embryos' cells multiply transforming the energy and nutrients into internal organs and limbs—the non-living yolk is trans-



Karl Marx portrait on East German 100 mark (1975) banknote. (Shutterstock)

formed into a live chick. Eventually the chick breaks free from the confinement of the shell to a qualitatively new life. If it continues to be fed, the chick's baby feathers will be replaced by adult ones which may allow the gravity bound bird to fly. In time, if the bird is fortunate to live to sexual maturity and find a mate, it will contribute to the next generation. It will change from being a dependent to being independent then, a parent. At some point in this seemingly repeated cycle of life, some of this successful line of birds will produce an egg that hatches to release a type of bird that is qualitatively different from its ancestors and, if able to reproduce, will be the first generation of a new species. (The egg came before the chicken.)

Whenever we investigate any natural phenomenon, we discover that nothing is permanent. Some changes are imperceptibly slow to our senses, on our human time scale—the Scottish Highlands were as high as Everest (8,828 meters) 600 million years ago but Ben Nevis the highest has been reduced to 1345 meters. Other processes we can watch, monitor and sometimes control such as gardening, cooking and scientific experiments. Yet others are so fast that all they leave is the trace of their having been, such as the identification of the Higgs boson.

Close examination of a group of A shows that all As are not identical. In microscopic examination no two microorganisms or cells or viruses are identical, yet we can classify them. For expediency and practicality these negligible differences are usually ignored while the quantity may be the most significant factor. The trained eye of a hematologist however can examine a specimen of blood in the microscope, recognize minuscule but significant differences in cells and so, can detect and diagnose leukemias or anemias. In these cases, A is not A with an expert's close inspection and that may be a matter of life and death.

When we investigate chemical composition of individual living cells, we

discover that they contain not only organic molecules such as DNA, proteins and fats but inorganic chemicals such as sodium, potassium, chlorine and is overwhelmingly water. It is the constant movement of materials into and out of the cells and the constant regeneration of the internal organic structures that are the essential activities of life. Life is the product of the unity of opposites, the organic and the inorganic. Everything that lives will eventually die but that is not an event, it is a process, and not the end to the story. Corpses are food for a multitude of organisms from the microbial to the carrion eaters.

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**Life is the product  
of the unity of opposites,  
the organic and  
the inorganic.**

---

All living things inhabit an environment which includes other living beings. Whether it be in a pond, or inside a human body, every living cell is in a community and in communication with many others. In the pond there is a lot of eating. There are carbohydrate producing plants which become food for herbivores who in turn become prey to carnivores who are themselves prey to other carnivores and parasites. All living organisms produce waste which becomes food for other life forms.

The ecology of the pond is determined by a lot of dialectical processes but above all by the essential dialectics of life and death.

Within the bodies of every living multicellular organism there are similar dialectical processes at work—life and death, growth and decay. In the course of living every body is in a constant state of change. Millions of cells are dying while others are being generated every second of our life. While the body is growing by the production of

new cells others are being induced to commit suicide (apoptosis) by specialized cells sculpting each tissue and organ into the form that will carry out a particular function such as liver, skin, brain or skeleton.

Reaching maturity for every organism is the combination of cell multiplication, differentiation and destruction. In humans, before we have reached sexual maturity, the processes of degeneration and ageing have already begun.

When we examine other phenomena that are presented as polar opposites by formal logic, we see that they too are inseparably linked.

**Necessity and chance**

That you are reading this means that you necessarily have an uninterrupted ancestry that goes back some 3.5 billion years to LUCA the common ancestor of all life on Earth. In that period countless trillions of other organisms have died, many of them to feed our ancestors each of whom survived long enough to produce descendants. Most of the species that ever lived are now extinct. It is the accumulated chance survivals through the immediate trials of life and five mass extinctions that were necessary for you and I to be here.

In sexual reproduction a sperm makes a chance encounter with a receptive egg as the necessary event. Two haploid cells with different ancestry (usually) combine their genetic material DNA to produce a unique individual. The DNA in each of the gametes is itself the product of the random shuffling of the genetic material each parent has inherited from their parents in such a way that unless cloned every individual human has a unique genetic profile. This process has been necessary for every one of us but there have been a myriad of chance events that lead to the evolution of humans and to each of us as living individuals.

A dandelion seed-head releases 100s of new seeds into the air that may travel

for many miles. Most will not survive to germinate but by chance a few will and grow to maturity be fertilized (not an absolute with all dandelions) by a chance visiting pollinator—bee, a butterfly or a beetle and give rise to another generation of seeds. It may be the repetition of a seemingly endless cycle, but detailed investigation will show that gene shuffling means each seed is a unique individual. Some from each generation have to survive the hazards of natural selection or the species will become extinct. In time this seemingly random process will reveal the effects of natural selection. There are over 200 species of dandelions which have evolved from a common ancestor, each with a unique genetic profile, morphology and ecological niche all formed by chance mutations in their DNA together and selected by the opportunities and challenges of the world. The fossil record shows innumerable plant and animal species that are now extinct but the vacancies they left were soon filled often by unrelated organisms.

One species' demise is an opportunity for others.

### Cause and effect

Cause and effect are inseparably linked in every event in nature. Every new effect produces a change in its environment—it has become the cause of further changes.

In all chemical reactions as the product accumulates it becomes a break on its own production, which is referred to as negative feedback. The living body is dependent on an infinite series of regulator mechanisms that control the internal environment of the body and maintain it despite both external and internal challenges. These mechanisms known collectively as homeostasis all operate by signals that affect the activity of cells and organs. The consequences of the actions are reported back so that the effect is now a new cause. This results in a dynamic equilibrium being established which maintains the body's

essential functions through internal disease and injury. These have limits beyond which is death.

I will concentrate on one of the pairings of formal logic<sup>1</sup>—the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*.

The first point to make is that quality and quantity are inseparable, everything is both of these at the same time which is a dialectical relationship. In mathematics there are abstract quantities ( $x$  and  $z$ ) but in the real world it is quantities of material things (qualities) that we work with—one liter of milk, five apples, two kilos of sugar. Even a single item (quality) has some volume, weight and other measurable (quantifiable) characteristics.

In nature quantity can profoundly affect quality. The example used by Engels of the Periodic Table, which was in its infancy in his day, has been confirmed with every element discovered or manufactured in the lab. The addition of a proton to the nucleus of an atom changes it into a different element.

In biology a myriad of species of inorganic ions—atoms that have gained or lost an electron—have an essential role in every aspect of living processes within cells and the tissues of the body.

### Atoms and electrons

The loss or gain of an electron can profoundly affect the physical, chemical and biological behavior of atoms—poisons are neutralized, explosives tamed and both employed in living systems that are dependent upon them. The transfer of the hydrogen ion ( $H^+$ ) through a series of stages in cells until it combines with oxygen, to form water is the principle means by which our cells obtain the energy to facilitate all of the other life processes.

Qualitative change is the foundation of quantitative expansion.

Sixty-five-million years ago a meteor hit the Earth—an event that ended the era of the dinosaurs. A relatively unimportant group of animals, the

mammals, were then able to multiply as never before, migrating and colonizing niches excluded to them before. Radiation and multiplication lead to diversification and the appearance of many new lineages and species. During that time many species of mammals have come into being and become extinct. One particular line of primates leads to the evolution of *Homo sapiens*, a creature, like no other before that could not only produce the means of life for itself but could reflect on its own origins and take consciously planned measures to affect its own future as a species.

### Negation of the negation

Everything has an ancestry from which it has emerged. The whole of the natural history and the diversity of life on Earth is a manifestation of this dialectical law.

All life on Earth is descended from LUCA, a prokaryote, (a microscopic single-celled organism that has neither a distinct nucleus with a membrane nor other specialized organelles,) a bacterial-like organism which evolved about 3.5 billion years ago. Her descendants multiplied, displaced any contending life forms and diversified being the only form of life on Earth for a time. At some point where some aggregation of cooperating prokaryotes (A microscopic single-celled organism that has neither a distinct nucleus with a membrane nor other specialized organelles) formed an entirely new life form eukaryotes—cells with a nucleus. These new organisms also evolved a method of generating genetic diversity more rapidly—through sexual reproduction, the combining of genetic material from different sources.

Prokaryotic evolution had proceeded slowly over billions of years, however with eukaryotes the rate of evolutionary change is accelerated and within a short time, complex multicellular organisms appeared. While the most abundant organisms on Earth are still

prokaryotes, it is multicellular life that has dominated for the last 500 million years. In that time there have been five mass extinctions each of which created conditions that allowed the emergence of new life forms that would radiate, diversify and predominate for a time to be supplanted by a life form that emerged from its ranks.

In our own lineage we have primitive ancestors whose unique characteristic was a biological experiment, an internal spinal column. For millions of years these creatures were not significant but in time they would give rise to fish whose relatives, the amphibians, would acquire the means to colonize the previously uninhabited land. Some decedents of the amphibians would evolve into exclusively land dwelling but “cold blooded” reptiles—a branch of which over time evolved into internal heat producing mammals. From our DNA through our anatomy, physiology and biochemistry we can still trace the biological features our ancestors have bequeathed to us. Each has been a platform from which other developments were generated eventually leading to a qualitatively different type of organism.

“Negation of the negation” is not a negative concept. The best of the old is maintained while escaping from its constraints so that new potentials are now presented.

A caterpillar lays its fertilized eggs on a leaf. The eggs hatch releasing the caterpillar that was developing inside. The caterpillars are eating machines and also an important food source for many birds and animals. Those that survive form a cocoon around themselves where the caterpillar body is broken down to all but its nervous and respiratory systems then used as material and fuel to build a new butterfly. When ready, the butterfly breaks out of its cocoon and sets off in search of a sexual partner and, if successful, the cycle continues again. Each stage is a negation of

the previous stage in the butterfly’s life cycle and a qualitatively different form needed for other activities.

All complex organisms go through definite stages of development but not as dramatically compartmentalized as butterflies and their insect relatives.

### **The truth is always concrete**

Irrespective of the general laws of dialectics we have discussed, the truth of what is happening in the real world is always our starting point. The truth is always concrete. The particular laws of dialects are not proscriptions for every situation and all time. They are a guide to analysis and action in today’s world and will be the foundation for the higher levels of consciousness that will emerge with social progress.

Why is any of this important?

First if we want to understand how the world works and then our thinking has to correspond to that reality. Everything in the universe is in constant movement but that does not make it lawless and unknowable. The specific branches of science investigate particular spheres of nature and have their own laws and paradigms. The constant that connects all branches of knowledge is dialectics.

Surgeons are encouraged to adopt hobbies such as playing a musical instrument or model making both of which require practice, patience manual dexterity and concentration. All are skills that they also employ in the operating theatre. As recreational activities they are also refining the skills that will be put to practical use in the life and death environment of the operating theatre.

So, too, with dialectical thinking, it is a tool like all others that our skill in using improves with practice. In our everyday life, of work and studies we will encounter dialectical processes constantly if we choose to look, until dialectics becomes our natural way of thinking. It is our most important weapon in the class struggle. It allows us to identify trends and developments

in the class struggle so that we can intervene to promote those movements which serve the interests of the working class and try to block those that don’t.

Marx and Engels were the first to recognize that history has always been the product of class struggles. The desire for socialism and a better life for all, among the working class, is a product of poverty and deprivation which are themselves inescapable products of the capitalist system. The capitalist system produced the proletarian class—a unity of opposites in constant struggle. The workers create the wealth which the capitalist class appropriates, and that dialectical relationship will only be resolved when the means of production are expropriated from the capitalists, directed to social use and the entire capitalist state apparatus is destroyed. Others believe that another road is possible, but the last few decades have shown that gains made over generations by the working class can be removed in an instant.

Sections of the Labour movement may have abandoned the class struggle but the capitalist class never does.

Knowledge is the guide to correct actions and that, above all, is the importance of dialectical materialism which gives us a more comprehensive understanding of the world than any particular branch of science or other school of philosophy.

Marx and Engels realized that capitalism had created a dialectical relationship of the capitalist class and the proletariat. The poverty and misery created by capitalism will only be abolished irrevocably when the proletariat takes control of society and runs industry, commerce and farming for need not profit. Dialectical materialism is an optimistic philosophy. No situation is permanent. The masses cannot be permanently held down or contained and every condition is only temporary.

To return to our movie analogy. It has a determined end which must flow

logically from the preceding story line. The director may have had options for the final cut, but the viewer has to passively accept the outcome. That is where the analogy ends, for we have the choice to remain observers or to actively participate. For Marxists, that means above all, in the class struggle, where dialectical and historical materialism are our greatest weapons.

Professor Hegel became a conservative in his old age and thought that constitutional monarchy was the pinnacle of human government. The revolutionary of his youth had turned into the opposite, a reactionary, in later life—a common enough story.

Dialectics forces us to face the truth however unpalatable. Marx and Engels realized that the state is the guardian of capitalism and only with its revolutionary overthrow and replacement by the dictatorship of the proletariat internationally can socialism be brought about. That knowledge then is the foundation for the program, strategy and tactics of revolutionary communists and what distinguishes us from other socialists and anarchists.

Suggested reading:

*Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, by George Novak

*Socialism Scientific and Utopian*, by Frederick Engels

*In Defense of Marxism*, by Leon Trotsky

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1 Without going into detail here I have listed a series of pairings that formal logic puts in opposition to each other. As a mental exercise look at these pairings in contexts that you are familiar with: Subject and object; Host and parasite; Growth and decay; Life and death; Cause and effect; Necessity and chance; Essence and appearance; Content and form; Self and non-self; Particular and universal; Quantity into quality.

## Year of the Plague: Socialism or Barbarism?

That is the question

BY CHRIS KINDER

What is the answer to the endless question of what is to become of human society in the late-late stage of the capitalist-imperialist strangle-hold on the world, amid a disastrous pandemic, a looming and deadly environmental degeneration, and the increasingly authoritarian regimes imposing rigid, rightist responses to crises infecting nations around the world? Is it to be a future of socialism, or a degeneration into worsening barbarism?

### The barbarism of U.S. imperialism

If we define barbarism as extreme cruelty, including enslavement, incarceration, genocide and war, visited upon any people or peoples on the basis of race, sex, national identity, economic status, opposition to higher authority, or for any other reason, then all U.S. and colonial history is rife with it. This applies to all presidential administrations, though many may not see the multiple examples as anything more than the errors of one administration or other, or the result of “a few bad apples.” Yet the ripping of children out of the arms of their asylum-seeking parents, and the deportation or confinement of innocent immigrants in concentration camps—immigrants who are fleeing the murderous results of U.S. destruction of their home countries—along with repeated racist murders by police and their fascistic allies are stark reminders that the system is crumbling.

U.S. imperialism began very barbarically. After its rise as an industrial capitalist power, the U.S. went to war in 1898 against Spain in order to grab its colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, after these colonies had already revolted against Spain. Claiming possession of these former Spanish colonies, the U.S. attacked the

first independent Philippine Republic, waging war against it and Katipunan-led rebels until 1913—15 years of barbaric terror. The U.S. caused at least 200,000 civilian deaths, and used tortures such as waterboarding, later used in North Korea and Vietnam.

Cuba was forced into a treaty which robbed it of true independence until 1959, when the puppet regime was overthrown in a revolution which abolished capitalism. Puerto Rico became a U.S. colony. We must also remember the nuclear and fire bombings of Japan and Germany in 1945—all against civilians—when their rulers had already lost the war. While the U.S. prosecuted the Nazis for their genocidal acts in the Nuremberg trials, the crime of mass bombings of civilians was never brought up, as it would have condemned the U.S. and Britain for genocide along with the Nazis.

### Barbarism is in Human history

The argument has been made that violence and war—barbarism—are inherent in our bones as humans. In his *New York Times* bestseller, *Sapiens, A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari focusses a lot of his analysis on how pre-historic humans, up to and including Homo Sapiens, developed violence and killing into part of our heritage today. He reviews weapons development and practices such as the killing of old or infirm people who can no longer contribute to the clan or grouping they are in, though he says they were infrequent.

An article in the *New York Times Book Review* section about “War, How Conflict Shaped Us,” by Margaret MacMillan, claims that war “is in our bones.”<sup>1</sup> I found the sentiments expressed in this book—as quoted in the review—to be enraging. “War is

waged by men, not beasts or gods. To call it a crime against mankind is to miss half its significance,” according to MacMillan. “War is not merely a negative force,” concludes the reviewer, “it’s an engine of change and creativity;” and, “War Helped liberate women.”—also from the reviewer. The book also notes that civilians were specifically selected as targets in the World War II allied bombings of Japan and Germany for purposes of terrorizing the population.

### **But is it “in our bones?”**

This all sounds like a good description of the barbarism of modern warlike class society so far. But here is the kicker, Macmillan begins the book with a reference to Otzi, the pre-historic man whose body was found in the Italian Alps in 1991, well-preserved in ice for 5,000 years. This man had an arrowhead embedded in his shoulder, and has been presumed to have been murdered. This is used to indicate how war is “in our bones,” according to the reviewer.

Is murder, mayhem and war in our bones, in our DNA as human beings? First of all, note that Otzi was killed 5,000 years ago, well within the 12,000 years of the development of agriculture and of class divisions in human society. All the writers and reviewers cited here have ignored the one defining difference between modern historical society, and pre-historic human evolution—class division.

### **Communal, cooperative groupings**

All human evolution and social development in the hundreds-of-thousands of years prior to the historical period, was based on communal, cooperative groupings.

This formed the basic nature of humanity.

Humans cooperate with each other. They survive by working together as a group. They do not fight wars or have conflicts anything like modern societies for their entire development as

modern human beings. If we define this period of development as the lifespan of the genus Homo, or humans—which culminated with us, Homo Sapiens—then we are talking about approximately 2.5 million years.<sup>2</sup> This period of human development is well over 2,000 times the length of modern historical times, which are just 12,000 years at most.

Two-point-five-million-years is the time period in which our nature as humans was defined. The recent 12,000 years is when our nature has become distorted by class division. The modern historical period, despite all its technical achievements, is barely a drop in the bucket of fundamental biological and social human development. Violent class divisions have defined only the latest, very small period of humanity on this planet, but they have fundamentally—but hopefully not permanently—disrupted and corrupted that which is our real human nature.

### **Human nature developed slowly, but surely**

Humanity was a long-time in development, and some of this basic devel-

opment happened in the pre-human millenniums. We walked on two legs as we descended from Apes as Australopiths, a pre-human hominid such as the famous fossil named “Lucy.” In the succeeding hundreds-of-thousands-of-years, we evolved as the genus Homo, starting with Homo Habilis. One of many Homo species to come, Homo Habilis pioneered the development of stone tools.

The development of stone tools was not just an instant, or a simple fact of human evolution, as it is often rendered. A stone tool requires skill. It requires knowledge of the right kind of stone, and where to find it. It requires skill to make the sharp edge that is needed to separate the furry skin from a large animal, and skill to actually acquire that furred skin for clothing (it will need days of drying after removal from the animal). All this did not evolve at once, it took thousands-of-years of development. The very first stone tools might just have been used to crack open the bones of animals that had been stripped bare, left by predator animals, and used by humans to access nutritious bone marrow.



BOLZANO, ITALY - APRIL 27, 2016: Reproduction of Oetzi the Similaun Man in the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy, Photo by Zigres. (Shutterstock)

Development of tools required language, and passing knowledge on to the youth. In a word, it required community.

### **This is how humans evolved**

The skills needed to make stone tools are just one example of the development of human community. Humans were not as strong or as fast as most of their animal adversaries. They (we) had to work together to preserve ourselves and our families. First, we were victims of the big predators, then, after many thousands of years, we were big game hunters. How did that come about? The long-term development of a community together with a division of labor within the community was essential. Some are gatherers, some are hunters, *etc.* Big brain development and language was essential in this development.

How did humans begin to control fire for their use, which enabled cooking of food, and which in turn promoted better nutrition and bigger brain development? Was it just one day some person said “hey, let’s capture some fire, keep it going, learn how to restart it if it goes out, and use it to cook food, so that we can grow our brains, and sit around the campfire and look at the stars?” Of course not. This was a process of learning, over thousands of years, involving innumerable individuals with different experiences with fire, and culminating in a community solution.

The development of the big brain of Homo Sapiens is inseparably connected with the development of the human community in the past two million or more years, and the language that is the most important part of that. It is impossible to imagine the development of human community without language.

And now, how are we to imagine that today’s class divided human “community” is real? It is not.

### **Modern human community is a fraud**

Modern human community is a distorted version of what it should be. Human communities as they appear today are frauds. Yes, it is true that people collect together in many types of communities that are apparently free of any connection to the class struggle, such as bridge clubs, golf clubs, yacht clubs, chess clubs, you name it. Humans connect in groups, as is our nature. But most such social groupings reflect status in society.

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### **Two-point-five-million-years is the time period in which our nature as humans was defined. The recent 12,000 years is when our nature has become distorted by class division.**

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The controlling “communities” today are based clearly on the class structure of society—corporate board rooms, business confabs, police and military units. Police and military have very strong camaraderie for a reason—they are communities designed to protect property, slavery, and to repress the working class and racial minorities. There was no such thing as private property for 2.5 million years, and all sub-communities (gatherers, hunters, tool makers, *etc.*) were integral and cooperative parts of the whole community.

Human community did not evolve for 2.5 million years with anything like today’s class divisions. Yes, there may have been occasional adversaries, and, yes, there may have been some brutal acts in primitive communities, but there was nothing like modern war, or the conflict between sub-communities within the social group that obtains

today. Today’s “communities” are based on the class struggle, which emerged only in the last ten or 12,000 years—men suppressing women, nations oppressing other nations, empires oppressing slaves, feudal lords oppressing peasants, *etc.* Finally, the capitalist/imperialist class exploiting the working classes of the world.

### **Socialism is the human answer to barbarism**

Workers’ unions and revolutionary parties are the organizations we need now to correct the situation.

Humans are a community, a collective that works together. That is what we are. Capitalism, imperialism—these are all recent impositions that must be overthrown and discarded through workers’ revolution. The global human community must be united in a cooperative unit, just as we were for hundreds-of-thousands-of-years. Of course, primitive communities were small local groups, and the globe today involves several billions. But the human nature of community and cooperation is basic. We can overcome today’s crises—it is how we evolved, and it is how we must survive now. And its name today is—socialism.

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1 This quote is from the review, “What Is It Good For?” by Dexter Filkins, *New York Times Book Review*, November 29, 2020. Unless otherwise indicated, the other quotes here are from the book as rendered in the review.

2 2.5 million years is the number Harari gives in *Sapiens* for the beginning of the genus Homo, or humans. Other estimates of the timing for this vary slightly.

# Billionaire Bonanza Continues

## Workers pounded by pandemic, recession, and GOP relief refusal

BY BRETT WILKINS

A handful of billionaires and corporations are enjoying record financial gains—often attained at the expense of worker safety—during the peaking coronavirus pandemic, according to a report published November 18, 2020, by a coalition of advocacy groups.

As 2,814 people died within 24 hours December 19, 2020<sup>1</sup>, during the deadliest pandemic in a century, plutocrats and their businesses are thriving like never before, in no small part due to a system rife with profiteering, opportunism, and worker exploitation. So says the report, entitled, “Billionaire Wealth vs. Community Health: Protecting Essential Workers from Pandemic Profiteers,” which focuses on 12 of the most egregious pandemic profiteers—the “Delinquent Dozen”—who include the owners of Walmart and the CEOs of Amazon and Target.

These companies and their owners and executives have benefited from their “monopoly positions,” the report states, but their success “hasn’t translated into better pay or safer working conditions for the employees showing up to work in a pandemic.”

It’s not just corporations—“private equity firms have bought up essential businesses in the healthcare, grocery, and pet care industries, only to aggressively cut costs, skimp on worker safety, and load companies up with debt to boost their own profits,” the report notes.

Among its key findings:

- As of November 17, the combined wealth of 647 U.S. billionaires increased by almost \$960 billion since mid-March, the beginning of the pandemic lockdown.
- Since March, there are 33 new billionaires in the U.S. Driving this exploding inequality are 12

companies whose profits are coming at the expense of workers and communities, including retailers like Walmart, Amazon, Target, Dollar Tree, and Dollar Store, gig economy companies like Instacart, and food producers like Tyson Foods.

- Also included is the investment giant BlackRock and private equity firms like Leonard Green Partners, Blackstone, Kohlberg, Kravis Roberts & Co., Cerberus Capital, BC Partners, and CVC Capital Partners. These private equity firms own several essential healthcare, grocery, and pet supply companies.
- Ten billionaire owners of the “Delinquent Dozen” companies have a combined worth of \$433 billion. Since March 18, their combined personal wealth has ballooned by \$127.5 billion, a 42 percent increase. These ten billionaires are: Jeff Bezos (Amazon); Alice, Rob, and Jim Walton (Walmart); Apoorva Mehta (Instacart); John Tyson (Tyson Foods); Steve Schwarzman (Blackstone); Henry Kravis and George Roberts (KKR); and Steve Feinberg (Cerberus).

The report features harrowing testimonies from workers affected by both the pandemic and their employers’ policies and actions.

“I close the register many nights, so I know my store’s revenue has practically doubled since the coronavirus hit,” said Kenya Slaughter, an employee of Dollar General—which is partly owned by the global financial behemoth BlackRock. “But we workers haven’t gotten any extra money, even though we’re risking our health, and our families’ health, to keep the stores running.”

Courtenay Brown, an Amazon Fresh warehouse worker in New Jersey and organizer with the worker advocacy group United for Respect, said, “While Amazon’s Jeff Bezos is on track to become the world’s first trillionaire, the frontline workers like me who’ve built his fortune are treated like we’re disposable.”

Brown added:

“As the virus spikes, we get more and more orders, and Amazon expects us to work at inhumane rates. The pace is blistering, and people get injured on the job a lot, people get sick, people are scared of catching [Covid-19], and Amazon is not doing enough to protect our lives. It’s time for Amazon’s workers to get some actual compensation for the essential work we’re doing—we don’t need feel-good TV commercials thanking us for being heroes, we need \$5 an hour in hazard pay, paid sick leave, and workplace protections from this dangerous virus.”

The report contains a set of recommended solutions for companies employing essential workers, as well as for lawmakers seeking to protect workers and reduce the power of plutocrats and the businesses they own. For employers, these include immediately offering workers at least \$5 per hour in hazard pay, paid sick leave, and other essential benefits. For legislators, an Essential Workers’ Bill of Rights, workplace health councils, a pandemic wealth tax, and a profiteering oversight committee are among the recommended remedies.

“When billionaire owners and CEOs fail to fulfill their responsibility during this extraordinary time, it is the duty of elected officials and Congress to step in and enact public policies to protect essential workers and their communi-

Continued on page 36

# Liberalism and Fascism: Partners in Crime

BY GABRIEL ROCKHILL

*“The intellectuals cast a veil over the dictatorial character of bourgeois democracy not least by presenting democracy as the absolute opposite of fascism, not as just another natural phase of it where the bourgeois dictatorship is revealed in a more open form.” —Bertolt Brecht*

Time and again we hear that liberalism is the last bulwark against fascism. It represents a defense of the rule of law and democracy in the face of aberrant, malevolent demagogues intent on destroying a perfectly good system for their own gain. This apparent opposition has been deeply engrained in contemporary so-called Western liberal democracies through their shared origin myth. As every school child in the U.S. learns, for instance, liberalism defeated fascism in World War II, beating back the Nazi beast in order to establish a new international order that—for all of its potential faults and misdeeds—was built upon key democratic principles that are antithetical to fascism.

This framing of the relationship between liberalism and fascism not only presents them as complete opposites, but it also defines the very essence of the fight against fascism as the struggle for liberalism. In so doing, it forges an ideological false antagonism. For what fascism and liberalism share is their undying devotion to the capitalist world order. Although one prefers the velvet glove of hegemonic and consensual rule, and the other relies more readily on the iron fist of repressive violence, they are both intent on maintaining and developing capitalist social relations, and they have worked together throughout modern history in order to do so. What this apparent conflict masks—and this is its true ideological power—is that the real, fundamental dividing line is not between two different modes of capitalist governance, but between capitalists and anti-capitalists. The long psy-

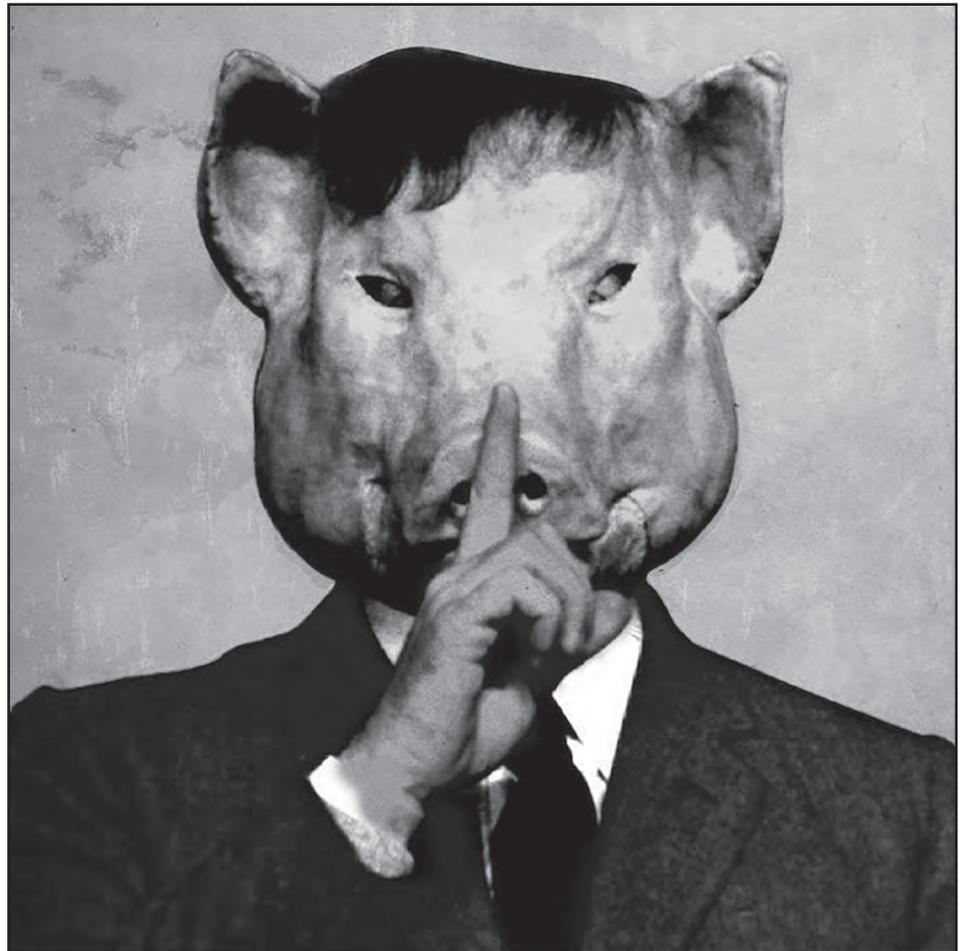
chological warfare campaign waged under the deceptive banner of “totalitarianism” has done much to further dissimulate this line of demarcation by disingenuously presenting communism as a form of fascism. As Domenico Losurdo and others have explained with great historical precision and detail, this is pure ideological pap.

Given the ways in which the current public debate on fascism tends to be framed in relationship to purported liberal resistance, there could scarcely be a timelier task than that of scrupulously re-examining the historical record of actually existing liberalism and fascism. As we shall see even in this brief overview, far from being enemies,

they have been—sometimes subtle, sometimes forthright—partners in capitalist crime. For the sake of argument and concision, I will here focus primarily on a conjunctural account of the non-controversial cases of Italy and Germany. However, it is worth stating at the outset that the Nazi racial police state and colonial rampage—which far surpassed Italy’s capabilities—were modeled on the United States.

## Liberal collaboration in the rise of European fascism

It is of the utmost importance that Western European fascism emerged within parliamentary democracies rather than conquering them from the



(Art by Nick Roney)

outside. The fascists rose to power in Italy at a moment of severe political and economic crisis on the heels of WWI, and then later the Great Depression. This was also a time when the world had just witnessed the first successful anti-capitalist revolution in the U.S.S.R. Mussolini, who had cut his teeth working for MI5 (United Kingdom's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency) to break up the Italian peace movement during WWI, was later backed by big industrial capitalists and bankers for his anti-worker, pro-capitalist political orientation. His tactic was to work within the parliamentary system, by mobilizing powerful financial supporters to bankroll his expansive propaganda campaign while his black shirts rode roughshod over picket lines and working-class organizations. In October of 1922, magnates in the Confederation of Industry and major bank leaders provided him with the millions necessary for the March on Rome as a spectacular show of force. However, he did not seize power. Instead, as Daniel Guérin explained in his masterful study *Fascism and Big Business*, Mussolini was summoned by the king on October 29th and was, according to parliamentary norms, entrusted with forming a cabinet. The capitalist state turned itself over without a fight, but Mussolini was intent on forming an absolute majority in parliament with the help of the liberals. They supported his new electoral law in July 1923 and then made a joint slate with the fascists for the election on April 6, 1924. The fascists, who had only had 35 seats in parliament, gained 286 seats with the help of the liberals.

The Nazis rose to power in much the same way, by working within the parliamentary system and courting the favor of big industrial magnates and bankers. The latter provided the financial support necessary to grow the Nazi party and eventually secure the electoral victory of September 1930. Hitler would later reminisce, in a speech on

October 19, 1935, on what it meant to have the material resources necessary to support 1,000 Nazi orators with their own cars, who could hold some 100,000 public meetings in the course of a year. In the December 1932 election, the Social Democrat leaders, who were far to the left of contemporary liberals but shared their reformist agenda, refused to form an eleventh-hour coalition with the communists against Nazism. "As in many other countries past and present, so in Germany," wrote Michael Parenti, "the Social Democrats would sooner ally themselves with the reactionary Right than make common cause with the Reds." Prior to the election, the Communist Party candidate Ernst Thaelmann had argued that a vote for the conservative Field Marshal von Hindenburg amounted to a vote for Hitler and for war. Only weeks after Hindenburg's election, he invited Hitler to become chancellor.

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**...the Nazi racial police state and colonial rampage—which far surpassed Italy's capabilities—were modeled on the United States...**

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Fascism in both cases came to power through bourgeois parliamentary democracy, in which big capital bankrolled the candidates who would do its bidding while also creating a populist spectacle—a false revolution—that marshaled or suggested mass appeal. Its conquest of power took place within this legal and constitutional framework, which secured its apparent legitimacy on the home front, as well as within the international community of bourgeois democracies. Leon Trotsky understood this perfectly and diagnosed what was going on at the time with remarkable insight:

"The results are at hand: bourgeois democracy transforms itself legally, pacifically, into a fascist dictatorship. The secret is simple enough: bourgeois democracy and fascist dictatorship are the instruments of one and the same class, the exploiters. It is absolutely impossible to prevent the replacement of one instrument by the other by appealing to the Constitution, the Supreme Court at Leipzig, new elections, etc. What is necessary is to mobilize the revolutionary forces of the proletariat. Constitutional fetishism brings the best aid to fascism."<sup>1</sup>

Once its power was secure, however, fascism revealed its authoritarian face, transforming itself into what Trotsky referred to as a military-bureaucratic dictatorship of the Bonapartist type. It unflinchingly set about—at a rather different pace in Italy than in Germany—completing the task it had been hired to accomplish by crushing organized labor, eradicating opposition parties, destroying independent publications, putting a halt to elections, scapegoating and eliminating racialized underclasses, privatizing public assets, launching projects of colonial expansion and investing heavily in a war economy beneficial to its industrial supporters. In establishing the direct dictatorship of big capital, it even destroyed some of the more plebeian and populist elements in its own ranks, while crushing many confused liberals under the juggernaut of repressive class warfare.

It was not only within Italy and Germany that bourgeois democracy allowed for the rise of fascism. This was also true internationally. Capitalist states refused to form an antifascist coalition with the U.S.S.R., a country that fourteen of them had invaded and occupied from 1918 to 1920 in a failed attempt to destroy the world's first workers' republic. During the Spanish Civil War, which historians like Eric Hobsbawm have characterized as a miniature version of the great mid-

century war between fascism and communism, Western liberal democracies did not officially support the left-leaning government that had been elected. Instead, they stood idly by while the Axis powers provided massive support to General Francisco Franco as he oversaw a military *coup d'état*. It is highly revealing that Franco, a self-declared fascist who is often sidelined in discussions of European fascism, understood with remarkable clarity why the epiphenomenal characteristics of fascism would differ considerably based on the precise conjuncture: "Fascism, since that is the word that is used, fascism presents, wherever it manifests itself, characteristics which are varied to the extent that countries and national temperaments vary." It was the U.S.S.R. that came to the aid of the Republicans battling fascism in Spain, sending both soldiers and materials. Franco would later return the favor, so to speak, by deploying a volunteer military force to fight godless communism alongside the Nazis. Franco would also, of course, become one of the great postwar allies of the United States in its fight against the Red Menace.

In 1934, the United Kingdom, France and Italy signed the Munich Agreement, in which they agreed to allow Hitler to invade and colonize the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. "The sheer reluctance of Western governments to enter into effective negotiations with the Red state," wrote Eric Hobsbawm, "even in 1938-39 when the urgency of an anti-Hitler alliance was no longer denied by anyone, is only too patent. Indeed, it was the fear of being left to confront Hitler alone which eventually drove Stalin, since 1934 the unswerving champion of an alliance with the West against him, into the Stalin-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, by which he hoped to keep the U.S.S.R. out of the war." This non-aggression pact was then disingenuously presented in the Western

media as an undeniable indication that the Nazis and communists were somehow allies.

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**...the real, fundamental  
dividing line is not  
between two different  
modes of capitalist  
governance, but between  
capitalists and  
anti-capitalists...**

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### **International capitalism and fascism**

It was not only large industrialists and bankers, as well as landowners, within Italy and Germany that supported and profited from the fascist rise to power. This was equally true of many of the major corporations and banks whose headquarters were in Western bourgeois democracies. Henry Ford was perhaps the most notorious example since in 1938 he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle, which was the highest honor that could be bestowed upon any non-German (Mussolini had received one earlier the same year.) Ford had not only funneled ample funding into the Nazi Party, he had provided it with much of its anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik ideology. Ford's conviction that "Communism was a completely Jewish creation," to quote James and Suzanne Pool, was shared by Hitler, and some have suggested that the latter was so close ideologically to Ford that certain passages from *Mein Kampf* were directly copied from Ford's anti-Semitic publication *The International Jew*.

Ford was only one of the American companies invested in Germany, and many other U.S. banks, firms and investors profited handsomely from Aryanizations (the expulsion of Jews from business life and the forced trans-

fer of their property into "Aryan" hands), as well as from the German rearmament program. According to Christopher Simpson's masterful study, "a half-dozen key U.S. companies—International Harvester, Ford, General Motors, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and du Pont—had become deeply involved in German weapons production." In fact, American investment in Germany sharply increased after Hitler came to power. "Commerce Department reports show," writes Simpson, "that U.S. investment in Germany increased some 48.5 percent between 1929 and 1940, while declining sharply everywhere else in continental Europe." The German subsidiaries of U.S. companies like Ford and General Motors, as well as several oil companies, made wide use of forced labor in concentration camps. Buchenwald, for instance, provided concentration camp labor for GM's enormous Russelsheim plant, as well as for the Ford truck plant located in Cologne, and Ford's German managers made extensive use of Russian POWs for war production work (a war crime according to the Geneva Conventions.)

John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles, who would later respectively become the Secretary of State and the head of the CIA, ran Sullivan & Cromwell, which some consider to have been the largest Wall Street law firm at the time. They played a very important role in overseeing, advising and managing global investment in Germany, which had become one of the most important international markets—particularly for American investors—during the second half of the 1920s. Sullivan & Cromwell worked with nearly all of the major U.S. banks, and they oversaw investments in Germany in excess of a billion dollars. They also worked with dozens of companies and governments all over the world, but John Foster Dulles, according to Simpson, "clearly emphasized projects for Germany, for the military junta in Poland, and for

Mussolini's fascist state in Italy." In the postwar era, Allen Dulles worked tirelessly to protect his business partners, and he was remarkably successful in securing their assets and helping them avoid prosecution.

Whereas most liberal accounts of fascism focus on its political theater and epiphenomenal eccentricities, thereby avoiding a systemic and radical analysis, it is essential to recognize that if liberalism allowed for the growth of European fascism, it is capitalism that drove this growth.

### Who defeated fascism?

It is not surprising that the bourgeois democracies of the West were extremely slow to open the Western front, allowing their erstwhile enemy, the U.S.S.R., to be bled by the pro-capitalist Nazi war machine (which received ample funding from White Russians.) In fact, the day after Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Harry Truman flatly declared: "If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious in any circumstances." After the U.S. entered the war, powerful officials like Allen Dulles worked behind the scenes to try and broker a peace deal with Germany that would allow the Nazis to focus all of their attention on eradicating the U.S.S.R.

The widespread idea, at least within the U.S., that fascism was ultimately defeated by liberalism in WWII, due primarily to the U.S. intervention in the war, is a baseless canard. As Peter Kuznick, Max Blumenthal and Ben Norton reminded listeners in a recent discussion, 80 percent of the Nazis who died in the war were killed on the Eastern Front with the U.S.S.R., where Germany had deployed 200 divisions (versus only ten in the West.) Twenty-seven-million Soviets gave their lives fighting fascism, whereas 400,000

American soldiers died in the war (which amounts to approximately 1.5 percent of the Soviet death toll.) It was, above all, the Red Army that defeated fascism in WWII, and it is communism—not liberalism—that constitutes the last bulwark against fascism. The historical lesson should be clear: one cannot be truly antifascist without being anti-capitalist.

### The ideology of false antagonisms

The ideological construction of false antagonisms, in the case of liberalism and fascism, serves multiple purposes:

- It establishes the primary front of struggle as one between rival positions within the capitalist camp.
- It channels people's energy into fighting over the best methods for managing capitalist rule rather than abolishing it.
- It eradicates the true lines of demarcation of global class struggle.
- It attempts to simply take the communist option off the table (by removing it entirely from the field of struggle, or disingenuously presenting it as a form of "totalitarianism.")

Not unlike sporting events, which are very important ideological rituals in the contemporary world, the logic of false antagonisms amps up and overinflates all of the idiosyncratic differences and personal rivalries between two opposing teams to such an extent that the frenzied fans come to forget that they are ultimately playing the same game.

In the reactionary political culture of the U.S., which has attempted to redefine the Left as liberal, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that the primary opposition that has structured, and continues to organize, the modern world is the one between capitalism—which is imposed and maintained through liberal ideology and institutions, as well as fascist repression, depending on the time, place and population in question—and social-

ism. By replacing this opposition by the one between liberalism and fascism, the ideology of false antagonisms aims at making the fight of the century into a capitalist spectacle rather than a communist revolution.

*Gabriel Rockhill is a Franco-American philosopher, cultural critic and activist.*

—CounterPunch, October 14, 2020

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/10/14/liberalism-and-fascism-partners-in-crime/>

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<sup>1</sup> "The United Front for Defense, A letter to a Social Democratic Worker," February 1933, by Leon Trotsky

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1933/330223.htm>

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**For what fascism and liberalism share is their undying devotion to the capitalist world order. Although one prefers the velvet glove of hegemonic and consensual rule, and the other relies more readily on the iron fist of repressive violence, they are both intent on maintaining and developing capitalist social relations, and they have worked together throughout modern history in order to do so.**

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# Jim Crow Joe

## Biden's record on race

By JACK DELANEY

It was the days of purple haze and the post-civil rights movement that President-elect Joe Biden cemented his political legacy, yet he was rarely on the right side of history. The era was marked by assassinations of political leaders, spurred a coalition opposing the Vietnam war, and produced police violence carried out on demonstrators. The unrest set the stage for Richard Nixon and advisor Lee Atwater's southern strategy.

Nixon's '68 campaign strategy relied on polished racist dog whistles and rhetoric promising law and order, which delivered the southern vote along with the White House. With a political realignment—where segregationist southern Democrats found refuge within the GOP—political newcomer, Joe Biden found opportunity.

### Delaware's Dixiecrat

Before the 1972 elections, then a city government official, Biden launched a bid for the U.S. Senate. In his campaign against Delaware's Republican incumbent, J. Caleb Boggs, Biden set himself apart from his opponent and supported the integration of schools through federally mandated busing. Yet in a few years following his first Senatorial win, he would reverse his stance and sharpen his words.

After a deciding vote that nixed a 1974 anti-busing amendment, the freshman Senator faced backlash and pressure from constituents. Biden's vote against the '74 amendment would stand as his sole exception of supporting school desegregation through federally mandated busing. After his controversial vote, constituent outrage ensued. Parents began to heckle the Senator at a town hall meeting, and he would promptly change his position to match his base's sentiments.

Through 1972 until the end of federally mandated busing, Biden would join staunch segregationists—Senators Strom Thurmond, James O. Eastland, Herman E. Talmadge, and others—backing bills that would prevent the federal government from enforcing school integration.

After the 1975 white anti-busing riots in Boston, Biden joined with former Dixiecrat—North Carolina Republican Jesse Helms—to introduce an anti-busing amendment a year later. The proposal's aim was to handcuff the enforcement of school desegregation by limiting the federal government from collecting data on integration. As reported by *NPR*, Biden later said in a 1975 interview he supported a Constitutional amendment to end the busing mandate.

In support of Helms's amendment, Biden would rise on the Senate floor stating, "I have become convinced that busing is a bankrupt concept." Helms's

measure failed but Biden introduced a similar and more bipartisan amendment that barred funding for local governments assigning teachers to schools based on race. Later that year, Biden issued a statement on busing in an interview, calling the policy, "[an] asinine concept, the utility of which has never been proven to me."

The *New York Times* notes that Biden proposed a 1976 measure that would block the Department of Justice (DOJ) from treating busing as a form of desegregation. A year later the Senator cosponsored an amendment that limited federal funding from busing oversight while leading legislation that would limit court-ordered busing enforcement.

A year later, in 1977, Biden remarked that some federal desegregation policies would "cause his children to grow up in a racialized jungle." Biden continued with rhetoric that echoed Congress's segregationists, haranguing



Photograph Source: Chuck Kennedy – CC BY 2.0

against “forced busing” and arguing for states’ rights.

By 1982, Biden joined former Dixiecrats to vote for a DOJ appropriations amendment that included a section labeled “the toughest anti-busing rider ever approved by either chamber of Congress.” He then voted in favor of an amendment that granted DOJ the ability “to remove or reduce the requirement of busing in existing court decrees or judgments.”

A 1991 Supreme Court decision would lead to a series of cases that would ultimately end federally mandated busing. Almost 30 years later, a 2019 report released by Penn State and UCLA showed that classrooms are overly segregated today.

### **New Jim Crow Joe**

From the early 1980s up until present day, racialized mass incarceration took hold—sponsored by the war on drugs, heightened sentencing, and through the empowerment of prosecutors and law enforcement. *The New Jim Crow*<sup>1</sup> author Michelle Alexander writes, “Ninety percent of those admitted to prison for drug offenses in many states were Black or Latino, yet the mass incarceration of communities of color was explained in race-neutral terms, an adaptation to the needs and demands of the current political climate. The New Jim Crow was born.”

Biden’s role in the genesis of the New Jim Crow began during the Reagan years. As reported by *The Intercept*, Biden lobbied the Reagan administration to beef up law enforcement and adopt harsher sentences. While courting Reagan, the Senator reached across the aisle to find common ground with an old friend.

Biden teamed up with Strom Thurmond to introduce the Comprehensive Control Act of 1984. The bill expanded penalties for marijuana production and trafficking, permitted punitive legal strategies, and

included a civil asset forfeiture clause. By 1986 and 1988 he would support and partly author two Anti-Drug Abuse Acts that imposed stricter sentencing on crack compared to powder cocaine and bolstered prison sentences for drug offenders.

During Biden’s first bid for the White House, a 1987 *Philadelphia Inquirer* piece reports that he gloated about receiving an award from Alabama’s former segregationist governor George Wallace in 1973. Shortly thereafter, Biden delivered a stump speech in Alabama, stating, “we [Delawareans] were on the south’s side in the Civil War.” Continuing on the campaign trail, he further remarked that he participated as a civil rights activist in the ’60s, yet the claim was unfounded.

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### **As reported by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, at least 380 to 801 civilians in the Middle East and Africa were killed by drone strikes during Obama and Biden’s tenure.**

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After the Reagan-era, a 1991 peak in national crime escalated calls for law and order and was followed by a media frenzy. In the ’92 Presidential campaign, Bill Clinton rebranded the Democratic Party as tough on crime, which paid off and delivered the White House. Shortly after the Clinton victory, Biden introduced The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, also known as the ’94 crime bill.

Biden was a substantial contributor to the legislation and shepherded it through, rising on the Senate floor boasting that the liberal wing of the Democratic Party was responsible for 60 new death penalties, 70 enhanced

penalties, 100,000 more cops, and 125,000 new prison cells. The Senator continued the next year, standing in support of the bill, “We have predators on our streets who are beyond the pale.... We have no other choice but to take them out of society.”

The bill passed and was signed into law by Clinton, imposing mandatory minimum sentences, the “three strikes you’re out rule,” and increased federal spending for newly militarized law enforcement and prisons nationwide.

As the policies took shape, the war on drugs and mass incarceration exploded, delivering the U.S. the world’s largest prison population. No secret—by the 2000s, with only five percent of the globe’s population, the U.S. had 25 percent of the world’s prison population. Data from the U.S. Census shows that Black people are five times more likely to face incarceration than white people, while a study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* showed police murders skew excessively towards people of color.

### **Late Senate and Obama years**

Towards the twilight of Biden’s Senate career, he pursued neoliberal economic reforms and championed financial deregulations. For over 40 years—from 1984 until 2018—Biden would support proposed freezes and cuts to Social Security spending, while people of color are disproportionately served by Social Security income benefits.

He continued with deregulation through the ’90s and ’00s. In 1999, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act was introduced and proposed to eliminate Great Depression-era financial regulations formed through the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933. The sweeping deregulatory bill paved the way and further incentivized finance capital to pursue predatory lending, redlining, and fiscal trickery which disproportionately disadvantaged people of color. Biden supported and voted for the bill.

Following the erasure of Glass-Steagall, the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005 (BAPCPA), known as the bankruptcy bill, was introduced. Through BAPCPA's time in the legislative process, Biden would offer three amendments that hallowed existing statutes. The law would unequally impact people of color, and down the road, exacerbated the student debt crisis, impacting people of color at more costly levels.

During the Obama-Biden years, videos and reports of police murders of Black people would surface. Ferguson and Baltimore became centers of the uprisings that ensued in 2014 and 2015, respectively, and were precursors to the current Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Yet the two-term administration didn't deliver the change that was promised in the '08 campaign.

Abroad it was also business as usual for the Obama-Biden White House. The foreign policy apparatus during the administration actively destabilized regions, causing crises in Yemen, Honduras, Syria, Somalia, and Libya, while continuing W. Bush-era operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq.

The drone program would also surge under Biden's White House years. Since the drone warfare-era, the administration amassed the highest number of civilian drone strike casualties. As reported by the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, at least 380 to 801 civilians in the Middle East and Africa were killed by drone strikes during Obama and Biden's tenure.

For Latin Americans, the White House also managed one of the largest deportation efforts in U.S. history, while mass graves of Latin American migrants went unchecked by the administration. Over two and half million migrants were deported, and the infrastructure was left for Trump to inherit and bolster.

A May 2020 *CNN* interview with Harvard professor, Dr. Cornel West,

succinctly summed up the Obama-Biden years. "The system cannot reform itself. We've tried Black faces in high places. Too often our Black politicians, professional class, middle class become too accommodated to the capitalist economy." West continued, "The Black Lives Matter movement emerged under a Black President, a Black Attorney General, and a Black Homeland Security, and they couldn't deliver."

### On the campaign trail

Biden didn't launch his campaign with much backing from the Democratic base, bundlers, or much of a vision. The core of Biden's messaging appealed to white suburbanites, offering nothing more than a return to normalcy and an alternative to Trump. Top Democrats, much like the base and donors, were also initially skeptical of Biden's path to victory.

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## Biden's career has been built on working for white supremacy.

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According to *Politico*, Biden's former running mate Barack Obama allegedly remarked, "Don't underestimate Joe's ability to fuck things up." Obama then supposedly told one Democratic candidate in Iowa, "And you know who really doesn't have it? Joe Biden."

Before Biden was thrust into the Democratic front runner spotlight, the former Vice President clashed with future running mate, Kamala Harris, regarding his record on busing during the debates. While Vice President-elect Harris has her own controversial record on criminal justice, the Biden camp deflected and muddied the waters.

During the campaign, Biden would falsely and repeatedly claim that he was arrested after meeting with Nelson Mandela while protesting apartheid in

South Africa. He would also state in an interview, "If you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't Black," for which he later apologized.

Peculiar phrases and malarkey aside, it didn't matter for the Biden coalition. The centrist candidates dropped out and consolidated to crush an insurgent Bernie Sanders challenge, delivering Biden key wins and the nomination.

Surrounding his primary victory were potentially the largest uprisings and movement in U.S. history. Following the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, mass rebellions stormed nationwide—continuing ever since. The majority of Americans support the Black Lives Matter movement and the rebellions against U.S. institutions.

With popular support behind BLM, Biden didn't seize the moment like during the post-civil rights political realignment. Nonetheless, the Black vote turned out to deliver him the White House. With that said, recent indications show a Biden administration will take the Black vote and the energy around BLM for granted.

Following the police murder of Walter Wallace Jr.—a young Black man experiencing a mental health episode in Philadelphia—the then Presidential nominee condemned the uprisings. Biden would then appear for remarks on the campaign trail to address the hopelessly frustrated crowds, "There is no excuse whatsoever for the looting and the violence. None whatsoever." The campaign also issued a written statement in response, adding in a qualifying "but at the same time...."

The President-elect previously denounced demonstrators in Portland, Oregon and elsewhere. Prior to issuing statements, Biden has also called for police to "shoot 'em in the leg" and doubled down on that remark during a town hall when asked about police de-escalation techniques.

The Biden transition team was also considering former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel for a top cabinet slot but walked his appointment back after criticism. In 2014, Emanuel attempted to cover up the police killing of Black Chicagoan, Laquan McDonald, along with gutting the city's social infrastructure for vulnerable communities.

### **Biden's "Tranquilizing Drug of Gradualism"**

Two years before Malcolm X was assassinated, he delivered a speech skewering white liberals, "The white liberal differs from the white conservative only in one way: the liberal is more deceitful than the conservative. The liberal is more hypocritical than the conservative. Both want power, but the white liberal is the one who has perfected the art of posing as the Negro's friend and benefactor; and by winning the friendship, allegiance, and support of the Negro, the white liberal is able to use the Negro as a pawn or tool in this political 'football game' that is constantly raging between the white liberals and white conservatives."

Martin Luther King Jr. would share similar sentiments on white centrists in his letter from the Birmingham jailhouse, writing, "I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice."

The warnings issued by X and King ring true today.

Opposing full school integration and using rhetorical pitches reminiscent of Atwater's southern strategy gave Biden the political capital he needed to rise through the ranks and

develop bipartisan favor. The racist war on drugs, mass incarceration, rampant disenfranchisement, the prison industrial complex, exploited labor, and militarized police forces didn't magically appear.

Austerity and financial deregulation further empowered conservatives and incentivized debt profiteers to prey on vulnerable people. The continuation of endless wars and *coups d'états*, building a mass deportation system, and failing to leverage power to yield change had someone behind those policies and inactions.

The policy failures that have perpetuated a white supremacist society weren't just lazily passed and implemented—they were championed and safe-guarded. Biden's career has been built on working for white supremacy.

While securing the election by placating voters of color and appealing to comfortable white suburbanites—like his strategy in the early throes of his career—has proven he will not build long-overdue and necessary systematic justice. Rather than championing a popular and righteous cause, he has gone out of his way to support and pay homage to countless white supremacist notions and institutions, twisting his record to the public. Though Biden's record and words are clear, "nothing will fundamentally change."

Like Biden, the U.S. has yet to repent for its past and present. For any significant change to occur in the Biden years and beyond, it will take a sustained mass movement constantly agitating institutions. During the Biden years and throughout Democratic strongholds, there will still be brutality, police murders, and white supremacy. The only possible way for meaningful change to occur—not symbolic victories—is for all decent people to continuously take to the streets and, by any means necessary, demand justice and freedom.

As put by Martin Luther King Jr., "this is no time to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism."

*Jack Delaney is a former policy analyst. He worked on issues relating to healthcare, disability, and labor policy, and is a member of the National Writers Union.*

—CounterPunch, December 6, 2020

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/12/06/jim-crow-joe/>

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_New\\_Jim\\_Crow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Jim_Crow)

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**“The white liberal differs from the white conservative only in one way: the liberal is more deceitful than the conservative. The liberal is more hypocritical than the conservative. Both want power, but the white liberal is the one who has perfected the art of posing as the Negro's friend and benefactor; and by winning the friendship, allegiance, and support of the Negro, the white liberal is able to use the Negro as a pawn or tool in this political 'football game' that is constantly raging between the white liberals and white conservatives.”**

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# Biden, the Emcee at the Billionaires' Ball

BY GLEN FORD

The Orange Era of racist rants will soon be over—just a few hundred mad tweets to go till January 20th, when the head flunky for the real rulers of the USA will take over the levers of government. Joe Biden made only one campaign promise that counts—to the only people that matter to corporate Democrats—when he assured the party's rich funders that “No one's standard of living will change, nothing would fundamentally change” under his presidency. But even as he spoke, back in June, the greatest change in wealth and power relationships in U.S. history was in full roar, as the billionaire class feasted on the COVID economy. As detailed in a November 12 report by the *Institute for Policy Studies* and other leftist outfits, the combined wealth of the 647 U.S. billionaires increased by almost a trillion dollars, and 33 new billionaires were created, during the same period that 22 million Americans lost their jobs, many of which will not return when the virus has receded. The Pew Research Center found that “one-in-four adults have had trouble paying their bills since the coronavirus outbreak started, a third have dipped into savings or retirement accounts to make ends meet, and about one-in-six have borrowed money from friends or family or gotten food from a food bank.”

Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon and the *Washington Post* and the guy that runs the cloud where the CIA keeps its secrets, grew richer by \$70 billion during the COVID crisis—a \$2 billion per week increase in wealth. As a group, U.S. billionaires are one-third richer than before the coronavirus struck.

What ordinary people experience as disaster is manna from heaven for the Lords of Capital. “Disaster capitalism” is only disastrous for those without capital. Every catastrophe consolidates the power of the billionaires, who use

these periods to devour the less-rich and reshape the political economy to their further advantage, deepening their dominance of society so that the Joe Bidens of the world jump higher and come quicker when summoned.

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**...the combined wealth of the 647 U.S. billionaires increased by almost a trillion dollars, and 33 new billionaires were created, during the same period that 22 million Americans lost their jobs, many of which will not return when the virus has receded...**

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The oligarchs are so obscenely rich, they bend all social and political institutions to their will. “Democracy” cannot possibly exist alongside oligarchy. It is, therefore, necessary that politicians like Biden pretend that the oligarchs are just regular folks, like the rest of us. “You know what I've found is rich people are just as patriotic as poor people. Not a joke. I mean, we may not want to

demonize anybody who has made money,” Biden assured a group of 100 rich people in Manhattan.

Black voters may have put Biden in the Oval Office, but the former “Senator from Mastercard” has always taken his orders from the oligarchy. The oligarch-in-charge at the Democratic National Committee is Michael Bloomberg, who has fronted much of the DNC's bills this year. The coronavirus has been very good to Bloomberg: he added \$10.5 billion to his mega-fortune—a 22 percent increase—in just the two months between March 18 and May 15. Such sums can buy every important politician in the Democratic half of the corporate duopoly.

For the Lords of Capital, control of the Democrats is critical, since they are the party that claims to represent the people hardest hit by capitalist crises. (The Republican “base,” although full of people in economic straits, demands only that white supremacy be championed.) It is the Democratic Party's job to beat back popular demands for social and economic justice, because the peoples and classes that make these demands are Democrats. As the crises become deeper and more frequent under late-stage capitalism, the oligarchy's hold on the Democratic Party tightens, accordingly.

The Black vote is key, because African Americans are the most left

**RACE TO THE  
BOTTOM**



leaning constituency in the nation, the group most in favor of income redistribution—the oligarch’s nightmare—and a range of other measures that would provide working people with some degree of security in this cut-throat capitalist economy. Therefore, the trick for keeping the austerity regime (Race to the Bottom) on track is to make Blacks and their allies more afraid of Republican racists than of rule by oligarch-controlled Democrats. That’s why Hillary Clinton’s campaign was so determined to run against Donald Trump, the most outrageously racist Republican, in 2016, as revealed by *Wikileaks*.

But the straw-man refused to be knocked down. For the next four years the Democrats, the bulk of the corporate media, and the national security state waged the most furious and dangerous campaign of demonization since Lincoln was elected in 1860. (Trump was correct in making that analogy but, like everything else from his mouth, it came out stupid.) It was a four-year, non-stop shock to the system, administered by the bulk of the ruling class and their media—the biggest beneficiaries of the system. They risked delegitimizing the very institu-

tions that have facilitated corporate governance, for the chance to rewrite the national narrative. From now on, the United States is on a permanent national security emergency footing, requiring censorship of social media, draconian punishment of protesters, and 24/7 witch hunts for Russians, Chinese, Venezuelans and their home-grown “dupes.”

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**The coronavirus has been very good to Bloomberg: he added \$10.5 billion to his mega-fortune—a 22 percent increase—in just the two months between March 18 and May 15. Such sums can buy every important politician in the Democratic half of the corporate duopoly.**

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The Lords of Capital know, better than most of the rest of us, that the

Race to the Bottom that immiserates the working class and disperses Black communities, is also responsible for the exponential, fantastical growth of oligarchic wealth. The Race to the Bottom is a global phenomenon of late-stage imperial capitalism, which funnels ever-increasing proportions of wealth upward by forcing all the world’s workers to compete against each other. War must be endless, to enforce the terms of the Race on as much of the planet as possible. Government social, health and income-supports that allow workers to refuse “gig” and less-than-living wage work, spoil the Race.

Biden is the oligarchs’ pick to keep the Race to the Bottom accelerating and the profits skyrocketing. On the other side of the duopoly, the Amerikkaner hordes plot vengeance for their perceived loss of what W.E.B. Du Bois called the “public and psychological” wages of whiteness. There is nothing lesser about either of these evils—which is why the only real option for Black and working people is an independent politics of struggle.

—*Black Agenda Report*, November 26, 2020

<https://www.blackagendareport.com/biden-emcee-billionaires-ball>

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**The Race to the Bottom is a global phenomenon of late-stage imperial capitalism, which funnels ever-increasing proportions of wealth upward by forcing all the world’s workers to compete against each other.**

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# Socialists Shouldn't Vote for the "Lesser Evil"

BY ROBERT BELANO

*"Pragmatism, empiricism is the greatest curse of American thought. You must inoculate younger comrades against its infection."* —Leon Trotsky

As Joe Biden says, if he wins the election, "nothing will fundamentally change." Like all establishment Democrats, Biden represents the continuation of the *status quo ante* Trump. Outside of election season, Biden does not even claim to stand on the side of working people. But the catastrophic possibility of a second Trump term demands a "pragmatic" approach to the elections November 3, say many self-described "progressives" and more than a few "socialists."

The common sense for progressives and much of the U.S. Left says that, while Biden may have flaws, these flaws pale in comparison to another four years of Trump. Therefore, those concerned with fighting oppression and climate catastrophe are told we have only one option—vote the lesser evil.

Of course, these same progressives admit that Biden is a fierce defender of corporate interests. He has a reactionary record as a Senator and as Vice President on immigration, policing, and climate. He refuses to back free, universal healthcare, even in the face of the largest public health crisis in a century. But his agenda differs from that of Trump. Biden would not appoint anti-choice Christian fundamentalists to the Supreme Court and does not court the fascist right.

Some on the Left, like *Jacobin's* Eric Blanc or *New Politics's* Dan LaBotz even recognize that workers need a party of their own, a party independent of the two parties of big capital. But such a party is years (or more!) away, they say, so we must support the best candidate we have now—even if that candidate happens to be a friend of the fossil fuel,

pharmaceutical and banking industries. A vote not cast for Biden is a vote for Trump, say these "pragmatic" socialists. Others on the left, such as Tithi Bhattacharya stopped short of calling socialists to vote against the two parties of capital, instead saying that it is acceptable for socialists to vote for Biden, as long as we vow to fight against his policies for the next four years.<sup>1</sup>

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**Only exceptional strategic clarity and determination will build the material force capable of liquidating capitalism—a party of the working class.**

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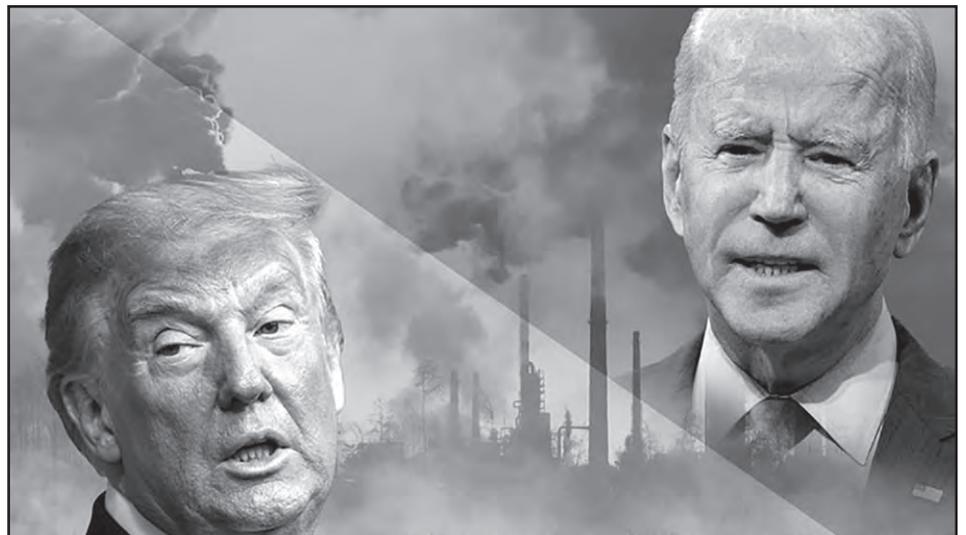
## Pragmatism's importance to American ideology

Marx famously wrote in *The German Ideology* that the "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, *i.e.*, the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force." In

the United States, no intellectual force has spread more successfully than pragmatism, achieving a status akin to dogma. The philosophy dominates every sphere of politics and business. Even the Left, by and large, has not broken from a pragmatic outlook.

Pragmatism, put simply, is the theory of expediency. In the words of Lenin, pragmatism "ridicules the metaphysics both of idealism and materialism, acclaims experience and only experience, [and] recognizes practice as the only criterion..." Any proposition, says pragmatism, is useful only if it results immediately in a desired outcome. Theory and principles are tossed aside as soon as they're no longer needed to achieve an objective.

We don't need to look far for pragmatism's influence on U.S. politics. American politicians, especially Democrats, will rarely put forward legislation they view as unpassable in Congress. For all the attention it has gotten, a Green New Deal has still not been put forward for a vote by Democrats. Both Republicans and Democrats tout their ability to "reach across the aisle" and make compromises with political opponents.



Candidates for office flip positions overnight depending on what constituency needs to be won. Kamala Harris, for example, unequivocally declared her intention to ban fracking during the Democratic primaries, and Joe Biden suggested he'd do the same. Now, however, the Biden-Harris ticket vigorously defends fracking, given the importance of winning Pennsylvania and reassuring the fossil fuel industry.

And nowhere is pragmatism more evident than in business. Capitalism's emphasis on short-term profit mandates pragmatic decisions rather than overarching theories. Trial-and-error is its *modus operandi*. Quarterly profit reports, rather than long-term strategies, guide the actions of corporations. In this way, despite lofty "mission statements" and humanitarian "core values," businesses will throw ten thousand workers in the streets from one day to the next if the situation demands it. Exxon, Shell, and BP will continue to extract and burn fossil fuels even as carbon emissions threaten the very existence of human society. The pharmaceutical giants will not share trade secrets with each other even though cooperation would mean the faster development of vaccines and life-saving medicines, because any shared knowledge would threaten their bottom line.

### **The pragmatic Left**

This logic of pragmatism has regrettably contaminated the discourse within the U.S. Left too. This manifestation of "left" pragmatism can be seen most clearly in the campaign to vote for the lesser evil. Neal Meyer and Eric Blanc from the Bread and Roses caucus of the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America,) in their unironically titled "This Time It's Different," call Biden a "hardened neoliberal," and "not a friend of the working class," but are ready to back him until November 3 because of the "unprecedented threat" posed by Trump. And not only should socialists vote for Biden, say Meyer and

Blanc, they should also "get out the vote for Biden" in every way possible. Any principles of class independence and anti-imperialism should be temporarily put aside in order to win a more favorable terrain for the left.

In September, an open letter entitled "Dump Trump, Then Battle Biden" was published and signed by dozens of progressive figures like Noam Chomsky and Barbara Ehrenreich and even some who identify themselves as Marxists like Dan LaBotz and Victor Wallis. Biden, the authors admit, is " beholden to corporate interests." However, "ending the Trump presidency is, by far, the most important goal that can be achieved between now and January." Chomsky described Trump as "the worst criminal in history, undeniably." (We will ignore for that moment that Chomsky and other progressives described Bush II in similar terms, justifying their appeal for a lesser evil vote in 2004.) The only "pragmatic" response, given these circumstances, is to support Biden in the upcoming elections.

Unfortunately, Biden's own pragmatism allows him to shift further and further to the right, courting conservatives, Wall Street, and big capital, with the conviction that he has the "progressive vote" already locked up. So, Biden can declare, without much hesitation, his support for the repressive and racist police forces around the country even in the face of an uprising against police violence. "Shoot them in the leg," says the Democratic candidate. Having earned the high praise of progressives for his climate plan, Biden can quickly change course to appeal to the oil and gas executives, stating openly that "we're not getting rid of fossil fuels for a long time."

### **Pragmatism's historical roots**

To understand how the logic of pragmatism rose to such prominence in the United States, we must take a brief look at its historical theorists and expressions.

In the 19th century, American pragmatism's most notable figures included William James and Charles Pierce; in the first half of the 20th, John Dewey was progressive pragmatism's theoretical leader. Dewey was perhaps the most well-known educator and public philosopher in the United States. He chaired the philosophy department at the University of Chicago, which included both psychology and pedagogy. He helped found New York's New School. His work continues to influence models for public education across the country. During the Moscow Trials, Dewey's progressivism led to his leadership of the Commission of Inquiry, which came to be known as the Dewey Commission, to investigate the charges brought against Leon Trotsky by the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. In a major defeat for Stalinism internationally, the Dewey Commission would go on to clear Trotsky's name, although on a pragmatic rather than a Marxist basis.

Dewey's philosophy rejected grand theories as a means to obtaining knowledge. Truth is determined by practical activity above all. Dewey, therefore, stood in opposition to both fascism and Marxism. "For in spite of itself any movement that thinks and acts in terms of an 'ism becomes so involved in reaction against other 'isms that it is unwittingly controlled by them. For it then forms its principles by reaction against them instead of by a comprehensive, constructive survey of actual needs, problems, and possibilities," he wrote.

The political expression of progressive pragmatism in the late 19th and early 20th century was populism, with parties like the People's Party, the Progressive Party, and the Farmer-Labor Party which sought to temper capitalism's worst impulses but without seeking to overturn it. Populism, a movement of the small farmers and the middle class, needed pragmatism. Why? The idealism of Kant or Hegel taught that freedom could be achieved

in the mind. But the struggling middle classes needed practical activity to protect themselves against big capitalist monopolies. Hence, pragmatism was a reflection of their class interests.

### **Pragmatism vs. Marxism**

In understanding the conflict between pragmatism and revolutionary Marxist theory, an instructive text is George Novack's book *Pragmatism vs. Marxism: An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy*. In his introduction, Novack says he undertook the work as a fulfillment of Trotsky's wish to see a "thorough *critique* of pragmatism from a Marxist standpoint."

When Novack visited Trotsky in Mexico, the old Bolshevik said "Upon going back to the United States, you comrades must at once take up the struggle against [Max] Eastman's distortion and repudiation of dialectical materialism. There is nothing more important than this. Pragmatism, empiricism is the greatest curse of American thought. You must inoculate younger comrades against its infection."

Novack's contribution came 30 years after the murder of the Russian revolutionary leader at the hands of a Stalinist agent in Mexico. Novack notes that pragmatism originated among the middle class of the newly-formed United States, a nation generally unencumbered by the old pre-capitalist institutions of Europe such as the church or the aristocracy. There was no reverence either for the divine right of kings. The United States "became a happy hunting ground for adventurers, innovators, enterprising individuals on the move and on the make. The spirit of initiative, the willingness to disregard routine and try something new to see what comes out of it is a deep trait of the American character."

This need to innovate and to toss aside long-held beliefs was therefore the basis of American pragmatism. As Novack says, "Just as the bourgeoisie repudiated unproductive labor in mate-

rial production, their thinkers turned away from theories which justified pursuits not immediately productive or gainful." The self-made man, pragmatism's highest ideal, has no use for dogma. He overcomes the obstacles in front of him through his own ingenuity.

Pragmatism also drew heavily from the influence of Darwin, whose theory of natural selection challenged the church and the feudal order. Though revolutionary for the sciences at the time, Darwin's evolutionary ideas were still a product of his bourgeois worldview. Unlike Marx and Engels, the great English naturalist excluded the possibility of sudden and rapid changes. Evolution, in Darwin's view, could only take place gradually. It was an outlook that fit perfectly with pragmatism since pragmatists never proposed the overthrow of the existing order, but rather its continual improvement through reforms. It was clear to the pragmatists that capitalism had created immense wealth for a small minority while the majority suffered. But they clung to the belief that by tinkering around the edges, a just and democratic capitalist society could be built.

Yet despite these progressive beginnings, says Novack, "pragmatism was to be sucked under by the ebb tide of capitalist reaction as the twentieth century unfolded." Pragmatism is the guiding philosophy behind imperialism's conquest of the globe. Allies and enemies are determined not by their level of "democracy" or "human rights" but rather their willingness to carry out U.S. objectives. Calculations about whether or not to launch new military interventions are made over the public support and impact on the deficit, not any respect for sovereignty or human life.

### **A workers' party requires a break from pragmatism**

The pragmatic Left is correct when they point out that there is no workers' party in the United States that we can

support today. They ignore, however, that it was the logic of lesser evilism that has been largely responsible for the absence of such a party. A party of the working class does not drop out of the sky. It requires years of dedicated work by revolutionaries who reject all cooperation with the capitalist class. It requires exposing the Democrats at every opportunity as defenders of imperialism, mass incarceration, deportations, and fossil fuel extraction. Such work necessarily precludes the strategy of "lesser evilism," which tells us every four years that the working class needs to line up behind the liberal wing of the ruling class.

Pragmatism is fundamentally incapable of putting forward a strategy for liberation of the working class and the oppressed. It substitutes shortcuts, like voting for the lesser evil, for the resolution of the strategic problems that arise in revolutionary struggle. Winning socialism requires a rejection of pragmatic logic. Only exceptional strategic clarity and determination will build the material force capable of liquidating capitalism—a party of the working class.

—*Left Voice*, November 2, 2020

<https://www.leftvoice.org/against-pragmatism-socialists-shouldnt-vote-for-the-lesser-evil>

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1 Correction: This article previously stated that *Spectre* editor Tithi Bhattacharya said that socialists must support Joe Biden. The article has been amended to reflect her position.

# Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop

BY OFFICER A. CAB



Officer A. Cab

*I was a police officer for nearly ten years and I was a bastard. We all were.*

*This essay has been kicking around in my head for years now and I've never felt confident enough to write it. It's a time in my life I'm ashamed of. It's a time that I hurt people and, through inaction, allowed others to be hurt. It's a time that I acted as a violent agent of capitalism and white supremacy. Under the guise of public safety, I personally ruined people's lives but in so doing, made the public no safer...so did the family members and close friends of mine who also bore the badge alongside me.*

*But enough is enough.*

*The reforms aren't working. Incrementalism isn't happening. Unarmed Black, indigenous, and people of color are being killed by cops in the streets and the police are savagely attacking the people protesting these murders.*

*American policing is a thick blue tumor strangling the life from our communities and if you don't believe it when the poor and the marginalized say it, if you don't believe it when you see cops across the country shooting journalists with less-lethal bullets and caustic chemicals, maybe you'll believe it when you hear it straight from the pig's mouth.*

## **Why am I writing this**

*As someone who went through the training, hiring, and socialization of a career in law enforcement, I wanted to give a first-hand account of why I believe police officers are the way they are. Not to excuse their behavior, but to explain it and to indict the structures that perpetuate it.*

*I believe that if everyone understood how we're trained and brought up in the profession, it would inform the demands our communities should be making of a new way of community safety. If I tell you how we were made, I hope it will empower you to unmake us.*

*One of the other reasons I've struggled to write this essay is that I don't want to center the conversation on myself and my big salty boo-hoo feelings about my bad choices. It's a toxic white impulse to see atrocities and think "How can I make this about me?" So, I hope you'll take me at my word that this account isn't meant to highlight me, but rather the hundred-thousand of me in every city in the country. It's about the structure that made me (that I chose to pollute myself with) and it's my meager contribution to the cause of radical justice.*

## **Yes, all cops are bastards**

I was a police officer in a major metropolitan area in California with a predominantly poor, non-white population (with a large proportion of first-generation immigrants.) One night during briefing, our watch commander told us that the city council had requested a new zero tolerance policy. Against murderers, drug dealers, or child predators?

No, against homeless people collecting cans from recycling bins.

See, the city had some kickback deal with the waste management company where waste management got paid by the government for our expected ton-

nage of recycling. When homeless people "stole" that recycling from the waste management company, they were putting that cheaper contract in peril. So, we were to arrest as many recyclers as we could find.

Even for me, this was a stupid policy and I promptly blew Sarge off. But a few hours later, Sarge called me over to assist him. He was detaining a 70-year-old immigrant who spoke no English, who he'd seen picking a coke can out of a trash bin. He ordered me to arrest her for stealing trash. I said, "Sarge, c'mon, she's an old lady." He said, "I don't give a shit. Hook her up, that's an order." And...I did. She cried the entire way to the station and all through the booking process. I couldn't even comfort her because I didn't speak Spanish. I felt disgusting but I was ordered to make this arrest and I wasn't willing to lose my job for her.

If you're tempted to feel sympathy for me, don't. I used to happily hassle the homeless under other circumstances. I researched obscure penal codes so I could arrest people in homeless encampments for lesser known crimes like "remaining too close to railroad property" (369i of the California Penal Code.) I used to call it "planting warrant seeds" since I knew they wouldn't make their court dates and we could arrest them again and again for warrant violations.

We used to have informal contests for who could cite or arrest someone for the weirdest law. DUI on a bicycle, non-regulation number of brooms on your tow truck (27700(a)(1) of the California Vehicle Code...shit like that. For me, police work was a logic puzzle for arresting people, regardless of their actual threat to the community. As ashamed as I am to admit it, it needs to be said: stripping people of their freedom felt like a game to me for many years.

I know what you're going to ask: did I ever plant drugs? Did I ever plant a gun on someone? Did I ever make a false arrest or file a false report? Believe it or not, the answer is no. Cheating was no fun, I liked to get my stats the "legitimate" way. But I knew officers who kept a little baggie of whatever or maybe a pocket knife that was a little too big in their war bags (yeah, we called our duffelbags "war bags....") Did I ever tell anybody about it? No, I did not. Did I ever confess my suspicions when cocaine suddenly showed up in a gang member's jacket? No, I did not.

In fact, let me tell you about an extremely formative experience: in my police academy class, we had a clique of around six trainees who routinely bullied and harassed other students: intentionally scuffing another trainee's shoes to get them in trouble during inspection, sexually harassing female trainees, cracking racist jokes, and so on. Every quarter, we were to write anonymous evaluations of our squadmates. I wrote scathing accounts of their behavior, thinking I was helping keep bad apples out of law enforcement and believing I would be protected. Instead, the academy staff read my complaints to them out loud and outed me to them and never punished them, causing me to get harassed for the rest of my academy class. That's how I learned that even police leadership hates rats. That's why no one is "changing things from the inside." They can't, the structure won't allow it.

And that's the point of what I'm telling you. Whether you were my sergeant, legally harassing an old woman, me, legally harassing our residents, my fellow trainees bullying the rest of us, or "the bad apples" illegally harassing "shitbags," we were all in it together. I knew cops that pulled women over to flirt with them. I knew cops who would pepper spray sleeping bags so that homeless people would have to throw them away. I knew cops that intentionally provoked anger in suspects so they

could claim they were assaulted. I was particularly good at winding people up verbally until they lashed out so I could fight them. Nobody spoke out. Nobody stood up. Nobody betrayed the code.

None of us protected the people (you) from bad cops.

This is why "All cops are bastards." Even your uncle, even your cousin, even your mom, even your brother, even your best friend, even your spouse, even me. Because even if they wouldn't Do The Thing themselves, they will almost never rat out another officer who Does The Thing, much less stop it from happening.

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**Understand:  
Police officers are part  
of the state monopoly  
on violence and all  
police training  
reinforces this  
monopoly as a  
cornerstone of police  
work, a source of  
honor and pride.**

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### Bastard 101

I could write an entire book of the awful things I've done, seen done, and heard others bragging about doing. But, to me, the bigger question is "How did it get this way?" While I was a police officer in a city 30 miles from where I lived, many of my fellow officers were from the community and treated their neighbors just as badly as I did. While every cop's individual biases come into play, it's the profession itself that is toxic, and it starts from day-one of training.

Every police academy is different but all of them share certain features—taught by old cops, run like a paramilitary bootcamp, strong emphasis on

protecting yourself more than anyone else. The majority of my time in the academy was spent doing aggressive physical training and watching video after video after video of police officers being murdered on duty.

I want to highlight this: nearly everyone coming into law enforcement is bombarded with dash cam footage of police officers being ambushed and killed. Over and over and over. Colorless VHS mortality plays, cops screaming for help over their radios, their bodies going limp as a pair of taillights speed away into a grainy black horizon. In my case, with commentary from an old racist cop who used to brag about assaulting Black Panthers.

To understand why all cops are bastards, you need to understand one of the things almost every training officer told me when it came to using force:

"I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by six."

Meaning, "I'll take my chances in court rather than risk getting hurt." We're able to think that way because police unions are extremely overpowering and because of the generous concept of Qualified Immunity, a legal theory which says a cop generally can't be held personally liable for mistakes they make doing their job in an official capacity.

When you look at the actions of the officers who killed George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, Mike Brown, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, or Freddie Gray, remember that they, like me, were trained to recite "I'd rather be judged by 12" as a mantra. Even if Mistakes Were Made™, the city (meaning the taxpayers, meaning you) pays the settlement, not the officer.

Once police training has—through repetition, indoctrination, and violent spectacle—promised officers that everyone in the world is out to kill them, the next lesson is that your partners are the only people protecting you. Occasionally, this is even true: I've had encounters turn on me rapidly to

the point I legitimately thought I was going to die, only to have other officers come and turn the tables.

One of the most important thought leaders in law enforcement is Colonel Dave Grossman, a “killologist” who wrote an essay called “Sheep, Wolves, and Sheepdogs.” Cops are the sheepdogs, bad guys are the wolves, and the citizens are the sheep (!). Colonel Grossman makes sure to mention that to a stupid sheep, sheepdogs look more like wolves than sheep, and that’s why they dislike you.

This “they hate you for protecting them and only I love you, only I can protect you” tactic is familiar to students of abuse. It’s what abusers do to coerce their victims into isolation, pulling them away from friends and family and ensnaring them in the abuser’s toxic web. Law enforcement does this too, pitting the officer against civilians. “They don’t understand what you do, they don’t respect your sacrifice, they just want to get away with crimes. You’re only safe with us.”

I think the Wolves *vs.* Sheepdogs dynamic is one of the most important elements as to why officers behave the way they do. Every single second of my training, I was told that criminals were not a legitimate part of their community, that they were individual bad actors, and that their bad actions were solely the result of their inherent criminality. Any concept of systemic trauma, generational poverty, or white supremacist oppression was either never mentioned or simply dismissed. After all, most people don’t steal, so anyone who does isn’t “most people,” right? To us, anyone committing a crime deserved anything that happened to them because they broke the “social contract.” And yet, it was never even a question as to whether the power structure above them was honoring any sort of contract back.

Understand: Police officers are part of the state monopoly on violence and

all police training reinforces this monopoly as a cornerstone of police work, a source of honor and pride. Many cops fantasize about getting to kill someone in the line of duty, egged on by others that have. One of my training officers told me about the time he shot and killed a mentally ill homeless man wielding a big stick. He bragged that he “slept like a baby” that night. Official training teaches you how to be violent effectively and when you’re legally allowed to deploy that violence, but “unofficial training” teaches you to desire violence, to expand the breadth of your violence without getting caught, and to erode your own compassion for desperate people so you can justify punitive violence against them.

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**Under no circumstances  
assume any police  
officer is acting in  
good faith.**

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**How to be a bastard**

I have participated in some of these activities personally, others are ones I either witnessed personally or heard officers brag about openly. Very, very occasionally, I knew an officer who was disciplined or fired for one of these things.

- Police officers will lie about the law, about what’s illegal, or about what they can legally do to you in order to manipulate you into doing what they want.
- Police officers will lie about feeling afraid for their life to justify a use of force after the fact.
- Police officers will lie and tell you they’ll file a police report just to get you off their back.
- Police officers will lie that your cooperation will “look good for you” in court, or that they will “put in a good word for you with

the DA.” The police will never help you look good in court.

- Police officers will lie about what they see and hear to access private property to conduct unlawful searches.
- Police officers will lie and say your friend already ratted you out, so you might as well rat them back out. This is almost never true.
- Police officers will lie and say you’re not in trouble in order to get you to exit a location or otherwise make an arrest more convenient for them.
- Police officers will lie and say that they won’t arrest you if you’ll just “be honest with them” so they know what really happened.
- Police officers will lie about their ability to seize the property of friends and family members to coerce a confession.
- Police officers will write obviously bullshit tickets so that they get time-and-a-half overtime fighting them in court.
- Police officers will search places and containers you didn’t consent to and later claim they were open or “smelled like marijuana.”
- Police officers will threaten you with a more serious crime they can’t prove in order to convince you to confess to the lesser crime they really want you for.
- Police officers will employ zero tolerance on races and ethnicities they dislike and show favor and lenience to members of their own group.
- Police officers will use intentionally extra-painful maneuvers and holds during an arrest to provoke “resistance” so they can further assault the suspect.
- Some police officers will plant drugs and weapons on you,

sometimes to teach you a lesson, sometimes if they kill you somewhere away from public view.

- Some police officers will assault you to intimidate you and threaten to arrest you if you tell anyone.
- A non-trivial number of police officers will steal from your house or vehicle during a search.
- A non-trivial number of police officers commit intimate partner violence and use their status to get away with it.
- A non-trivial number of police officers use their position to entice, coerce, or force sexual favors from vulnerable people.

If you take nothing else away from this essay, I want you to tattoo this onto your brain forever: if a police officer is telling you something, it is probably a lie designed to gain your compliance.

Do not talk to cops and never, ever believe them. Do not “try to be helpful” with cops. Do not assume they are trying to catch someone else instead of you. Do not assume what they are doing is “important” or even legal. Under no circumstances assume any police officer is acting in good faith.

Also, and this is important, do not talk to cops.

I just remembered something, do not talk to cops.

Checking my notes real quick, something jumped out at me:

Do not fucking talk to cops. Ever.

Say, “I don’t answer questions,” and ask if you’re free to leave; if so, leave. If not, tell them you want your lawyer and that, per the Supreme Court, they must terminate questioning. If they don’t, file a complaint and collect some badges for your mantle.

### **Do the bastards ever help?**

Reading the above, you may be tempted to ask whether cops ever do

anything good. And the answer is, sure, sometimes. In fact, most officers I worked with thought they were usually helping the helpless and protecting the safety of innocent people.

During my tenure in law enforcement, I protected women from domestic abusers, arrested cold-blooded murderers and child molesters, and comforted families who lost children to car accidents and other tragedies. I helped connect struggling people in my community with local resources for food, shelter, and counseling. I deescalated situations that could have turned violent and talked a lot of people down from making the biggest mistake of their lives. I worked with plenty of officers who were individually kind, bought food for homeless residents, or otherwise showed care for their community.

The question is this: did I need a gun and sweeping police powers to help the average person on the average night? The answer is no. When I was doing my best work as a cop, I was doing mediocre work as a therapist or a social worker. My good deeds were listening to people failed by the system and trying to unite them with any crumbs of resources the structure was currently denying them.

It’s also important to note that well over 90 percent of the calls for service I handled were reactive, showing up well after a crime had taken place. We would arrive, take a statement, collect evidence (if any), file the report, and onto the next caper. Most “active” crimes we stopped were someone harmless possessing or selling a small amount of drugs. Very, very rarely would we stop something dangerous in progress or stop something from happening entirely. The closest we could usually get was seeing someone running away from the scene of a crime, but the damage was still done.

And consider this: my job as a police officer required me to be a marriage counselor, a mental health crisis profes-

sional, a conflict negotiator, a social worker, a child advocate, a traffic safety expert, a sexual assault specialist, and, every once in awhile, a public safety officer authorized to use force, all after only a 1000 hours of training at a police academy. Does the person we send to catch a robber also need to be the person we send to interview a rape victim or document a fender bender? Should one profession be expected to do all that important community care (with very little training) all at the same time?

To put this another way: I made double the salary most social workers made to do a fraction of what they could do to mitigate the causes of crimes and desperation. I can count very few times my monopoly on state violence actually made our citizens safer, and even then, it’s hard to say better-funded social safety nets and dozens of other community care specialists wouldn’t have prevented a problem before it started.

Armed, indoctrinated (and dare I say, traumatized) cops do not make you safer; community mutual aid networks who can unite other people with the resources they need to stay fed, clothed, and housed make you safer. I really want to hammer this home: every cop in your neighborhood is damaged by their training, emboldened by their immunity, and they have a gun and the ability to take your life with near-impunity. This does not make you safer, even if you’re white.

### **How do you solve a problem like a bastard?**

So, what do we do about it? Even though I’m an expert on bastardism, I am not a public policy expert nor an expert in organizing a post-police society. So, before I give some suggestions, let me tell you what probably won’t solve the problem of bastard cops:

- Increased “bias” training. A quarterly or even monthly training session is not capable of covering over years of trauma-based

camaraderie in police forces. I can tell you from experience, we don't take it seriously, the prosecutors let us cheat on whatever "tests" there are, and we all made fun of it later over coffee.

- Tougher laws. I hope you understand by now, cops do not follow the law and will not hold each other accountable to the law. Tougher laws are all the more reason to circle the wagons and protect your brothers and sisters.
- More community policing programs. Yes, there is a marginal effect when a few cops get to know members of the community, but look at the protests of 2020: many of the cops pepper-spraying journalists were probably the nice school cop a month ago.

Police officers do not protect and serve people, they protect and serve the *status quo*, "polite society," and private property. Using the incremental mechanisms of the *status quo* will never reform the police because the *status quo* relies on police violence to exist. Capitalism requires a permanent underclass to exploit for cheap labor and it requires the cops to bring that underclass to heel.

Instead of wasting time with minor tweaks, I recommend exploring the following ideas:

- No more qualified immunity. Police officers should be personally liable for all decisions they make in the line of duty.
- No more civil asset forfeiture. Did you know that every year, citizens like you lose more cash and property to unaccountable civil asset forfeiture than to all burglaries combined? The police can steal your stuff without charging you with a crime and it makes some police departments very rich.
- Break the power of police unions. Police unions make it nearly

impossible to fire bad cops and incentivize protecting them to protect the power of the union. A police union is not a labor union; police officers are powerful state agents, not exploited workers.

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- Require malpractice insurance. Doctors must pay for insurance in case they botch a surgery, police officers should do the same for botching a police raid or other use of force. If human decency won't motivate police to respect human life, perhaps hitting their wallet might.
- Defund, demilitarize, and disarm cops. Thousands of police departments own assault rifles, armored personnel carriers, and stuff you'd see in a warzone. Police officers have grants and huge budgets to spend on guns, ammo, body armor, and combat training. 99 percent of calls for service require no armed response, yet when all you have is a gun, every problem feels like target practice. Cities are not safer when unaccountable bullies have a monopoly on state violence and the equipment to execute that monopoly.

One final idea: consider abolishing the police.

I know what you're thinking, "What? We need the police! They protect us!" As someone who did it for nearly a decade, I need you to understand that by and large, police protection is marginal, incidental. It's an illusion created by decades of copaganda designed to fool you into thinking these brave men and women are holding back the barbarians at the gates.

I alluded to this above: the vast majority of calls for service I handled were theft reports, burglary reports, domestic arguments that hadn't escalated into violence, loud parties, (houseless) people loitering, traffic collisions, very minor drug possession, and arguments between neighbors. Mostly the mundane ups and downs of life in the community, with little inherent danger. And, like I mentioned, the vast majority of crimes I responded to (even violent ones) had already happened; my unaccountable license to kill was irrelevant.

What I mainly provided was an "objective" third party with the authority to document property damage, ask people to chill out or disperse, or counsel people not to beat each other up. A trained counselor or conflict resolution specialist would be ten-times more effective than someone with a gun strapped to his hip wondering if anyone would try to kill him when he showed up. There are many models for community safety that can be explored if we get away from the idea that the only way to be safe is to have a man with a M4 rifle prowling your neighborhood ready at a moment's notice to write down your name and birthday after you've been robbed and beaten.

You might be asking, "What about the armed robbers, the gangsters, the drug dealers, the serial killers?" And yes, in the city I worked, I regularly broke up gang parties, found gang members carrying guns, and handled homicides. I've seen some tragic things,

from a reformed gangster shot in the head with his brains oozing out to a fifteen-year-old boy taking his last breath in his screaming mother's arms thanks to a gang member's bullet. I know the wages of violence.

This is where we have to have the courage to ask: why do people rob? Why do they join gangs? Why do they get addicted to drugs or sell them? It's not because they are inherently evil. I submit to you that these are the results of living in a capitalist system that grinds people down and denies them housing, medical care, human dignity, and a say in their government. These are the results of white supremacy pushing people to the margins, excluding them, disrespecting them, and treating their bodies as disposable.

Equally important to remember—disabled and mentally ill people are frequently killed by police officers not trained to recognize and react to disabilities or mental health crises. Some of the people we picture as “violent offenders” are often people struggling with untreated mental illness, often due to economic hardships. Very frequently, the officers sent to “protect the community” escalate this crisis and ultimately wound or kill the person. Your community was not made safer by police violence; a sick member of your community was killed because it was cheaper than treating them. Are you extremely confident you'll never get sick one day too?

Wrestle with this for a minute: if all of someone's material needs were met and all the members of their community were fed, clothed, housed, and dignified, why would they need to join a gang? Why would they need to risk their lives selling drugs or breaking into buildings? If mental healthcare was free and was not stigmatized, how many lives would that save?

Would there still be a few bad actors in the world? Sure, probably. What's my solution for them, you're no doubt

asking. I'll tell you what: generational poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, and for-profit medical care are all problems that can be solved in our lifetimes by rejecting the dehumanizing meat grinder of capitalism and white supremacy. Once that's done, we can work on the edge cases together, with clearer hearts not clouded by a corrupt system.

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**Police officers do not protect and serve people, they protect and serve the *status quo*, “polite society,” and private property.**

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Police abolition is closely related to the idea of prison abolition and the entire concept of banishing the carceral state, meaning, creating a society focused on reconciliation and restorative justice instead of punishment, pain, and suffering—a system that sees people in crisis as humans, not monsters. People who want to abolish the police typically also want to abolish prisons, and the same questions get asked: “What about the bad guys? Where do we put them?” I bring this up because abolitionists don't want to simply replace cops with armed social workers or prisons with casual detention centers full of puffy leather couches and Playstations. We imagine a world not divided into good guys and bad guys, but rather a world where people's needs are met and those in crisis receive care, not dehumanization.

Here's legendary activist and thinker Angela Y. Davis putting it better than I ever could:

“An abolitionist approach that seeks to answer questions such as these would require us to imagine a constellation of alternative strategies and institutions, with the ultimate aim of removing the prison from the

social and ideological landscapes of our society. In other words, we would not be looking for prisonlike substitutes for the prison, such as house arrest safeguarded by electronic surveillance bracelets. Rather, positing decarceration as our overarching strategy, we would try to envision a continuum of alternatives to imprisonment—demilitarization of schools, revitalization of education at all levels, a health system that provides free physical and mental care to all, and a justice system based on reparation and reconciliation rather than retribution and vengeance.” (*Are Prisons Obsolete*, pg. 107)

I'm not telling you I have the blueprint for a beautiful new world. What I'm telling you is that the system we have right now is broken beyond repair and that it's time to consider new ways of doing community together. Those new ways need to be negotiated by members of those communities, particularly Black, indigenous, disabled, houseless, and citizens of color historically shoved into the margins of society. Instead of letting *Fox News* fill your head with nightmares about Hispanic gangs, ask the Hispanic community what they need to thrive. Instead of letting racist politicians scaremonger about pro-Black demonstrators, ask the Black community what they need to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. If you truly desire safety, ask not what your most vulnerable can do for the community, ask what the community can do for the most vulnerable.

**A world with fewer bastards is possible**

If you take only one thing away from this essay, I hope it's this: do not talk to cops. But if you only take two things away, I hope the second one is that it's possible to imagine a different world where unarmed Black people, indigenous people, poor people, disabled people, and people of color are not routinely gunned down by unaccountable police officers. It doesn't have to be

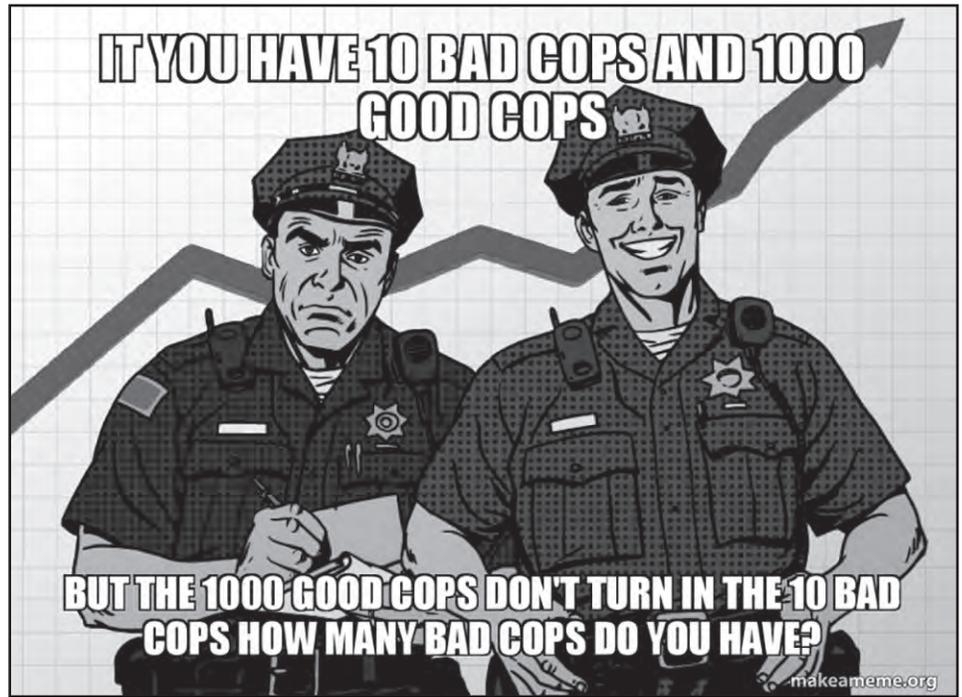
this way. Yes, this requires a leap of faith into community models that might feel unfamiliar, but I ask you:

When you see a man dying in the street begging for breath, don't you want to leap away from that world?

When you see a mother or a daughter shot to death sleeping in their beds, don't you want to leap away from that world?

When you see a twelve-year-old boy executed in a public park for the crime of playing with a toy, Jesus fucking Christ, can you really just stand there and think "This is normal?"

And to any cops who made it this far down, is this really the world you want to live in? Aren't you tired of the trauma? Aren't you tired of the soul sickness inherent to the badge? Aren't you tired of looking the other way when your partners break the law? Are you really willing to kill the next George Floyd, the next Breonna Taylor, the next Tamir Rice? How confident are you that your next use of force will be something you're proud of? I'm writing this for you too: it's wrong what our training did to us, it's wrong that they hardened our hearts to our communities, and it's wrong to pretend this is normal.



Look, I wouldn't have been able to hear any of this for much of my life. You, reading this now, may not be able to hear this yet either. But do me this one favor: just think about it. Just turn it over in your mind for a couple minutes. "Yes, And" me for a minute. Look around you and think about the kind of world you want to live in. Is it one where an all-powerful stranger with a gun keeps you and your neighbors in

line with the fear of death, or can you picture a world where, as a community, we embrace our most vulnerable, meet their needs, heal their wounds, honor their dignity, and make them family instead of desperate outsiders?

If you take only three things away from this essay, I hope the third is this: you and your community don't need bastards to thrive.

—Medium, June 6, 2020

<https://medium.com/@OfcrACab/confessions-of-a-former-bastard-cop-bb14d17bc759>



# U.S. Government has Blood of Millions on its Hands

By DR. NAYVIN GORDON

Trump has repeatedly said that the cure can't be worse than the disease—crushing the COVID-19 pandemic is not worth the cost. Congress, on a nearly unanimous basis, passed the CARES Act which transferred trillions of dollars to Wall Street and Corporate America, but it is “too costly” to eradicate the disease and protect the lives of millions. Trump's favorite advisor Dr. Atlas<sup>1</sup>, a member of the right-wing conservative Hoover Institute, advocates an anti-scientific, deadly “herd immunity”—deliberately allowing the disease to spread through the population. Dr. Atlas was publicly denounced by many Stanford doctors.<sup>2</sup>

All reputable health authorities know that the science of “herd immunity” is achieved by mass vaccination to protect the population from disease.

The White House supports the science deniers at the right wing think tank, the American Institute for Economic Research, that recently published the Great Barrington Declaration.<sup>3</sup> This document advocates allowing widespread infections, illness and death through an anti-scientific policy of “herd immunity.” The *Washington Post* writes, “The plan of The Great Barrington Declaration is endorsing what the president's policy has been for months.”<sup>4</sup> This criminally homicidal policy has already resulted in over 317 thousand U.S. deaths as of December 20, 2020.

There is still no science-based national policy to crush and eliminate the disease. All we hear about is controlling the spread to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed. The news media is filled with reports about the need to slow, control, contain, and manage—no mention of stopping, eradicating or eliminating COVID-19 through basic scientific public health practice which requires tens-of-millions of tests, tracking, and isolation of the infected. The editors of the respected *New England Journal of Medicine* maintain that the standard public health practices have large effects and are not being followed or enforced. Strict quarantine, aggressive tracing and isolation were effective in China, Singapore, South Korea and New Zealand have succeeded in eliminating the disease.<sup>5</sup>

The rich, the one percent, and politicians in many countries, have demanded that business open and we get back to work while they take no responsibility for economic suffering, illness and death. They have failed their United Nations responsibility to protect, and are committing crimes against humanity defined as: Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. The blood of millions is on their hands.

Demand life and social needs before profits—protection at work, health coverage, and economic support while isolated and unable to work. Demand millions of tests daily, an army of trackers, and safe isolation units. We must eradicate this disease to prevent the catastrophe of millions more infections and deaths.

1 “Dr. Scott Atlas resigns November 30, 2020 from Trump administration”

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/30/politics/scott-atlas-resigns-trump-administration-coronavirus-task-force/index.html>

2 <https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/09/12/stanford-doctors-take-aim-at-former-colleague-scott-atlas-trumps-new-adviser-on-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

3 <https://gbdeclaration.org/>

4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/10/14/herd-immunity-barrington-declaration/>

5 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2029812>

Continued from page 15

ties,” Chuck Collins, a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies and one of the authors of the report, wrote in a *Common Dreams* op-ed published Wednesday.

“The contrast between billionaires making no sacrifice while their essential workers make the ultimate sacrifice, risking their health, their families, and their livelihoods is both unethical and corrupt,” Collins added.

The report was produced by Bargaining for the Common Good, the Institute for Policy Studies, and United for Respect and published in partnership with Action Center on Race and the Economy, Americans for Financial Reform, Jobs With Justice, New York Communities for Change, Step Up Louisiana, and Working Washington.

—*Common Dreams*, November 18, 2020

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/11/18/billionaire-bonanza-continues-workers-pounded-pandemic-recession-and-gop-relief?cd->

1 “The Latest: U.S. reaches nearly quarter million daily cases”

The Associated Press, December 19, 2020

<https://apnews.com/article/turkey-coronavirus-pandemic-china-coronavirus-vaccine-michael-pence-1c4be49acc0fd69f4b9248f53cb8491e>



# COVID Economy: A Deliberate Disaster

BY BRUCE LESNICK

With nearly 12 million cases and a quarter million deaths in the U.S. so far (over 55 million cases and 1.3 million deaths world-wide), the COVID 19 pandemic is ravaging civilization. The disease is on track to be the deadliest epidemic since 1918.

The economic fallout for the working class has been severe. In the U.S., unemployment has skyrocketed, with 45.4 million new unemployment claims since March 14. At least 1/6 of those with jobs before the pandemic are now out of work. According to the *New York Times*, “The economic downturn is shaping up to be particularly devastating for renters, who are more likely to be lower-income and work hourly jobs cut during the pandemic.” As many as 40 million, or up to 43 percent of renters, may be facing eviction by the end of the year. Breadlines not seen for generations now stretch for miles. Tens-of-thousands of small businesses have closed; millions more are threatened and may not survive.

Strikingly, all of this was completely avoidable.

To begin with, the atrocious COVID 19 infection and death totals in the U.S. could have been orders of magnitude smaller. How do we know? Because China, with more than four times the U.S. population has had 1/50th as many fatalities! (86,398 cases and 4,634 deaths.) Blame for the failed U.S. response is shared by the President, Congress, both political parties and many corporate conglomerates. How China spectacularly outdid the U.S. and Europe in controlling their COVID outbreak—allowing Chinese citizens to attend work and school and enjoy restaurants, theaters, sporting events and pool parties while the U.S. continues to languish under lockdown—is a story for another time.

The question for now is this: in the midst of a raging pandemic, was immense economic hardship and disruption necessary?

The answer is a resounding no.

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**China, with more than four times the U.S. population has had 1/50th as many fatalities...**

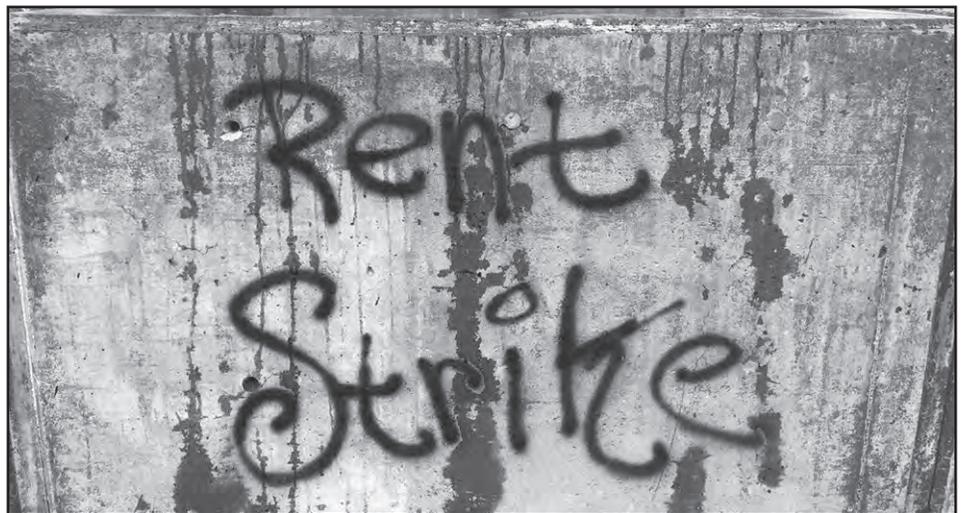
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Five basic measures could have prevented—and still could greatly mitigate—the COVID economic nightmare in the U.S.:

1. Full, no-cost healthcare for everyone while the pandemic lasts. This should cover all healthcare needs, not just COVID 19 related care. No one should need to delay seeking care for any reason during a pandemic. Arguably, such universal care is a right that ought to be available whether or not there’s a global health emergency, but that broader debate can be deferred. Meanwhile denying free, univer-

sal care during a pandemic is self-defeating.

2. Provide a significant monthly payment (\$1,000 or greater) to each adult and child while the pandemic lasts. Among other things, the success of any quarantine depends on people being financially able to stay at home. For efficiency, there should be no means testing. Later, reclaim some of this income from those at the top through a special tax on the wealthiest.
3. Institute a moratorium on all loan, rent and mortgage payments. This is not a deferral of payments that accumulate during the pandemic but the complete suspension of those charges until the pandemic ends. At the end of the pandemic, payments would resume as if no payments had been missed; no additional back payments would be owed. (To include credit card payments in the moratorium, there would need to be a suspension in the use of credit cards for new purchases. Debit cards and cash could continue to be used.)



4. No corporate bailouts. Period. Leaving aside the irresponsible behavior of big business leading up to the pandemic, corporate titans should be able to live on the special monthly government payments like everyone else for the duration of the crisis.
5. Most small businesses would be able to survive on the money people spend from their monthly government payments. Small business owners would not be burdened by rent and loan payments during the crisis, and they and all their employees would receive their own monthly government stipend. Any small business for which this doesn't work could apply for hardship grants. But any big business having trouble surviving should either be allowed to fail or be nationalized and run as a public utility.

### **Rent creates no value**

Unlike the production of needed commodities and useful services, mortgage, insurance, interest and rent payments produce no new value. These payments (collectively referred to as “rent”) merely transfer existing wealth from one person to another or one class of people to another. So, suspending rent during the pandemic has no harmful effect on the real economy. Such a suspension only temporarily halts the upward transfer of wealth. After the pandemic, the country as a whole would not be one cent poorer for having implemented a rent holiday.

By contrast, reduced production of real goods and services—from restaurants, factories, businesses and farms whose employees and customers must shelter during the pandemic—does negatively affect the economy. The monthly government payments can offset some of this. Beyond that, the best that can be done is to defeat the pandemic as quickly as possible in order to return to economic “normality.”

### **Show me the money**

The question “How will we pay for it?” is meant as a showstopper, but it's really a red herring. The U.S. government, as a sovereign currency issuer, can print money whenever it wishes. That's exactly how the government funded the \$6 trillion CARES Act which was touted as COVID relief but was actually a humongous transfer of wealth to those at the top. No new taxes were announced to fund this bipartisan deception. The Treasury just authorized the electronic distribution of additional money.

Not convinced? Still believe that the federal government can only spend what it has previously collected in taxes? Fine. Paying for serious COVID relief is still not a problem. We could take funds from the bloated, pugnacious “defense” budget. Or tax Wall Street and the richest one percent to generate new funds. Either way, political will, not money, is the limiting factor.

### **They're just not that into you**

The failed U.S. response to the COVID 19 pandemic has led to unnecessary death and suffering. Comparing U.S. results with China, Vietnam, New Zealand, South Korea and Singapore makes this clear. China has experienced 0.34 deaths per 100,000 people, while the figure for the U.S. (77.19) is 227 time greater!

The resultant economic hardship was also completely avoidable. The best way to ameliorate COVID-triggered economic fallout would have been to address the pandemic in a scientific, efficient manner, as some countries demonstrated was possible. Trump and the Republicans failed to provide national leadership. But the Democrats are hardly blameless. Despite previous disease-driven wake-up calls, health funding decreased for most years under the Obama administration. Though China first notified the World Health Organization of the

Wuhan outbreak in December 2019, the Democrats prioritized their doomed impeachment initiative in January over mobilizing a healthcare response. Both corporate parties were asleep at the wheel when it came to early COVID mitigation.

But as we've seen, even with infection rates raging throughout the country, the required health response did not necessitate piling economic suffering on top of illness for working people, farmers and small business owners. It's always been possible to fix this problem without the cure being worse than the disease. Choosing a different, more onerous course was a deliberate decision by the powers that be.

Going forward, there's every indication that the incoming Biden administration will offer nothing close to the measures required to ameliorate the COVID economic crisis. As an outspoken opponent of Medicare for All and government spending, Biden will be facing the healthcare emergency having discarded our most potent weapons in advance. The Democrats and Republicans will give us nothing; we have to organize and fight for what's needed. As Frederick Douglass warned, “Power concedes nothing without a demand.”

*Bruce Lesnick is a long-time political activist who lives and writes in Washington State. He blogs at blogspot.com.*

—CounterPunch, November 25, 2020

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/11/25/covid-economy-a-deliberate-disaster/>

# Their “Global Security” is Fueling Our Revolt!

EDITORIAL OF *CONVERGENCES REVOLUTIONNAIRES* PUBLISHED BY THE ETINCELLE FRACTION OF THE NEW ANTI-CAPITALIST PARTY (NPA) IN FRANCE—NOVEMBER 29, 2020

Since mid-November, demonstrations have been surging throughout France against the so-called “global security” bill and its Article 24, which seeks to penalize the dissemination of images of law enforcement officers in the exercise of their duties. On Saturday, November 28th, there was a tidal wave in most cities: marches of trade unions, associations and political groups, but also and above all many young people and not so young people taking to the streets out of indignation, due to their conscience and their fear of being subjected to an increasingly authoritarian system. These several-hundred-thousand people in the streets have spread unrest, even within the ranks of the pro-president-Macron majority, and there is no doubt that a political crisis is opening up for Macron and his government.

## Too much was too much

First of all, this bill dares to propose that, in practice, neither journalists nor any other person can film or show police violence, based on the pretext that this would be “malicious!” And right on the tail of this come the hideous images of cops beating up young migrants and their supporters in a migrant camp in *Place de la République* in Paris—kicking and bludgeoning young Afghans who have nothing left but their tents with which to survive. Finally, we’ve seen the images of a Black music producer being attacked by the cops in his studio, with the use of tear gas. Thanks to a surveillance camera at the studio door there were images! These show police officers continuing to beat him even though he was on the floor. And they even continued to punch him outside of his home—where fortunately a neighbor was filming. These cops even called for police reinforcements, lying about the reality of the facts.

This violence that is on top of the violence that many of us know, and that we sometimes experience ourselves, a violence that, just recently, 14- and 15-year-old high school students suffered while they were simply fighting for minimal health measures in their school system.

## Yes, shame on them! They’d better back off!

Today President Macron, Prime Minister Castex, Minister of the Interior Darmanin and all their bootlicker deputies don’t know how to get out of this mess. Macron says he is ashamed! Castex is trying to invent some trick, a commission of experts that would reframe the famous Article 24 of the “security” bill. Even some pro-Macron deputies quibbled about it. It should be noted that, in the Assembly, it was above all with the full force of the voices of the right and the extreme right that the Global Security Bill was approved. But the popular mobilization, which is far from over, can and must force all of them to back down, to repackage their project and many other things, perhaps. The demonstrators demand the withdrawal of this one article in the bill, but why not the withdrawal of the whole bill, and the resignation of Darmanin, of the

prefect of Paris Lallement, and, while we’re at it, why not the withdrawal of a whole series of policies that are unbearable for the working classes?

## Let us impose our right to democratic freedoms

This bill comes in the context of an intensification of repression in recent years. Those who govern us are wielding weapons—especially in the area of policing—in anticipation of the increased sacrifices they would like to impose on us, particularly to make us pay for their inability to manage the health crisis without economic damage. They are preparing to crack down in the event that, tomorrow, the poor and the exploited raise their heads as they did around the world.

It is therefore not only a question of defending our freedoms, but also and above all of snatching up better ones and going further by posing the problem of real freedoms in a society where money is king and provides those who have money with means that are inaccessible to the majority. The stakes in this arm-wrestling match go far beyond one simple bill.

—*Speak Out Now*, December 1, 2020

<https://speakoutsocialists.org/their-global-security-is-fueling-our-revolt/>



Photo Credit: Christophe Petit Tesson/EPA-EFE (source)

# Israeli Racism in Palestine

BY RAMZY BAROUD

The discussion on institutional Israeli racism against its own Palestinian Arab population has all but ceased following the final approval of the discriminatory Nation-State Law in July 2018. Indeed, the latest addition to Israel's Basic Law is a mere start of a new government-espoused agenda that is designed to further marginalize over a fifth of Israel's population.

On Wednesday, October 28, eighteen members of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) conjured up yet another ploy to target Israeli Arab citizens. They proposed a bill that would revoke Israeli citizenship for any Palestinian Arab prisoner in Israel who, directly or indirectly, receives any financial aid from the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Worthy of mention is that these MKs not only represent right-wing, ultra-right and religious parties, but also the Blue and White (Kahol Lavan) "centrist" party. Namely, the proposed bill already has the support of Israel's parliamentary majority.

But is this really about financial aid for prisoners? Particularly since the PA is nearly bankrupt, and its financial contributions to the families of Palestinian prisoners, even within the Occupied Territories—West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza—is symbolic?

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**Israeli racism is not random and cannot be simply classified as yet another human rights violation.**

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Here is an alternative context. On Thursday, October 29, the Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, revealed that the Israeli government of right-wing Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, plans to expand the jurisdiction of the Jewish town of Harish in northern Israel by 50 percent. The aim is to prevent Palestinians from becoming the majority in that area.

The contingency plan was formulated by Israel's Housing Ministry as a swift response to an internal document, which projects that, by the year 2050, Palestinian Arabs will constitute 51 percent of that region's population of 700,000 residents.

These are just two examples of recent actions taken within two days, damning evidence that, indeed, the Nation-State law was the mere preface of a long period of institutional racism, which ultimately aims at winning a one-sided demographic war that was launched by Israel against the Palestinian people many years ago.

Since outright ethnic cleansing—which Israel practiced during and after the wars of 1948 and 1967—is not an option, at least not for now, Israel is finding other ways to ensure a Jewish majority in Israel itself, in Jerusalem, in Area C within the occupied West Bank and, by extension, everywhere else in Palestine.

Israeli dissident historian, Professor Ilan Pappé, refers to this as "incremental genocide." This slow-paced ethnic cleansing includes the expansion of the illegal Jewish settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the proposed annexation of nearly a third of the Occupied Territories.

The besieged Gaza Strip is a different story. Winning a demographic war in a densely populated but small region of two million inhabitants living within 365 square kilometers (140.927 square miles), was never feasible. The so-called "redeployment" out of Gaza by late Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in 2005 was a strategic decision, which aimed at cutting Israel's losses in Gaza in favor of expediting the colonization process in the West Bank and the Naqab Desert. Indeed, most of Gaza's illegal Jewish settlers were eventually relocated to these demographically-contested regions.



Photograph Source: International Solidarity Movement, Palestine

But how is Israel to deal with its own Palestinian Arab population, which now constitutes a sizeable demographic minority and an influential, often united, political bloc?

In the Israeli general elections of March 2020, united Arab Palestinian political parties contesting under the umbrella group, The Joint List, achieved their greatest electoral success yet, as they emerged as Israel's third-largest political party. This success rang alarm bells among Israel's Jewish ruling elites, leading to the formation of Israel's current "unity government." Israel's two major political parties, Likud and Kahol Lavan, made it clear that no Arab parties would be included in any government coalition.

A strong Arab political constituency represents a nightmare scenario for Israel's government planners, who are obsessed with demographics and the marginalization of Palestinian Arabs in every possible arena. Hence, the very representatives of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel become a target for political repression.

In a report published in September 2019, the rights group, Amnesty International, revealed that "Palestinian members of the Knesset in Israel are increasingly facing discriminatory attacks."

"Despite being democratically elected like their Jewish Israeli counterparts, Palestinian MKs are the target of deep-rooted discrimination and undue restrictions that hamstring their ability

to speak out in defense of the rights of the Palestinian people," Amnesty stated.

These revelations were communicated by Amnesty just prior to the September 27 elections. The targeting of Palestinian citizens of Israel is reminiscent of similar harassment and targeting of Palestinian officials and parties in the Occupied Territories, especially prior to local or general elections. Namely, Israel views its own Palestinian Arab population through the same prism that it views its militarily occupied Palestinians.

Since its establishment on the ruins of historic Palestine, and until 1979, Israel governed its Palestinian population through the Defense (Emergency) Regulations. The arbitrary legal system imposed numerous restrictions on those Palestinians who were allowed to remain in Israel following the 1948 Nakba, or ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

In practice, however, the emergency rule was lifted in name only. It was merely redefined, and replaced—according to the Israel-based Adalah rights group—by over 65 laws that directly target the Palestinian Arab minority of Israel. The Nation-State Law, which denies Israel's Arab minority their legal status, therefore, protec-

tion under international law, further accentuates Israel's relentless war on its Arab minority.

Moreover, "the definition of Israel as 'the Jewish State' or 'the State of the Jewish People' makes inequality a practical, political and ideological reality for Palestinian citizens of Israel," according to Adalah.

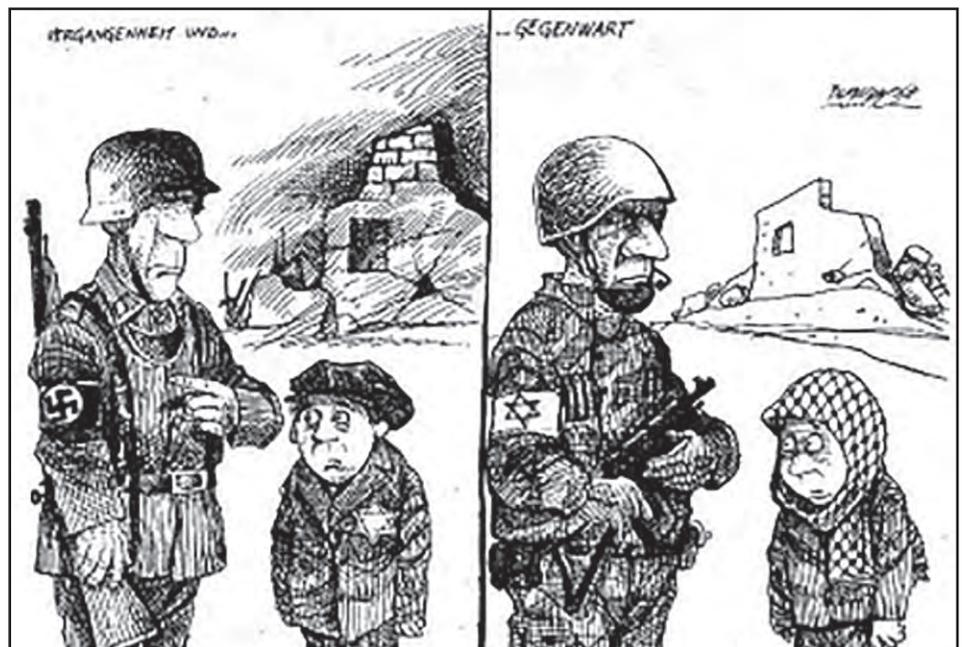
Israeli racism is not random and cannot be simply classified as yet another human rights violation. It is the core of a sophisticated plan that aims at the political marginalization and economic strangulation of Israel's Palestinian Arab minority within a constitutional, thus "legal," framework.

Without fully appreciating the end goal of this Israeli strategy, Palestinians and their allies will not have the chance to properly combat it, as they certainly should.

*Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle.*

—CounterPunch, November 10, 2020

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/11/10/escalating-the-demographic-war-the-strategic-goal-of-israeli-racism-in-palestine-2/>



## Incarcerated Women Punished for Their Trauma

BY ELIZABETH HAWES

At Minnesota's Shakopee Correctional Facility for women, where I am incarcerated, solitude is something we seldom have a chance to experience. Loud, muffled over-head announcements begin every morning at 5:30 and continue until 9:30 P.M. when we are counted for the last time of the day. There is little privacy; everyone can hear each other's business when we talk on the phone. Every aspect of our life is micromanaged, from when our blinds have to be raised and lowered, and how many books we can put on a shelf in our room, to the date we have to wear our winter coats regardless of the outside temperature. Prison is manila-walled, grey-clothed and full of blue plastic chairs. Any prisoner could tell you what's for breakfast on a Wednesday or what's on TV on a Monday night because our lives are a study in monotony. All of us are called "Offender" all day long.

By its very nature, prison is isolating. Stripped of our personal physical identifiers—wedding rings, contact lenses, clothing and makeup, we are away from our homes, family, pets, employment, favorite activities, foods, computers and green spaces. Our lives are condensed. To survive, we cling to what comforts us—small rituals that give us a sense of normalcy and help us retain our dignity. For some, this means going to the gym or walking outside in the courtyard. For others it means calling their mom or child every morning. Some people eat a lot, some church a lot, some read a lot, some play cards with their friends every day. The communities built in prison, as unlikely as they appear, are vital. Whether we have one good friend or a larger group of friends, our community relationships help us navigate and stay bal-

anced while we are here. This balance is upended when we are taken to solitary confinement, or as most people in prison call it, segregation.

In Shakopee, the segregation unit is separate from the other living units. There are 33 segregation beds in 33 cells. Each cell is ten-by-12-feet and contains a narrow bed with a thin foam pad, two blankets and a pillow covered with a water-resistant material. Bolted to the wall is a metal sink with buttons to push for water and a metal toilet. There is a light switch, an outside-looking window, and a "mirror" made of a reflective metal. The door to the cell is wood and has a narrow four-by-20-inch window and slit to push through a tray of food, change of clothes, or medicine. The mail is slid under the door. There is a small desk and a stool attached to the wall. Some cells have a camera in them, or a camera pointed at them.

The most common response when asked about segregation conditions was that it was cold.

I see people taken to segregation nearly every day—often several times a day.

When people are brought to solitary in this prison, they are handcuffed unless they are pregnant. Two female officers stand at the open door of the cell and like any strip search, have a prisoner take off their clothes piece by piece and hand them to the correctional officers (CO) who pat the items down and shake them. Once naked, prisoners are asked to bend at the waist and run their fingers through their hair. They are asked to show behind their ears, open their mouth, show the bottoms of their feet, and squat and

cough three times. A pillow pack (a pillowcase containing two flat sheets, two towels and a washcloth) and clothes (plastic sandals, two socks, one pair of underwear and a pair of orange scrubs) are given out. People can wear their own bra. They are allowed an inhaler, a personal phone book, glasses, hairbrush and up to ten envelopes. They are also given a small bag of generic toiletries, five sheets of paper, a cup and a small rubber pen.

They are allowed to change their clothes every day and shower every other day.

But worse than the physical austerity of solitary, is the severe psychological harm it delivers. The boredom and loneliness is extreme and often amplifies mental illness, psychosis and suicidal tendencies.

People are led to believe that segregation is used to contain extremely dangerous, violent people. In a women's prison at least, this is hardly the case. While women can be and are sent to solitary for fighting, the truth is women are more often there because of mental health issues and for a wide range of petty infractions that have nothing to do with violence. Between April and July 2019, I interviewed 51 people who had gone to segregation and discovered that regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation, the common denominator was not a tendency for violence, but a history of trauma.

The demographics of the prison population at Shakopee, where I am incarcerated, break down like this: 59 percent are white, 20 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native, 16 percent are Black, four percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and five percent

are Hispanic. The youngest prisoner is 19. The oldest is 87. The average age is 37. Eighty-five percent are mothers. Fifty eight percent are here on drug-related offences.

The lack of mental healthcare was the most prevalent topic during the interviews. The consensus was that segregation made mental health issues worse. People often felt suicidal or very depressed while isolated, and felt they were not given the help they needed before, during or after their segregation. As of late November 2020, there is only one psychiatrist for the 407 people in this prison, most of whom have PTSD and backgrounds of abuse.

Solitary confinement is often used as a quarantine for mental health. Jayde Moon, a white woman in her late 20s, has been to segregation six times.

“Now they say that seg is not ‘punishment,’ ...but there is a girl I know there who bangs her head ‘til it bleeds just to get out of her cell. They isolate people so they don’t have to deal with them. Why don’t they just chop off a body part? It is just as outdated. As a society, don’t we have a better way to deal with mental illness? Let’s look at the why. The root cause. Let’s look at passive women who have been repeatedly exposed to trauma and help them.”

Patti Becht, a white woman in her 50s who has always struggled with mental illness, said, “Mentally ill people should not be locked in seg. They should be safe, not condemned. I hear voices all the time. Christmas music all the time. Seg amplifies this.”

A Native woman in her mid-30s said, “Seg feels normal to me. When I was young, I would often hide in small spaces to feel safe. Being hidden feels safe to me. I am often lost within the outside world.” Darcy Drobec, a white person in her mid-40s who has been to segregation 45 times, said, “Isolation makes everything worse. It makes people want to hurt themselves or hurt

others. It should only be used in extreme cases.”

If anyone in the prison’s general population says they are having suicidal thoughts, the protocol is to take them to segregation and put them on COS (Constant Observational Status,) constantly watched by guards. They are usually there for ten days. A white woman in her mid-40s said, “I was told

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**As of late November 2020, there is only one psychiatrist for the 407 people in this prison, most of whom have PTSD and backgrounds of abuse.**

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by a CO that the only way I could get help for my mental illness was to tell them [staff] I had suicidal thoughts and be put in segregation. This was true. Medical staff had taken me off all my Seroquel—all at once, which put me in a state of psychosis. I needed help. I wasn’t getting help.”

Many of the mental health issues for which people are placed in solitary confinement are based on trauma. I met with a young Spanish-speaking woman in her 20s who had been to solitary five times because of her inability to urinate for drug tests. Testing for drug use is done randomly at the prison. When pulled for a UA (Urine Analysis), a prisoner is stripped in front of two female COs who then stand over the prisoner as they urinate into a cup. This woman is unable to urinate because of past sexual trauma. She was sexually abused for 14 years. There is no reason that the door could not be shut and a person could do their business in private. The water is turned off in the room; a prisoner would not be able to alter their urine sample.

To speak with women about their solitary narrative, I would go to the courtyard and ask people if they had been to segregation and if they had, could I ask them a few questions about their experience. Soon I didn’t have to ask. Once women understood what I was doing they approached me. “When you have a minute, I would like to talk to you.” I soon learned that more people had been to segregation than I had



A woman places a rose in front of the Hall of Justice in Los Angeles, California, on June 5, 2020 in solidarity with victims of state violence inside and outside of LA County’s jail system, one of the largest in the world.

thought, and everyone seemed to want to share their story.

Over and over, I heard comments about how segregation amplified people's depression. A Black woman in her 50s told me,

"Seg takes me back. It means failure to me. I'm let down. I fight for what I want, for what is right. I heard, 'You'll never be nothing' all my life. Seg gives me sad feelings."

Sabrina Flowers is an African American woman in her early 20s who leaves prison in a month. She has been to solitary 35 times. She told me, "I'm often suicidal up there. I survive by thinking about my daughter. I act out when I'm locked in. Seg makes me act worse. It gets worse every time." Like everyone I interviewed, Sabrina felt once you went to segregation you were marked; an easy target to go back again. Staff now sees her as a problem and is ready to send her to segregation for the smallest infraction. A Native woman in her mid-30s said,

"Staff has me marked. 'Hey Troublemaker!' Especially the new ones. My pockets are constantly searched. My room is searched repeatedly."

I spoke with a Native woman in her early 30s about mental healthcare. She had been to segregation 16 times; 13 times for cutting herself with a razor, spending 15 days in solitary for every incident. I asked her why she cut herself. "Shame. Guilt. It's how I cope." (She didn't cut herself before she came to prison.) When she writes to Mental Health Services for help, she gets no response, cuts herself and then is sent to solitary. I asked her if she received any help once she was there. "They [mental health workers] come through, but don't stay and help. They say, 'try some deep breathing,' or 'send a kite [paper communication between prisoner and staff] to your mental health worker.' I do. No response. Mental Health [Services] is a joke. They cut off medication randomly. I emotionally shut

down...we can't just stuff our emotions every day and expect not to explode." She is the mother of five sons, now all adopted out. Like many of the women here, her depression stems from being stripped of her children.

In 1997, a law was passed called the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which states that if a parent does not have physical custody of their children for 15 out of the last 22 months, they can lose custody. For an incarcerated parent, this means that even if they are a great parent and are doing everything they can to fix the problem that landed them in prison, they can lose their child to the system. A recurring statement in many of my interviews was, "I have no reason to live without my children."

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**...the population of women in prison has increased by 730 percent over the last 40 years...**

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Another piece of the mental health issue and segregation is the difficulty people had when they were released from solitary and put back into general population. They are taken from a relatively quiet, isolated environment and abruptly moved to a noisy atmosphere—surrounded by people and constant over-head announcements. A woman of Puerto Rican/Native descent told me,

"I have severe mental health issues. I have a hard time being alone. Walls breathe, I see things, and I talk to myself. When I'm released, I have a hard time; I'm messed up. I talk weird. I stutter."

A 24-year-old Black woman said,

"I feel that putting someone in seg makes mental illness. Especially when we are put there for stupid things instead of talking to us [and] working through the issues. Seg leaves us more institutionalized, makes us worse."

I heard how people were often taken to segregation for small infractions. If people were put in solitary for something like fighting, they understood it. If people were put in for loitering or other small nonviolent offenses, they felt insulted and picked on. They no longer cared about the rules and said they were inclined to behave worse in the future.

"[We go for] petty reasons," said a white woman in her mid-30s. "We shouldn't be sent for a bad day. And once people go to seg, or go to seg a lot, if they get in trouble it's immediate seg as a first response rather than having them go to Holding or talking to them. We are taken for small, petty things."

I began to ask people about their most trivial reason for going to segregation. I talked with people who had gone to solitary for singing during count, singing in the lunchroom, putting someone's bag lunch on the floor, braiding someone's hair, walking backwards on the sidewalk in the courtyard, having talcum powder in their shoes, loitering, passing food, and for eating someone's piece of cake in the lunchroom when it was offered to them. The reasons seem insignificant but most every time people go to segregation they lose. They lose their room placement, their job, their programming, and are taken away from their community and moved to another living unit. When people's belongings are packed up, whatever does not fit into two bins (equivalent space as two milk crates) has to be thrown out or shipped out. Very few people can fit all their belongings into two bins.

The more I researched women's segregation, the more I realized there was a pattern of discipline that extended beyond the walls of Shakopee. A report released by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2020 confirmed what NPR (*National Public Radio*) found; women prisoners are disciplined more often than male prisoners—two to three

times more—and often receive harsher punishments. The commission states that the population of women in prison has increased by 730 percent over the last 40 years. Data shows that women prisoners consistently got in more trouble more often than their male counterparts. More disruptive? No.

The majority of women prisoners have histories of sexual and physical trauma that cause them to react in a certain way to male guards. Women in prisons are more likely to have a history of substance abuse, mental illness, and to be the primary caregivers of minor children.

Moreover, what soon became apparent was there was a culture of staff homophobia in Shakopee. Homophobia, or the appearance of homophobia, is linked with the prison's long-standing policy on touch.

On September 4, 2003, a federal law was enacted called PREA, the Prison Rape Elimination Act. Since then, throughout the state of Minnesota, there is a zero-tolerance policy against sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Next to the prison hallway phones are posters in both English and Spanish with a number to report any abuse, as well as a list of victim advocate services. People feel this is good, but that Shakopee had failed them in the assessment of appropriate touch.

From its establishment until last year, the Shakopee Women's Prison had a no-touch rule in place. Prisoners were not able to help someone up when they fell, hug them when a parent died, or shake their hand when they earned their GED. All these gestures were considered "sexual." All touch was considered sexual. A prisoner at Shakopee who did not get visits—where an outside visitor can give a brief hug and a kiss on the cheek when they arrive or leave—would not have had human touch in a long time. Some people had literally not been touched for years. This draconian policy had been strictly enforced.

Staff's view of touch seems extreme. A Native woman in her mid-30s told me, "In 2018, I went to seg for a 'sexual' because our feet were touching under the table in the dayroom. We both got 15 days." I was told a similar story by several people. Every person I asked, regardless of sexual orientation, thought that there was homophobia within staff. A 28-year-old white woman said, "I am targeted [for] my sexual orientation. Verbal harassment is constant. They use intimidation, always threatening to take me to segregation."

I spoke with a white woman in her mid-30s with a very long sentence. She said, "I need human contact, it doesn't matter how much. I'm here for a long time. I need to do what I need to do to survive. If that means I need a hug, I'm going to hug someone." When asked if segregation made her more or less likely to follow the rules, she admitted it made her more likely to break the rules. "If I can go for the smallest of things, (she got 15 days for hugging someone and one day and an overnight—but not charged—for holding someone's hand) if I get in trouble for holding someone's hand, why not just hug them? What's a reason not to go bigger? I know it's bad to hit someone; I'm not going to do that. But hug someone?"

Last June, there was an article written about the no-touch policy in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, where Shakopee's Warden Tracy Beltz (now the Warden of Faribault Prison) "denied inmate claims that they are sometimes punished for minor touch offenses." Beltz said, "There aren't women going to segregation for doing one another's hair, they're going to discipline because they're engaging in inappropriate sexual activity." I talked with several people this summer who had gone to segregation for minor touch infractions, including braiding hair.

Because of outside pressure by advocacy groups like the ACLU, this no-touch policy changed. On July 10,

2019, an assistant warden came to the living units and read off the "new appropriate touch policy." The new touch guidelines include "fist-bumps, handshakes, high-fives, or a pat on the shoulder/shoulder blade.... Physical contact should be brief, lasting only a few seconds."

Before I came to prison, I assumed prisoners were just bad people. The truth is, I've met some wonderful people, many of whom suffer from addiction. The December 2020 Minnesota Department of Corrections Shakopee Inmate Profile states that 235 prisoners are here because of drug charges. Two thirds of the population of this prison suffers with addiction. Many began their addiction by self-medicating a mental health issue or to cope with a major crisis or tragic loss. As a population, they are far more wounded than violent. Their fight is not against the world but for sobriety.

Solitary confinement is not just ineffective; it is destructive. Based on everything I've experienced and everything I've learned, it makes people act worse within the community and feel worse about themselves.

Traumatized people need more care, not increased isolation.

—*Truthout*, December 12, 2020

<https://truthout.org/articles/incarcerated-women-are-punished-for-their-trauma-with-solitary-confinement/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=8235d76f-ab45-4d61-bebb-bce418902f84>

# Julian Assange's Farcical Hearing

By JOSHUA CHO

U.S. corporate media have buried coverage of *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange's extradition hearing in the UK, despite its being the media "Trial of the Century" (*FAIR.org*, September 25, 2020.) But even in the scarce coverage that does exist of this unprecedented case with immense implications for freedom of expression, one would hardly get the impression that the U.S. and British governments are involved in an illegal conspiracy—in violation of their own laws—to punish Assange for the "crime" of journalism.

Coverage before and at the start of the trial by establishment media outlets like the *New York Times* (September 7, 2020,) *Wall Street Journal* (September 7, 2020,) *USA Today* (September 6, 2020) and the *Associated Press* (September 6, 2020) largely omitted simple facts, like Assange displaying signs of abuse. Of these reports, only *USA Today* cited Nils Melzer, a UN special rapporteur on torture, who observed that when he visited him last year, Assange displayed symptoms of "psychological torture," likely caused by extreme stress, chronic anxiety and isolation.

*AP* framed Assange's visible and prolonged abuse at the Belmarsh maximum security prison in London and

the Ecuadorian embassy—where he sought asylum for seven years—in a partisan way, presenting it as a charge of his "supporters" rather than the judgment of professionals:

"Supporters say the ordeal has harmed Assange's physical and mental health, leaving him with depression, dental problems and a serious shoulder ailment."

In fact, Melzer's assessment is corroborated by other experts. *The Lancet* (February 17, 2020) published an open letter by 117 doctors and psychologists calling for the end to what they called the "torture and medical neglect of Julian Assange." Dr. Sondra Crosby, one of the first doctors to independently examine Guantánamo captives, who possesses extensive experience treating torture victims around the world, later testified at Assange's hearing that he met "all of criteria for major depression," and is at "high risk of completing suicide if he were to be extradited" to the U.S. (*Shadowproof*, September 24, 2020.)

Torture and arbitrary detention are human rights violations of international conventions that both the U.S. and Britain have signed, which obligates them to conduct prompt and

impartial investigations whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe someone has been and is being tortured. In Assange's case, these violations have been downplayed or even celebrated by U.S. and British media (*FAIR.org*, April 18, 2019.) *AP* (September 22, 2020) reported on psychiatric expert Michael Kopelman of King's College London testifying to Assange's "intense suicidal preoccupation" and "auditory hallucinations," without once noting the obvious connection to psychological torture.

Another human right enshrined in international conventions and in U.S. and British domestic law is the right to a fair trial, which is precisely what has been and is currently being denied to Assange, although one wouldn't know this from corporate media coverage. Establishment media omitted, for example, that Assange was sent to these hearings by a judge who ruled on his case despite having several undisclosed conflicts of interest.

Before the hearing, journalists Matt Kennard and Mark Curtis of *Declassified UK* published several damning reports revealing that Emma Arbuthnot—the chief magistrate who had previously overseen Assange's extradition proceedings before informally stepping aside in December, 2019 for "perception of bias"—had failed to disclose several conflicts of interest before delivering two rulings that prevented Assange from taking up asylum in Ecuador. Kennard and Curtis (November 14, 2019) reported that Arbuthnot had been receiving gifts and hospitality from Bechtel, a U.S. military and cybersecurity company that had been exposed by *WikiLeaks*.

She has also taken part in junkets, along with her husband, paid for by two partner organizations of the British



Foreign Office, which has long taken an anti-Assange position (*Declassified UK*, February 21, 2020.) (Her husband, James Arbuthnot, is a former Conservative Defense minister who has also worked closely with the neo-conservative Henry Jackson Society—*Declassified UK*, September 4, 2020.) One of the junkets involved a meeting between James Arbuthnot and Turkish Energy Minister Berat Albayrak—the son-in-law of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—whose personal emails were published by *WikiLeaks*.

Arbuthnot's son, Alexander Arbuthnot, is the vice president of Vitruvian Partners, a private equity firm heavily invested in Darktrace—a company founded by GCHQ and MI5 to stop data leaks, which is staffed by veterans of the NSA and CIA, intelligence agencies behind the U.S. government's persecution of Assange (*Declassified UK*, November 15, 2019.)

Although UK legal guidance requires British judges to declare any conflicts of interest before the courts, Arbuthnot has a history of stepping aside from adjudicating cases only after media investigations expose them. Because she refused to disclose her conflicts of interest and only informally stepped away from Assange's case, her previous rulings in February 2018 and June 2019—which brought Assange to his extradition hearings in 2020—couldn't be revisited by his defense. Although she is no longer personally hearing Assange's extradition proceedings, she remains the chief magistrate, and is still responsible for supporting and guiding the junior judges in her jurisdiction, like Judge Vanessa Baraitser, who presided over Assange's extradition hearings and is responsible for delivering her verdict on January 4, 2021.

But can any of this scandalous information make it through the filters of U.S. media? Aside from trivial reporting that focused on technical “glitches”

on the first day of the hearing (*New York Times*, September 16, 2020; *Washington Post*, September 7, 2020,) the media blackout from establishment outlets like the *Times*, *Post*, *Journal*, *USA Today* and *CNN* has largely forced U.S. audiences to rely on reprinted *AP* reports to get any idea of what was going on during the trial.

To *AP*'s credit, it has covered important topics that other U.S. outlets have ignored, such as U.S. whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg's defense of Assange (September 16, 2020,) and testimony confirming that the U.S. prosecution was lying when it claimed Assange wouldn't be held in solitary confinement if he were to be extradited (September 29, 2020.) It also covered crucial testimony from whistleblowers at the Spanish security firm UC Global, revealing that for their “American friends,” the firm had covertly installed in the Ecuadorian embassy microphones, cameras and special stickers that disrupt white noise machines (September 30, 2020.)

As British media watchdog Media Lens (October 7, 2020) pointed out in its critique of the British media blackout, the mere fact that Assange's confidential conversations with his lawyers had been violated under the auspices of the CIA “should have been sufficient to throw out any court case against Assange.” Journalist Kevin Gosztoła (*Shadowproof*, October 3, 2020) later reported that in the UK, the FBI had enlisted the Ecuadorian government's help in stealing legally privileged material from Assange's lawyers, which made it more difficult for his lawyers to prepare a defense for his extradition hearing.

However, when it came to the substance of what was actually argued by both the defense and prosecution, and the case's evolving implications for the future of journalism, even the *AP* joined in the atrocious U.S. media blackout. Without indispensable cov-

erage from outlets like *Shadowproof*, *Consortium News* and former UK ambassador Craig Murray's blog updates, one wouldn't know that the prosecution had shifted its arguments from the claim that Assange isn't a journalist—making a specious distinction between his behavior and those of other media professionals—to asserting the U.S. government's “right” to prosecute, under the 1917 Espionage Act, all journalists around the world who publish classified U.S. information. These new U.S. government charges could criminalize even receiving classified information, which is standard practice in journalism.

The prosecution was forced to do this because their unsubstantiated arguments collapsed under their own lies, such as when they falsely charged Assange with aiding whistleblower Chelsea Manning in a “conspiracy to commit computer intrusion,” or that *WikiLeaks* disclosures resulted in material harm, in order to dodge claims that the trial is politically motivated (*Shadowproof*, September 26, 2020; *Independent*, October 5, 2020.)

At other times, *AP* reports focused on relatively trivial matters compared to reports by other observers at the extradition hearings. For example, *AP* (September 8, 2020) published an article focusing on Judge Baraitser instructing Assange to stop interrupting witnesses. On that same day, Craig Murray (September 8, 2020) reported on Baraitser's blatantly inappropriate practice of reciting pre-written judgments



prepared before she heard any lawyers argue their case in front of her, and preventing the defense from having adequate time to prepare for superseding indictments and present their case in court. Eyewitnesses to the trial, like Australian journalist John Pilger (*Arena*, October 2, 2020,) described it less as due process and more as “due revenge.”

AP, and corporate U.S. news outlets more generally, never followed up on *Consortium News*' revelation (September 28, 2020) that the U.S. government's lawyers had been relying not on actual witnesses but on a 2011 book by two *Guardian* journalists, Luke Harding and David Leigh, who are known to be hostile to Assange. Neither of them has been called to give evidence under oath about the contents of their book, which would require them to be cross-examined by Assange's lawyers. Yet when the defense called former *Der Spiegel* journalist John Goetz to give evidence under oath refuting the book's claim that Assange had remarked that informants deserved to die—a comment supposedly made at a dinner Goetz attended—Baraitser sided with the prosecution to prevent Goetz from giving firsthand testimony about the allegation (*Consortium News*, September 16, 2020.)

From top to bottom, the trial itself is a farce, since no one should be prosecuted for working with a whistleblower to expose war crimes, yet there are few reports questioning its legitimacy (*FAIR.org*, April 4, 2019.) On the contrary, it appears that major U.S. news organizations have buried all the ways that the U.S. and UK governments have already stacked the deck against Assange, in order to give the illusion that he's receiving a fair trial.

—FAIR, November 13, 2020

<https://fair.org/home/farcical-coverage-of-julian-assanges-farcical-hearing/>

**EXPOSING CRIMES  
IS NOT A CRIME**

## New Push to Free Leonard Peltier

BY NATE RAU

*Prominent Nashville attorney Kevin Sharp is leading the push to grant clemency to Leonard Peltier, whose conviction 43-years-ago has been criticized by politicians, prison reform activists, religious leaders, celebrities and even some of the government officials who helped put him behind bars.*

*Peltier's case is renowned in the criminal justice world. Peltier admits to being involved in a shootout at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1975. The shootout took place after two plain-clothed FBI agents pulled over a truck while investigating a pair of stolen boots.*

*How the shooting began and who fired the first shot is unclear, but there's agreement that tensions were high on the reservation at the time because of a feud between the activist group, the American Indian Movement, of which Peltier was a member, and the Guardians Of the Oglala Nation (GOON) Squad led by tribal chairperson Dick Wilson. The FBI supplied information, weapons and ammunition to the GOON Squad, which was accused at the time of carrying out spectacular acts of violence against AIM members. There were about 60 murders, many of them never investigated, in the area around the time of the incident, Sharp said. The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation was a powder keg.*

*So, when the shootout began, Peltier and others descended on the scene and fired back at the two young FBI agents, who were killed.*

*Peltier fled the country to Canada, but was arrested there after FBI investigators secured his extradition thanks largely to sworn statements that were later recanted. At the trial, the conduct of the FBI agents and their ties to the GOON Squad were blocked from being introduced, and a bullet ballistics test that would have exonerated Peltier was not introduced.*

*Although Peltier was initially convicted of first-degree murder, that conviction was later vacated, but his prison sentence upheld for aiding and abetting a murder.*

*The assistant United States Attorney who helped uphold Peltier's conviction and the federal Appeals Court judge who rejected his earlier appeals have since called for his release, as has a cascade of celebrities, religious leaders and politicians including Pope Francis, The Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Floyd Red Crow Westerman, Nelson Mandela, Muhammad Ali, Robert Redford, Wes Studi, Tantoo Cardinal, Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, and Marlon Brando, among many others.*

*Now, 76, Peltier remains incarcerated at a federal prison in Florida. His appeals have been exhausted and his only hope for life outside of prison is a clemency request that has been sent to President Donald Trump.*

*The attorney pushing for Peltier's clemency is Kevin Sharp, the former federal judge who left the bench in part because he disagreed with mandatory minimum sentencing.*

*Although Trump and his political supporters continue to contest the election results, there is every reason to believe President-elect Joe Biden will be inaugurated next month. That leaves precious little time, Sharp says, for Trump to grant Peltier clemency. It's a race against time because Peltier is in poor health, and the clemency process restarts when a new president takes office.*

*The Tennessee Lookout conducted an interview with Sharp about the state of the case as it reaches its 11th hour.*

**Tennessee Lookout:** Is clemency Leonard Peltier's only hope for release at this point in the process?

**Kevin Sharp:** Essentially yes. His sentence was life, but with parole. You can't do that anymore in the federal system, they got rid of parole in the late '80s. But, because of the time of his sentence, he is eligible for parole. He keeps getting denied, and practically speaking, clemency is his only option because they are not going to parole him for the same political reasons that make clemency difficult.

**Tennessee Lookout:** When and how did you get involved in his clemency request?

**Kevin Sharp:** After I left the bench, I became involved in the clemency petition for Chris Young. That was one of the defendants I had to sentence to a mandatory life sentence as part of a drug conspiracy conviction. In that case, Kim Kardashian got involved, because the lawyer who represented Chris was also the lawyer who represented Alice Johnson. She was the African American woman from Memphis who Trump initially commuted her sentence, and then earlier this year pardoned her.

So, when the same lawyer, her name is Brittney Barnett, comes in, I was involved working in clemency for Chris, as was Kim Kardashian. That ultimately results in me being invited to the White House as part of a clemency roundtable discussion. It also results in a personal conversation with President Trump about clemency issues and about criminal justice reform issues.

When that meeting happens, it becomes its own story. Kardashian, Ivanka Trump, Jared Kushner and a group of leading experts on reform issues were all there that day. We were discussing clemency issues, how to clean it up, how to fix this broken system we all have.

Because of that there's this lawyer in Texas named Logan Ross, who reads this and has been trying to work to help with Leonard's case for years. He

sees this and sends me, out of the blue, a packet of information.

So, I get this thick packet. Normally what happens is I get lots of letters, mostly from men and family members of men who are incarcerated. These are kind of help-me letters. For a while, I was getting so many of them that I would let them stack up and then I'd get into them once a week or so.

One day I get this thick manilla envelope and I recognize it as one of these letters. I pause and turn back to the person in my office and said, "Put it with the others, I'll read it later in the week." Then I'm walking back to my office and I say, "You know what, let me have that one." I come into my office and I open this thing up and it's

this history of Leonard Peltier's case. It's trial transcripts, newspaper clippings, photographs, case opinions. I end up spending my day going through this thing. I look up and the sun's gone down. I became engrossed in this case.

At first, I was just kind of shocked at what happened, and then angry at what happened. The gist of it was, would you please help Leonard? So, I end up having a couple of phone conversations with Leonard and then flew down to Florida to meet with him and said, "Yeah. I'll do it."

**Tennessee Lookout:** What did you find compelling about the case?

**Kevin Sharp:** It was this travesty of the criminal justice system and what happened to Leonard, and just the



1975 mug shot of Leonard Peltier from FBI Most Wanted list. (Photo: FBI.gov) Leonard has been in prison for over 43 years since this photo was taken.

mountain of constitutional violations. Ultimately, Leonard was convicted of murdering two FBI agents, but the government dropped that because years later, through a FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) request, it turned out they had withheld some pretty damning exculpatory evidence, which was a ballistics test that showed it was not his gun.

They knew that when they tried him and their whole case was based on another ballistics test. The expert says at trial, “Because the weapon we believe was his was destroyed in a fire, we couldn’t do a firing pin test.” That would have been the most accurate test. But all they did was a shell casing test. The expert says, “We could only do a shell casing test, and the test tells me this casing was tied to the weapon we believe belonged to Leonard Peltier.” And that really was their whole case because they had some eye-witnesses that came out during the investigation, but through the course of this as it got closer to trial, they all fell apart because they all ultimately said, “Our prior testimony is not true. We were threatened by the FBI. So, we said we saw things that we did not see.” So, they had nothing except that he was there, and he did fire a weapon along with about 40 other Native Americans. But, a ballistics test showing that the casing was not from Leonard’s weapon was deliberately concealed and not introduced at trial.

That was the biggest one that hit me, and then as I got into it there were layers of violations. On appeal these issues

came up, and the judge said even if the jury was aware of these issues, I can’t say for certain they wouldn’t have convicted Leonard of aiding and abetting.

**Tennessee Lookout:** Is the problem for any president considering clemency that it appears you are going against the FBI?

**Kevin Sharp:** Correct. When Clinton was considering this—you have to go back to the politics of Clinton. Can he come out and do something the FBI opposes? He had just survived his own impeachment hearings. He was not wanting to step out in front of this one. Through another FOIA request, I saw a letter that Louis Freeh, the head of the FBI, wrote to Janet Reno, then-Attorney General, saying we know Clinton is considering this, here is why he shouldn’t do it. I read it in 2019, and realized Louis Freeh knew it wasn’t true. He knows about the intimidation and threatening of witnesses. He knows about Myrtle Poor Bear (the witness who said she saw Leonard shoot the agents, but later recanted.) He knows about the hidden exculpatory ballistics test. So, when he’s writing to Janet Reno saying we have witnesses who saw it, he knows it isn’t true. So, Clinton doesn’t do it.

Then, Obama has the same issue. It comes back to politics. Do I want to oppose the FBI? As a matter of fact, when Clinton was considering it, there were 500 agents who picketed the White House.

**Tennessee Lookout:** You now have a president who has railed against the Deep State, and has been openly critical of the FBI and its director. And you have the political point of this being a case of government overreach in terms of its collaboration with the GOON Squad. There’s a lot of reasons why a conservative would look at this case and think clemency was fair. So, what is your opinion about where things stand with the Trump administration?

**Kevin Sharp:** Well, all of those things you just mentioned are right. And that’s why I think that President Trump will seriously consider it, and ultimately should grant clemency for those reasons you just said. We now all recognize, the FBI and the Department of Justice are not always the guys with the white hats. And they have to be subordinate to the constitution. We saw it with General Flynn. I get why there reasons not to be happy with General Flynn. But, if you’re withholding exculpatory evidence, you have got to let him go.

So, when he was filing his appeal after the government said we are going to drop this, all of the exculpatory evidence came out and the DOJ (Department Of Justice) said we’re going to drop the case. And, they were absolutely right. Not my politics in terms of the people involved. But, the constitution is the constitution.

They’re right about Flynn for the same reasons I’m right about Peltier.

—*Tennessee Lookout*, December 11, 2020

<https://tennesseelookout.com/2020/12/11/nashville-attorney-kevin-sharp-leads-push-to-free-leonard-peltier/>

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# Torment in Indiana Prisons

## The abuse, the lawsuit, the death of Phillip Littler

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

Wrap your mind around this story if you will...or rather, if you can.

### Defenseless, shot in the face and beaten

A prisoner, a small-framed man about 150 pounds and around 5'6" is inside a locked shower, and, according to prison officials, he refuses to submit to a strip search. His name is Phillip Littler.

The assistant warden, Frank Littlejohn, tells the ranking guard to shoot Phillip in the face at point-blank range with a pepper ball gun. The guard laughs and says she loves the idea.

Phillip is then shot in the face in this exact fashion, shattering his nose, and only by a lucky near-miss, not losing his eyes. The camera, which is supposed to film all such uses of force, is turned off during this assault.

A team of at least ten guards in full body armor is then sent into the shower to “extract” the already downed prisoner. They beat him brutally, resulting in a possible broken shoulder blade and extensive additional facial injuries. The camera is activated during this phase of the assault, but it is deliberately trained on another guard’s body to block filming Phillip being beaten.

After the attack, a medical “examination” is staged by a nurse, which is required procedure following any use of force by guards. Phillip, who is bleeding profusely from the face, tells the nurse he was shot in the face and beaten—punched and kicked repeatedly—by guards. She ignores him, pats away a little of the blood that is running profusely from his nose, then gives up and sends him on his way, refusing him any further care or examination. On the record, she lies and claims he refused treatment and responded, “go to hell,” when she claimed she offered him care.

Although guards deliberately block the camera from filming Phillip, the audio captures him asking the nurse for help and telling her he was shot in the face and beaten.

I should add that before being shot, Phillip was repeatedly sprayed with extensive amounts of tear gas inside the locked shower—I have written extensively about the deadly nature and routine abuse of tear gas on U.S. prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

Also, the shooting didn’t end with the round to Phillip’s face. By the guards’ own admissions, he was shot in rapid succession in the head a total of ten times, until the gun stopped working.

### The lawsuit, the lies, the outraged judge

But Phillip, a determined and intelligent man, didn’t cave-in to his abusers. Instead, he fought his way through



Wabash Valley Correctional Facility Assistant Warden, Frank Littlejohn, pictured with his wife, Teresa Littlejohn, who serves as Public Information Officer at the facility.

the prison system's obstructions and representing himself filed a federal lawsuit the next year.

His case, *Littler v. Martinez*<sup>2</sup>, came before Chief Judge Jane E. Magnus-Stinson, who proved unusually fair. What came to light as the case unfolded, prompted her to bring down the mallet on Phillip's abusers and their lawyers.

In response to the lawsuit, the prison officials, medical staff, and their attorneys—including the state's Attorney General's office—closed ranks to produce a huge record of sworn affidavits in which they told a litany of lies to cover up what they did and try and get the case dismissed.

Judge Stinson was having none of it. As she noted in orders sanctioning the defendants and attorneys for perjury and facilitating these lies, "only due to the 'perfect storm' of Mr. Littler's litigation skills and the existence of video evidence was the most egregious misconduct in this case uncovered exposing a litany of false evidence."

The judge expressed a total loss of trust in the state's highest law office and prison system. She found Assistant warden Littlejohn lied claiming he had nothing to do with the use of force on Phillip. But emails were produced showing his exchange with the supervising guard, where he prompted the shooting of Phillip at point-blank range.

The nurse and guards all lied about their roles, which were also contradicted by video records.

These findings and rulings came out in a series of published reports and orders.<sup>3</sup>

The penalty against P. Hagmeier, the nurse who refused Phillip medical care after he was shot and beaten, was an entry of default judgment, which meant she was found guilty of the wrongdoing that she was charged with within the lawsuit. On information and belief, Phillip also prevailed against all the other defendants, and after a four-year court battle, he won a

\$150,000 settlement and judgment in 2020. But this was by no means a happy ending.

### The tortured death of Phillip Littler

Several outside people who know of Phillip's ordeal and legal battle didn't know about the tragedy that followed almost immediately.

At just the time that he prevailed in his lawsuit, Phillip developed cancer in his mouth and throat. Witnessing prisoners like Kristopher Kanable described his tongue as having swollen so large that it protruded from his mouth—he couldn't talk or close his mouth. It also impaired his ability to eat. His weight fell to around 100 pounds.

Initially, prison officials refused him any care, until his cancer progressed to stage-four. His final months were blatant torture as the cancer quickly consumed his face.

Phillip died around June 2020.

Many prisoners who witnessed and followed Phillip's struggle believe officials caused his death, both the onset of his cancer and its rapid progression without care.

What tops off this tragedy and exposes the true face of this American fascist system, is Frank Littlejohn, the man who initiated the sadistic attack on Phillip and was caught and sanctioned in federal court for lying to justify and cover up the abuse and his role, is still the assistant warden of the prison where this abuse occurred. Indeed, it's the very same Wabash Valley Correctional (sic) Facility where I'm now confined.

Not just this, but Frank Littlejohn's wife, Teresa Littlejohn, is the prison's public relations officer.

### What to do?

Across Amerika, prisons operate in this fashion as overt fascist fiefs within an imperialist empire, where their captives are subjected to the arbitrary

abuses of their captors and have no voice nor right to resist.

As the judge in Phillip's case observed, most prisoners who manage to file a lawsuit challenging incidents of abuse, are quickly booted out of court by defenses made by the state's highest and most powerful law office; using lying defenses just like were tried against Phillip. And lawsuits are no remedy. The few that are "won" are settled—and I've previously revealed how settlements actually uphold and preserve the culture of murder and abuse by police and guards.<sup>4</sup>

What's needed is a broad inside-to-outside mass support network organized to expose and challenge prison abuses. We need to link our captives on the inside with the oppressed communities they come from in a movement to build dual power and revolutionary change against the capitalist-imperialist police state that has us all under siege.

—November 22, 2020

1 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Chemical Weapons Used in U.S. Prisons" (2017) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2580>

2 *Littler v. Martinez, et al.*, Case no: 2:16-cv-00472-JMS-DLP, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, Terre Haute Division

3 See, Olivia Covington, "Judge Sanctions Lawyer of ex-DOC Nurse in Inmate Abuse Case," *Indiana Lawyer*, March 6, 2019; *Littler v. Martinez*, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 155868 (2018); *Littler v. Martinez*, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 163985 (2018); *Littler v. Martinez*, 2019 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 34735 (2019); *Littler v. Martinez*, 2020 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1850 (2020)

4 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Selling Out in Court: How Settlements Protect Police Abusers" (2020) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2822>



Kevin "Rashid" Johnson

# Gas Abuses in Indiana Prisons

## The cases of Marshawn Weems

BY KEVIN “RASHID” JOHNSON

Tear gas, inside the confined spaces of prisons, takes on a particularly abusive effect and lethality. It chokes off the air and lingers for hours if no exhaust system is used to remove it. It clings to surfaces for days if sprayed areas aren't decontaminated. To top it off, the weapon is lethal in itself.

As I've written before<sup>1</sup>, this weapon, along with its sister chemical weapons like mustard gas, chlorine gas, and others, was designed and used during World War I, and subsequently banned from battlefields. It then became a common weapon of torture in colonizing Third World peoples and then U.S. prisons.

As its use became more common, it's been refined by manufacturers with few to no regulations, to enhance its painful effects and make it more difficult to flush from the skin. Which has also increased its lethality.

In prisons across Amerika gas is used to torture and murder prisoners so casually and routinely, that most people who've been confined expect to be or have been victims of its abuse, either directly or as bystanders. And guards commonly make a game of inventing pretexts and outright lying to speciously justify gas assaults on prisoners.

I'd like to give two examples, both involving a prisoner at Indiana's Wabash Valley prison where I'm presently confined. In one case the guards' own documentation and surveillance video footage demonstrate they lied to justify assaulting a completely defenseless man. In the other case, surveillance camera footage was erased by administrators to cover up the assault.

### Two strikes

Marshawn Weems is a young Black man who's been imprisoned since he was 16 in adult Indiana prisons. He's

now 22, and still has the energy and instinctive tendency to question so-called “authority” that his youthfulness suggests. Pigs don't like Black males, or any prisoners for that matter, who question them.

Both assaults on Marshawn happened inside Wabash Valley's solitary confinement unit, which has long been notorious for its abusive and torturous conditions<sup>2</sup>.

The first attack took place on November 16, 2019. It was breakfast time and a guard, J. Thompson, was passing out meal trays and beverages by unlocking the hinged slots on the cell doors and handing in the food and beverages.

Thompson repeatedly bypassed Marshawn without serving him his beverages, while serving everyone else theirs. Marshawn asked Thompson several times why he was being bypassed and was ignored. Finally, Marshawn admittedly cursed at Thompson, stating it was disrespectful to ignore him and finally, “fuck you and that juice and coffee.” He then left his cell door and got back into bed.

Several minutes later, and without warning or explanation, Thompson came to Marshawn's cell with another guard named Arnold and proceeded to repeatedly spray him with tear gas as he lay in bed.

Taken completely by surprise Marshawn, blinded and enraged, asked, between choking and gasping, why he was being gassed. Thompson only laughed and kept spraying him. When a ranking guard was finally called to the area, Marshawn not knowing what was a miss ended up being gassed several more times because he wouldn't come to the door and be cuffed from behind, rendering himself even more defenseless to unprovoked attack.

Thompson subsequently wrote Marshawn a disciplinary report (DR) claiming falsely that he came to Marshawn's cell and ordered him to come to the cell door and back up to be handcuffed, and Marshawn refused to comply. (DR case #WVS 19-11-0025)

The surveillance camera video record was narrated for the DR process



Self-portrait by Kevin “Rashid” Johnson

and states what happened at Marshawn's cell. Everything is described except the period between 7:00:41 A.M. and 7:01:19 A.M., during which the document says, "Camera freezes." At just the time when Thompson repeatedly gasses Marshawn, the camera is reported as having malfunctioned.

I have the "Report of disciplinary hearing video evidence review" right in front of me. It is clearly no coincidence that the camera supposedly "freezes" just when Marshawn is assaulted. And this at a prison where the still reigning assistant warden, Frank Littlejohn, and other officials and their attorneys were punished by a federal judge earlier this year for setting another prisoner up to be repeatedly gassed and shot point-blank in the face with a gas gun, while he was locked inside a shower, and lying in court to cover up the assault.<sup>3</sup>

The next attack on Marshawn happened on August 11, 2020, on the solitary exercise yard, while he was handcuffed.

On this occasion, he'd just been "escorted" in handcuffs to the yard, which consists of a dog kennel type cage, and was locked inside by a guard M. Phillips and sergeant M. Smith. Phillips ordered him to give them a hat Marshawn had in his hand, which he did.

Words were passed and without warning, Smith repeatedly gassed him from behind. In response to being gassed Marshawn instinctively pulled away—he was held by a nylon leash connected to the handcuffs—and was pulled back toward the guards and gassed again.

Yet again a DR was fabricated to portray Marshawn as having done something to justify the assault. In the DR, Phillips outright lied claiming he was ordered to hand over his hat and refused, and further refused to allow himself to be handcuffed. In a witness statement, Smith added to the lies, claiming Marshawn tried to pull the nylon leash out of their hands and was warned to stop or he'd be gassed. (DR case #WVS 20-08-0010)

This time the surveillance camera video was not tampered with and showed the guards lied. The report narrating the video states before he was ever gassed, Marshawn "gives his orange hat to Sargent Smith." And only after "Sergeant Smith sprays his chemical agent at offender Weems," does he begin, "aggressively pulling on the security lead."

### What to do?

But of course, that the surveillance video shows these guards lied on

Marshawn doesn't matter. It wasn't used to take action against them for unjustifiably assaulting him; and it didn't help to acquit him of the blatantly fabricated DR—he was found guilty and punished on top of having been assaulted.

Unlike in society, videos of prisoners being abused, beaten, and killed by guards aren't readily uploadable to social media to allow the world to bear witness to the outrages we suffer every day, and at rates much higher than those "out there." We live under the direct and total occupation of these armed enforcers of this fascist system, where every aspect of our lives is under their control and their acts of abuse and opportunities to abuse us are constant.

We need the unity and support of the outside movement that's been awakened to the reality of police abuse, and not for mere reforms, but to build a struggle to end this decadent and incorrigible capitalist-imperialist system that sustains itself through institutionalized violence against the poor, workers, and people of color.

—November 30, 2020

1 Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, "Amerika Uses Military Grade Chemical Weapons on Prisoners That it Bombs Syria for Using in Civil War" (2018) <http://rashidmod.com/?p=2580>

See also: "Faces Full of Gas"

[http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/marapr\\_20/marapr\\_20\\_22.html](http://www.socialistviewpoint.org/marapr_20/marapr_20_22.html)

2 Cold Storage: Super-Maximum Security Confinement in Indiana, Human Rights Watch (1997) <http://hrw.org/reports/1997/usind/>

3 Torment In Indiana Prisons: The Abuse, The Lawsuit, The Death of Phillip Littler (2020)—In this issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

[rashidmod.com/?=2887](http://rashidmod.com/?=2887): See, *Littler v. Martinez* <https://casetext.com/case/littler-v-martinez-2>

Write to Kevin "Rashid" Johnson:

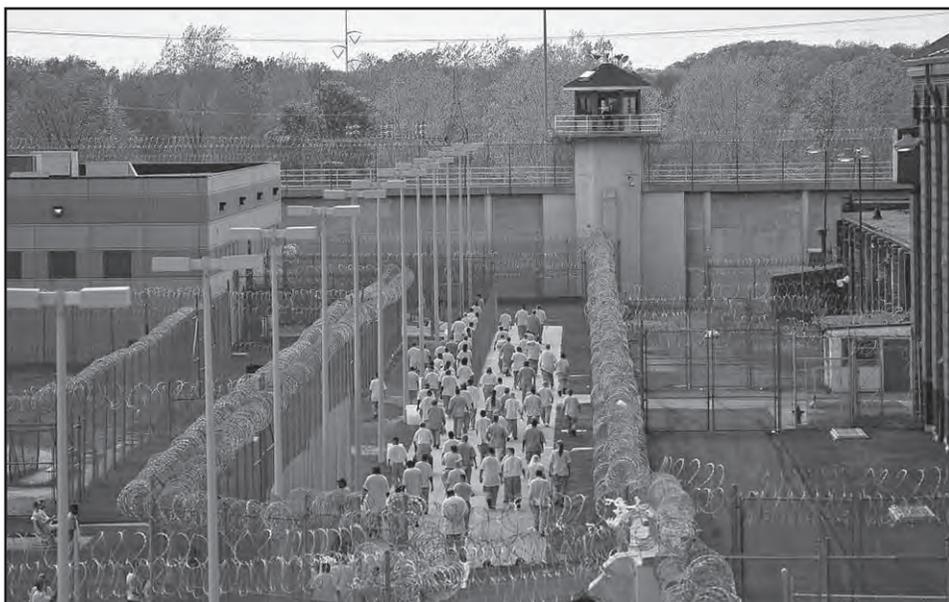
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# The Untold Story of Jerod Fralerson

BY PETER KAMAU MUKURIA

*“Black men born in the U.S. and fortunate enough to live past the age of eighteen are conditioned to accept the inevitability of prison. For most of us it simply looms as the next sequence of humiliations. Being born a slave in a captive state and never experiencing any objective basis for expectation had the effect of preparing me for the progressively traumatic misfortunes that lead so many Black men to the prison gate. I was prepared for prison. It required only minor psychic adjustments.” —George Jackson*

In a country in which African Americans are a minority, ironically, they constitute the majority in state and federal prisons. This isn't an implication that they commit most crimes, quite the contrary. It is the by-product of a system which disproportionately target and effects African Americans more than any other racial group.

So, who is Jerod Fralerson? He is an African American man incarcerated in the state of Virginia, serving a 30-year prison term. Given such a lengthy imposed draconian sentence one would assume that he was convicted of a heinous violent crime of some sort. However, that isn't the case. Mr. Fralerson is from Richmond, Virginia. He was arrested in New Kent County for possession of 1.777 grams of cocaine. At the trial proceeding he was found guilty by an all-white jury who, along with the Commonwealth prosecutor, recommended a ten-year prison term but ultimately, the decision was up to the presiding Judge Thomas B. Hoover, who rendered a 30-year prison sentence. As though that wasn't enough, he mockingly suggested to Mr. Fralerson “I'd appeal if I were you.” Prior to this case, Mr. Fralerson had only one previous drug conviction and minor traffic violations.

I met Mr. Fralerson in the unit I'm currently housed in after recently being released from eight years in solitary

confinement. As we were talking, he disclosed to me the amount of time he is serving. Surely there must be more to this story was my initial thought and I instantly made a presumptive assumption that he was most likely incarcerated for a violent crime. However, even after explaining his case with legal documents to corroborate, I still found it inconceivable and mind boggling that a life would be so nonchalantly discarded and condemned to decades in prison over such an iota amount of drugs, a non-violent offense when there are a plethora of people who get convicted daily of actual violent crimes and sentenced to drastically lighter sentences.

During Mr. Fralerson's sentencing the presiding judge issued much lighter sentences to other defendants who were indicted and found guilty on felony drug distribution, crimes far worse than Mr. Fralerson's. One defendant was issued a work release program, another was sentenced to a mere six months in jail, whereas another received a little over a year in jail. The conspicuous difference between these other defendants and Mr. Fralerson was their skin color; they, being white, whereas Mr. Fralerson is Black. The disparity between the sentences is a vivid illustration of how race is a determining factor in how justice is administered.

A letter authored May 17, 1993 by the Judicial Sentencing Guidelines Committee provides an historical framework for appropriate sentencing in which it stated verbatim, “The single purpose of Virginia's sentencing guidelines is the establishment of rational and consistent sentencing standards which...reduce unwarranted sentencing disparity.” Clearly, this established guideline was not applied in Mr. Fralerson's case. Additionally, these sentencing guidelines recommended an active sentence of five years, nine

months on the low end, and nine years, five months on the high end. The Commonwealth prosecutor recommended a ten-year prison sentence which lands on the high end of the sentencing guidelines, but Judge Thomas B. Hoover disregarded those established guidelines and recommendations and arbitrarily sentenced him to an astounding 30 year prison term, three times harsher than what the sentencing guidelines along with the Commonwealth prosecutor recommended.

Mr. Fralerson has been incarcerated since May 2009. He has missed out on his two sons' growing up, family events, graduations, and weddings. He recently suffered the tragic loss of his mother to Covid-19. Her one wish before passing away was to see her son doing great things with his life, but that wish did not come to fruition as he is still unjustly incarcerated. His niece was merely a kid at the time of his arrest. Now she's a young woman fighting for the release of her uncle. His brother continues to fight for his pardon. His wife has stood by his side fighting and advocating on his behalf. When Judge Hoover condemned Mr. Fralerson to 30-years in prison for a non-violent crime, he not only utterly destroyed his life and future, but also destroyed his family, for they too suffer daily with the unjust incarceration of their loved one.

I hate to mention the obvious, but had Mr. Fralerson been a Caucasian male, chances are astronomical that he would not have been sentenced to such a draconian prison term. What we have learned through the pseudo “War on Drugs” and mass incarceration is that in every state African Americans—particularly in the poorest neighborhoods—are subject to tactics and practices that would result in public outrage if committed in white neighborhoods. Another lesson procured is that

justice is unambiguously administered unequally.

Mr. Fralerson was a teenager at the time of his arrest and has expressed deep regret for the decisions he made which landed him in prison. As human beings none of us are perfect. We all have failed to live up to our highest ideals and values and certain decisions we make as teenagers, particularly non-violent ones, shouldn't condemn anyone to decades in prison.

We all deserve a second chance. Many of us even deserve a third and fourth chance. Had Mr. Fralerson perhaps received a second chance he rightfully deserved; he could have graduated college rather than languish in prison. He could have been doing great things with his life which was his mother's last wish, and been a productive member of society had he been given a chance.

His case warrants close and broad public attention for his story and experiences with the criminal injustice system is a microcosm of the stories and experiences of a myriad of other African Americans men and women whose lives have been deemed disposable and buried in these dark places. If Black lives truly matter, then even those discarded and condemned to decades in these human warehouses should also be included in this nationwide discussion. I'm more than privileged to shed any light on this case for it speaks volumes into the functionality of the criminal injustice system.

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## COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons

BY ELLA FASSLER

U.S. jails and prisons, already death traps, have been completely ravaged by COVID-19. Crowded quarters, a lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), inadequate medical care, an aging population, and unsanitary conditions have contributed to an infection rate 5.5-times higher than the already ballooned average in the U.S. As of this writing [November 13, 2020], over 252,000 people in jails and prisons have been infected and at least 1,450 incarcerated people and officers have died from the novel coronavirus. Evidence suggests these figures are underreported, however. (The entire state of Wisconsin, for example, isn't releasing any information to the public.)

In response, incarcerated people have shown strong solidarity, coming together to demand baseline safety measures and advocating for their release, only to be met with brutal repression and punishment.

According to a new report released by the archival group Perilous: A Chronicle of Prisoner Unrest on November 13, incarcerated people in the U.S. collectively organized at least 106 COVID-19 related rebellions from March 17 to June 15. Perilous, a volunteer collective project that tracks information on all prison uprisings, riots, protests, strikes and other unrest within carceral facilities, described this activity as "clearly one of the most massive waves of prisoner resistance in the past decade."

Duncan Tarr, a researcher at Perilous, tells *Truthout*, "Since corrections departments and ICE contractors are unwilling to prevent the spread of the virus, prisoners and detainees have been taking action themselves to draw attention to the dangerous situation they find themselves in and to resist the system of incarceration that is killing them."

Perilous's analysis found that people rose up inside federal and state prisons, jails, juvenile carceral centers, and Immigration Detention Centers in 39 states. Immigrant Detention Centers rebelled most frequently, with 45 separate events. Thirty-two rebellions took place in private prisons (25 of which had contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement), a disproportionate response as less than nine percent of prisons in the United States are privately operated. Louisiana, with a rich history of work stoppages, rebellions and an indefatigable support infrastructure, was the state with the highest frequency of COVID-19-related prison rebellions. California and Washington were the second and third most rebellious respectively.

Common demands have included that guards wear masks and that departments provide individuals with protective items like soap, masks, and hand sanitizer.

In early April, an estimated 120 to 180 detainees inside GEO Group's Adelanto ICE "Processing Center" in California went on hunger strike after two individuals exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms were sent to the hospital. Striker Marcos Duran told Perilous that the private prison's guards weren't wearing masks. Detainees did not have access to soap or shampoo, were forced to eat alongside 50-60 other detainees, and slept in the same room as seven others, Duran said. As of October 7, according to *Desert Sun*, nearly 20 percent of detainees at Adelanto had contracted COVID-19.

Beyond hunger strikes, Perilous documented 21 "uprisings" in American prisons, defined as collective acts of rebellion that exceed the usual scope of a protest through unpredictable or chaotic means.

In Monroe, Washington, after six incarcerated people and five staff members were diagnosed with COVID-19, an estimated 100 to 200 incarcerated people staged a protest over inadequate protective measures and a downplaying of the virus in the recreation yard at Monroe Correctional Complex on April 8. Joshua Vermaat, an incarcerated person at MCC, described his concerns in a letter to a friend, excerpts of which were published in *KUOW*, *NPR*. He said the Department of Corrections was transferring uninfected incarcerated people into contaminated tiers. He wrote, “We’ve been safe until now, but because of their lack of foresight and proper planning, now they need rooms for more vulnerable inmates and they want us to go into the ‘hot zone’ to make room for them.”

“They tried to bribe us with McDonald’s food. Are you flipping kidding ... if you would do anything I ask you to tell this to the news and to the governor, this isn’t right.”

Some people refused orders to move. Their grievances were met with chemical weapons, rubber bullets and sting balls, according to the Department of Corrections. Demonstrators were ultimately forced to surrender.

The next day Vermaat said the resistance led to a change in tone from the DOC, but that the facility went on lock down. “No one here wants violence, NO ONE, but at the same time you’ve got 400-plus ... who are now being backed into corners.”

One month later, a guard at Monroe Correctional died from COVID-19.

Cook County Jail in Chicago, a site with the largest outbreak of any location in the state of Illinois, rebelled on six separate occasions including one uprising and several hunger strikes. On at least one occasion some detainees attempted or threatened to attempt suicide.

Over the course of April, the jail had released nearly a fourth of its population, decreasing it from 5,604 to 4,301.

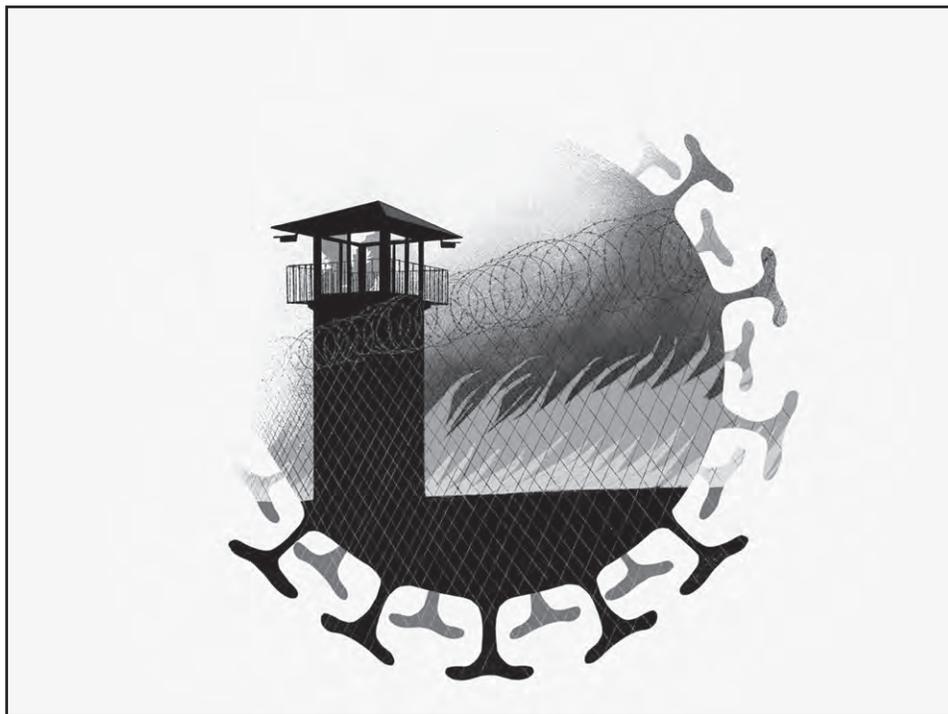
But, despite early resistance, Cook County Jail’s population has crept up again to nearly pre-pandemic levels.

COVID-19 flareups behind bars have undoubtedly contributed to the United States’ abysmal failure to control the virus. Despite urgent calls for action from public health scientists in *The Lancet*, the ACLU and countless other organizations, Democratic and Republican politicians alike, from New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, have largely refused to reduce prison populations by any meaningful margin. In the ACLU’s evaluation of state efforts to prevent COVID-19 deaths behind bars, Colorado, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont and West Virginia received the best scores, all with a “D-”. After sustained activism and a mounting death toll, on November 4, New Jersey released more than 2,000 incarcerated people who were already nearing the end of their sentences.

In the face of negligence, Ivan Von Staich, an incarcerated person at the notoriously brutal San Quentin State

Prison, filed a lawsuit in May against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation alleging “deliberate indifference to the risk of substantial harm to inmates by failing to immediately reduce the prison population of San Quentin by releasing or transferring at least 50 percent of the population of the prison.” After the filing, San Quentin suffered an outbreak of at least 2,500 cases and at least 29 deaths. On October 20, the First District Court of Appeal in California ruled in Von Staich’s favor, ordering the release or transfer of nearly 1,500 incarcerated people. The court wrote, “If necessary to achieve this reduction, respondents are ordered to revise their expedited release programs to include inmates over 60, who have served at least 25 years of their sentences and are eligible for parole, such as life prisoners eligible for parole and second or third strike prisoners, even if such prisoners are serving a sentence for a violent offense.”

Incarcerated people and public health experts warn, however, that transfers increase the spread of COVID-19. San Quentin’s massive outbreak resulted from transfers. “The best way



Lauren Walker/Truthout

## Colin Kaepernick: Free Mumia!

to help keep prisoners from contracting the virus would be mass releases,” Christopher Blackwell, an incarcerated man at Monroe previously told *Truthout*. “Absent those, it is essential to cease transfers and provide incarcerated people with adequate supplies.”

Instead of mass releases, as the U.S. enters its third wave, many departments’ chosen preventative measures continue to be “lockdowns,” or confining people in their cells for 21 to 23 hours a day. It’s estimated that 300,000 people incarcerated in state and federal prisons are in lockdown or solitary confinement conditions. Many incarcerated people have lost phone privileges and (already scant) programming. As budgets are slashed without complementary mass releases, healthcare services behind bars will continue to deteriorate, according to Perilous’ report.

Prior to COVID-19, experts considered U.S. prisons to be “ticking time bombs.” Baseline volatile conditions remain and the virus is an accelerant. Some people hope that the virus will be better managed once Biden and Harris take power, although they have not yet released a plan that puts people over profit.

Tarr hopes that the Perilous report will bring some attention to the struggle behind bars during this chaotic time. “As the national political crisis continues to play out over the next few months, it is important that some of the most vulnerable to COVID-19—those locked up by our government—are not forgotten and that their cries for help and freedom do not go unheard,” he said. “And a close look at the first few months of their resistance to the pandemic can shed some light on how we might move forward in preventing more unneeded deaths inside prison walls.”

—*Truthout*. November 13, 2020

<https://truthout.org/articles/report-finds-over-100-rebellions-in-jails-and-prisons-over-covid-conditions/?eType=E-mailBlastContent&eId=772fc9d9-d705-472b-8b36-dbfadee37de4>

When I was invited to speak on behalf of Mumia, one of the first things that came to mind was how long he’s been in prison. How many years of his life had been stolen away from him, his community, and his loved ones. He’s been incarcerated for 38 years. Mumia has been in prison longer than I’ve been alive.

When I first spoke with Mumia on the phone, I did very little talking. I just listened. Hearing him speak was a reminder of why we must continue to fight. Earlier this year, The United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner issued a statement, noting that prolonged solitary confinement, the precise type often used in the United States, amounts to psychological torture. Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent roughly 30 out of his 38 years in solitary confinement.

In his book *Live From Death Row*, Mumia wrote that prison is a second-by-second assault on the soul, a day-to-day degradation of the self, an

oppressive steel and brick umbrella that transforms seconds into hours, and hours into days. He has had to endure this second-by-second assault on his soul for 38 years.

He had no record before he was arrested and framed for the death of a Philadelphia police officer. Since 1981, Mumia has maintained his innocence. His story has not changed. Mumia was shot, brutalized, arrested, and chained to a hospital bed. The first police officer assigned to him wrote in a report that the “Negro male made no comment” as cited in *Philly Mag*. Yet 64 days into the investigation, another officer testified that Mumia had confessed to the killing. Mumia’s story has not changed, but we’re talking about the same Philadelphia Police Department whose behavior “shocks the conscience,” according to a 1979 DOJ (Department of Justice) report. Behaviors like shooting nonviolent suspects, abusing handcuffed prisoners, and tampering with evidence.



A sign with an image of sports icon Colin Kaepernick asking “Get It Yet?” —June 2, 2020: Black Lives Matter Protest at Clifton City Hall - Clifton, NJ, (Shutterstock)

# FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

It should therefore come as little surprise that, according to Dr. Johanna Fernandez, over one-third of the 35 officers involved in Mumia's case, were subsequently convicted of rank corruption, extortion, and tampering with evidence to obtain convictions in unrelated cases. This is the same Philadelphia Police Department where officers ran racial profiling sweeps, like Operation Cold Turkey in March 1985, targeting Black and Brown folks; and bombed the MOVE house in May of that year, killing 11 people, including five children and destroying 61 homes.

The same Philadelphia police department, whose officers eight days before the 2020 presidential election, shot Walter Wallace Jr. dead in the streets in front of his crying mother. The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police has unrelentingly campaigned for Mumia's execution. During their August 1999, national meeting, a spokesperson for the organization stated that they will not rest until Abu-Jamal burns in hell. The former Philadelphia president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Richard Castello, went as far as to say that if you disagree with their views of Mumia, you can join him in the electric chair and that they will make it an electric couch.

The trial judge on Mumia's case in 1981, Albert Sabo was a former member of the Fraternal Order of Police. Court reporter Terry Maurer Carter even heard Judge Sabo telling a colleague "I'm going to help them fry the nigger."

Found in December 2018, in an inaccessible storage room of the DA's office, six boxes of documents for Mumia's case reveal previously undisclosed and highly significant evidence showing that Mumia's trial was tainted by a failure to disclose material evidence in violation of the United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions. In November 2019, the Fraternal Order of Police filed a King's Bench Petition asking the court to allow the state attorney general, not the Philadelphia DA's office, to handle the upcoming appeals.

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**Well, Mumia is 66 years old. He is a grandfather. He is an elder with ailments. He is a human being that deserves to be free.**

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As the FOP president John McNesby said just last year, "Mumia should remain in prison for the rest of his life." And a King's Bench order provides the legal angle for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to uphold Judge Sabo's original wish, which was for Mumia ultimately to die in prison.

Today we're living through a moment where it's acceptable to paint "end racism now" in front of the

Philadelphia Police Department's 26th district headquarters, and yet a political prisoner who has since the age of 14 dedicated his life to fighting against racism, continues to be caged and lives his life on a slow death row. We're in the midst of a movement that says Black Lives Matter. And if that's truly the case, then it means that Mumia's life and legacy must matter. And the causes that he sacrifices life and freedom for must matter as well.

Through all of the torture Mumia has suffered over the past 38 years, his principles have never wavered. These principles have manifested themselves in his writing countless books while incarcerated, in his successful radio show, and the time and energy he has poured into his mentorship of younger incarcerated folks and the continued concern for the people suffering outside of the walls. Even while living in the hells of the prison system, Mumia still fights for our human rights. We must continue to fight for him and his human rights.

Well, Mumia is 66 years old. He is a grandfather. He is an elder with ailments. He is a human being that deserves to be free.

Free Mumia.

—*PrisonRadio.org*, November 20, 2020

<https://www.prisonradio.org/news/colin-kaepernick-free-mumia>

## A New Development in the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal

In a ruling helpful to Mumia, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has ruled against the case brought by The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police Lodge Five and Maureen Faulkner, the widow of the police officer that Mumia was accused of killing. They sought to remove Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krassner from the case because of his record of correcting some of the past abuses by Philadelphia police against Black defendants. The effect of this frivolous lawsuit was to delay Mumia's efforts to get his case back into court to examine and rule on copious amounts of evidence of Mumia's innocence that was suppressed for years.

# “Accelerate Our Efforts” to Free Mumia

BY ANGELA DAVIS

*Professor Angela Davis, herself once a political prisoner, is a founding member of Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to dismantling the prison industrial complex. On November 16, Davis delivered the following remarks during the virtual press conference “Freedom and Abolition: A critical moment in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.”*

Mumia Abu-Jamal has played such a pivotal role in the processes of popular education that have led us to this critical juncture and what one might call the century-and-a-half-year-old effort to acknowledge the structural and systemic character of racism and to take seriously the demands for abolition. Abolition of the death penalty, of prisons, of the police. And so, it is right and just that we should accelerate our efforts, on this new terrain, to finally free our brother-comrade.

Much attention has been focused on Philadelphia recently from the elections, to the police killing of Walter Wallace who was experiencing a mental health crisis, to the arrest by federal agents of the teacher and community activist Anthony Smith. And we know that barely a week before his arrest,

*Philadelphia Magazine* had applauded Anthony Smith’s community service and his exceptional leadership. And all around the world we have followed the work of Anthony Smith’s organization, the Black Philadelphia Radical Collective, and many of us passionately support the 13 demands<sup>1</sup> they have submitted.

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## ...now is the time to accelerate our campaign to bring Mumia home...

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We know also that the City Council in Philadelphia recently offered an apology, an official apology, for the 1985 bombing which killed 11 MOVE members, including five children, and completely destroyed 61 homes.

So, I’ve been asked to briefly describe Mumia’s case in the context of the long history of political repression in this country and in the context of the utilization of the criminal legal system to produce pretext for incarcerating people who have chosen to develop radical resistance strategies in relation to racist state violence.

Mumia is a relatively younger member of a generation of Black radical activists and intellectuals who have challenged the structural and systemic character of racism long before this recognition helped to accelerate efforts to reimagine some of our society’s fundamental institutions. Because of our radical stances we were targeted by the state. In many instances the state demonized and railroaded countless numbers of Black radicals, some of us who were freed, but many of whom have been imprisoned for as many as five or six decades.

Mumia was targeted by the Philadelphia police and COINTELPRO, beginning with his membership in the

Black Panther Party. His declassified 500-page FBI file shows that the Philadelphia police, in consultation with COINTELPRO, for many years had tried to peg a crime on Mumia. We also know that at least one third of the police involved in his case were jailed after it was discovered that they had systematically tampered with evidence in large numbers of cases across the city of Philadelphia.

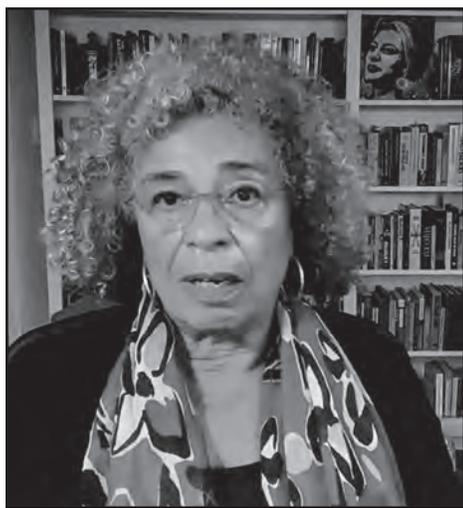
## COINTELPRO’s role in Mumia’s frameup

I think that few people know that the investigation of the killing of Daniel Faulkner, the policeman whom Mumia is accused of killing, that this investigation was conducted not by the homicide unit of the Philadelphia police department but by its “Civil Defense Unit,” which was the local police arm of [former FBI Director] J. Edgar Hoover’s COINTELPRO.

In 1981, Mumia was sentenced to death. And from death row [he] produced brilliant critiques of the prison industrial complex, mass incarceration, capital punishment, and other institutional consequences of racial capitalism. Many of us are aware of the fact that his widely circulated writings have helped to humanize people in prison and people on death row.

Like many others of my age, I’ve been an active supporter of Mumia for many decades. And I’ve had the honor of speaking on his behalf at United Nations conferences and other international venues where Mumia, for example, was declared an honorary citizen of Paris. (The last person before him to receive that distinction was Pablo Picasso [in 1971].) I participated in that ceremony in Paris as his surrogate.

Leonard Peltier, Mutulu Shakur, Russell Maroon Shoatz, Ed Poindexter,



Angela Davis speaking at press conference for Mumia, November 16, 2020. Credit: Joe Piette.

# BRING MUMIA HOME

Veronza Bowers, Romaine “Chip” Fitzgerald, David Gilbert, and my former co-defendant Ruchell Magee are just a few of the U.S. political prisoners who have spent the vast majority of their lives behind bars and, as we know, are currently the most vulnerable with respect to COVID-19. We’ve already heard about Russell Maroon Shoatz’s condition. And we’ve heard [Yale professor and global health activist] Gregg Gonsalves emphasize the need for compassionate decarceration, an abolitionist strategy.

Thanks to international organizing efforts, Mumia is perhaps the most well-known political prisoner in the world. And these international efforts saved his life when he came dangerously close to execution in 1995. Mumia’s case exemplifies the length to which the state will go to silence those who speak truth to power. And this is why the Fraternal Order of Police has been unrelenting in its attempt to silence him and his supporters.

But now that structures of policing have finally been exposed for their systemic racism, and as we call for justice in the names of Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, and Walter Wallace, and so many others, and now that the city of Philadelphia has issued an official apology to MOVE, now is the time to accelerate our campaign to bring Mumia home. Let’s not forget that Mumia’s identification with MOVE and his empathetic reporting on the city’s repression of MOVE rendered him a major target of the Rizzo administration.

## Mumia’s case and the abolition movement

As you’ve heard from Johanna [Fernandez] and others—Linn Washington for example—his case is riddled with violations. Especially the concealing of exculpatory evidence and the presence of Kenneth Freeman at the scene of the killing of Daniel Faulkner although the prosecutor was aware of the fact that Freeman had been identified as the shooter by four witnesses. And [on May 13th, 1985] the same night of the MOVE bombing, Kenneth Freeman was found dead in a parking lot, gagged and handcuffed.

We know that there were clear violations in relation to the selection of the jury. Eleven out of the prosecution’s 14 peremptory challenges were used to eliminate Black jurors. Of course, this in itself, as it’s already been pointed out, supports the call for a new trial. The Supreme Court has ruled that the elimination of jurors on the basis of race is a major violation. And as Johanna and others have pointed out, newly discovered file boxes in the DA’s office, which were there for 37 years or so, contained a list of potential jurors highlighting their race.

And perhaps even more egregious are the instructional tapes that were produced by Assistant District Attorney Jack McMahan, who pointed out that educated Black people should not be selected to serve on the jury. But also, as he said, “Blacks from the low-income area are less likely to convict” and, as a result, “I don’t want these people on your jury.” As he said: “It may appear that you’re being racist or whatnot but again you’re just being realistic. You’re just trying to win the case.”

So finally, the framing of Mumia and his incarceration are part of a larger story of structural racism and repression linked to global capitalism, linked to racial capitalism. Racism drives incarceration and infects policing all over the world, from Rio de

Janeiro to Johannesburg, to London, to Paris. Here in the U.S., mass incarceration especially affects Indigenous people and Black and Latinx communities.

And I think we need to emphasize the fact that the very same forces that have driven the creation of the prison industrial complex are responsible for the fact that many people in other countries, in countries of the Global South, have seen their whole economies destroyed by capitalist incursions. They have no other choice than to flee. Thus, the borders and the walls and immigrant detention facilities are integrally linked to racist policing and the prison industrial complex.

I should point out that abolitionist strategies emphasize the connections of all of these institutions. At a time when structural critiques of racism are gaining traction, and specifically its centrality to policing, we gather here to demand the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners whose trials and sentences were irreparably influenced by their political beliefs and by their challenges to this very system.

—*Workers World*, November 19, 2020

<https://www.workers.org/2020/11/52580/>

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1 Black Philly Radical Collective: Thirteen Demands:

1. We Demand an Authentic Defunding of the Police Budget;
2. Immediately Cease the Criminalization of Black Resistance;
3. Immediately & Permanently Remove All Symbols of State Violence;
4. Immediate Permanent Release of Mumia Abu Jamal, Major Tillery, Arthur Cetawayo Johnson, Russell “Maroon” Shoatz, Omar Askia, Joseph “Jo-Jo” Bowen, and all Black Political Prisoners;
5. Immediate Release of All Vulnerable Individuals in Prison;
6. Swift Firing of Killer Cops and Community Response;
7. Abolish the Fraternal Order of Police and the Police Advisory Committee;
8. End the Military Occupation of the Black Community;
9. Protection for Black Philadelphia;
10. End All Carceral Systems;
11. Disband All Private Police Departments;
12. Fund Communities, Not Cops;
13. Economic Justice NOW!

<https://blackphillyradicalcollective.com/our-13-demands>

# You Cannot Decarcerate by Using Tools of Incarceration

MARESI STARZMANN INTERVIEWS MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

*The somber baritone of Mumia Abu-Jamal is unmistakable. Before we can exchange greetings, one of several automated announcements interrupts the call, reminding us that our conversation will be subject to recording and monitoring. Abu-Jamal is phoning from State Correctional Institution Mahanoy, a medium-security prison in Pennsylvania. Convicted in 1982 for the alleged killing of white Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner in a racially charged trial that, according to Amnesty International, failed to meet international standards, Abu-Jamal's death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2011. In April 2019, a new path for Abu-Jamal to appeal his life sentence was opened by reform-leaning Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, who withdrew his initial opposition for a new appeal to go forward in the courts. Yet, 64-year-old Abu-Jamal remains skeptical when it comes to criminal legal reform in the United States. Despite calls to defund the police and a string of electoral victories for more pro-*

*gressive prosecutors like Krasner, the current administration is actively rolling back reforms. Most notably, Donald Trump has lifted the 17-year moratorium on federal executions and reinstated Department of Justice contracts with private prisons. For Abu-Jamal, with whom I spoke about abolition, the history of slavery and racialized state violence in the United States, this fraught political moment requires an entirely different mindset that allows us to think about decarceration in new ways.*

**Maresi Starzmann:** Donald Trump claims to have instituted prison reforms, because he introduced the First Step Act, a bipartisan federal sentencing and reform bill, and granted clemency to several select, high-profile or celebrity prisoners. What do you make of this?

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** Trump is a wolf. He does not understand the meaning, much less the function of the word “empathy.” One cannot seek to help the people who are caged in this carceral state without empathy. Trump

really has no substantive prison reform programs at all. But he takes a thimble and makes a bucket out of it. I've heard him in debates talking about prison reform, but that's not really what he supports. It is a political tool meant to pry people away from other candidates in support of his reelection. While it is true that some people have gotten out on the First Step program, Trump has also supported the reinstatement of some of the most repressive institutions in the carceral state—private prisons. This takes us far back to post-Civil War traditions in American life when the state sublet its function to private corporate entities and Black people were forced into slavery by another name.

**Maresi Starzmann:** Can you explain this term, “slavery by another name?”

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** I refer to the post-Civil War era of the 1870s and the period after Reconstruction that resulted in the eruption of what can only be called a fascist state—openly at first in the Southern half of the United States, then suddenly and quietly in the rest of the country. Against Black life, Black freedom, Black liberty and ostensibly Reconstruction. The people, who were formerly enslaved, were now submitted to Black Codes—laws that only applied to Black people. It was a form of legalized bondage of African Americans under the power of the state. This continued throughout the beginning of the 20th century, which was itself marked by pogroms and race riots in major American cities against Blacks. At the time, white workers were mobilized, both north and south, because Black people were considered threats to their jobs. It was absurd and it was patently unconstitutional.

**Maresi Starzmann:** Can we still see remnants of this today?



Riot police arrest protesters in Louisville, Kentucky, on September 23, 2020, after a judge announced the charges brought by a grand jury against Detective Brett Hankison, one of three police officers involved in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor in March.

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** Many Americans think that the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were introduced to grant freedom and equal rights to Black people. In fact, however, they did nothing of the kind. We are living in a period where Black people are attacked by forces and agents of the state, like the police, with very little control or comeback. This is the kind of unspoken, unwritten impunity that targets Black people in the North, in the South, in the East, in the West, in their homes, in their cars, on the streets, at the job, anywhere.... Black people speak openly about driving while Black, walking while Black and breathing while Black.

**Maresi Starzmann:** Could you talk more about the historical roots of this system, in particular with regards to American policing, and what this means for the present political moment?

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** American policing really differs from the police systems that emerged in European states. There is no co-referent to these systems, they are distinct. Most people lazily believe that American policing emerged as an offspring of Scotland Yard in London. Nothing could be further from the truth. The American police system emerged from the slave system and from a perpetual war against the freedom, movement and liberation of Black people from the land of their oppressors. It was designed to terrorize, humiliate and often destroy Black people as a message to other Black people, who dared to run away from slavery. Forces known as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, and similar organizations performed a super-policing of Black people through terrorism. This was fascism in every sense. Fascism is not [only] an Italian or even a German thing; in many ways, it's an American thing. And we saw what that means when we looked at that video of George Floyd dying, begging for his life and

calling for his mother. The cop kneeling on his neck could not be more nonchalant, more comfortable, more arrogant, because he is doing his job.

**Maresi Starzmann:** And yet, we also see reform movements in the criminal legal system, like the election of progressive prosecutors, many of whom are Black women who ran on platforms to reduce racial disparities in prosecution. Isn't that a positive development?

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## We will never heal the social wound of mass incarceration by changing the prosecutors.

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**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** Reform movements are playing around the edges of the problem. It is interesting that people think progressive prosecutors could mend this broken system, because, in the end, they are still prosecutors. Their job is to put people in prison. And why are we not talking about changing judges or legislators, who are also engines in this system? Or the media? The media play a remarkable role in driving mass incarceration in America. When people work their way out of the system after 20, 25, 30 or 35 years, it is the media making money by selling stories about the prisoners' redemption. When you look at the scope of the problem—the fact that millions of people are incarcerated and that the prison system has become a generational employer for the white rural working class—then you see the kind of economic and political impediment to the abolition of this system. We will never heal the social wound of mass incarceration by changing the prosecutors.

**Maresi Starzmann:** Can you elaborate?

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** Reforms allow us to ignore the structural element that

has created mass incarceration. You cannot decarcerate by using the tools of incarceration, because they have a specific function. Decarceration calls for a completely different mindset. I prefer the term adopted by Dr. Angela Y. Davis: abolition. We must move for what we want, not for what we think the system can produce, because the system is the problem, not the solution to the problem.

**Maresi Starzmann:** Given your own experiences with the system, do you at all believe that deep, systemic change is possible?

**Mumia Abu-Jamal:** I obviously think all things are possible. The question is, is it probable? That's an open political question, because freedom has always been contested in the land that claims to be the land of the free. This is also the land of the incarcerated. There is a reason we speak of "prison nation," because the numbers in the millions are an American phenomenon. And mass incarceration is a direct response to freedom movements in the United States. Change is contested. But where there is struggle, there is progress. That's the lesson of Frederick Douglass, and we do well to listen to the original abolitionists to get a sense of what is necessary for this moment. It is relentless, continuous struggle wherever it's possible—and sometimes even in places where one may think it to be impossible.

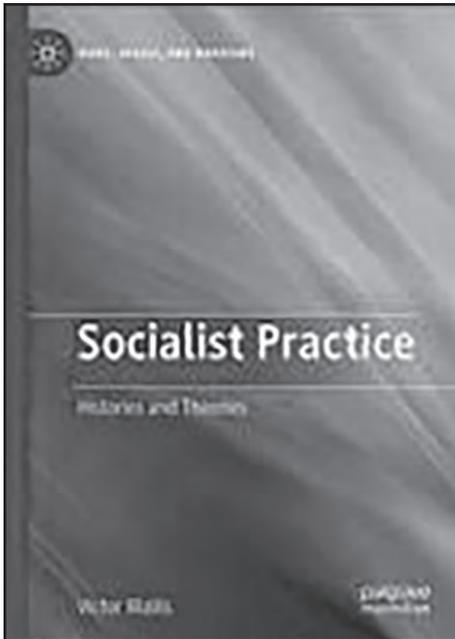
—*Truthout*, October 25, 2020

<https://truthout.org/articles/you-cannot-decarcerate-by-using-the-tools-of-incarceration-says-mumia-abu-jamal/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=70360aab-2132-48a7-aec1-4c5cdae6b383>

Write to Mumia at:  
Smart Communications/PADOC  
Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-8335  
SCI Mahanoy  
P.O. Box 33028  
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

## Thoughts on Socialism

By COMRADE PITT



*Socialist Practice: Histories and Theories*

By Victor Wallis

“The real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development.”

—Albert Einstein

Since Capitalism toppled feudalism it has illustrated for centuries that it is incapable of solving the social issues it created. The gap between rich and poor is steadily widening, systemic racial injus-

tice and disparities continue, as well as irreversible damage to the climate, abject poverty, etc. The year 2020 has unequivocally been a year full of chaos, uncertainty and devastation; however, in the midst of this crisis the curtains have been pulled back on the diabolical functions of capitalism. Consequently, calls for an alternative system echo louder than before.

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**...the oppressor has an outsized role in the life of the oppressed, which makes understanding the oppressor’s *modus operandi* a matter of great importance—sometimes a matter of life and death—to the oppressed...**

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In this brief essay I want to focus on the recently published book titled *Socialist Practice: Histories and Theories* by Victor Wallis. Subsequent to reading this book and circulating it in my study group, I find the perspective and argu-

ments presented to be an indispensable contribution to social justice and social change. It draws historical lessons from a Marxist perspective and applies them to the present times in ways that serve as a blueprint to expedite qualitative and quantitative social change for all of humanity and the environment. *Socialist Practice* builds upon arguments presented by the author in his other books, *Democracy Denied* and *Red-Green Revolution*. The author’s research derives from his own direct experiences as an activist and scholar.

Being of the lumpen proletariat class and a prisoner, what I truly appreciate most is how eloquently the arguments are presented in ways which are easily grasped by the readers but also even more importantly, I find this book to be quite empowering. I fully fathomed Victor Wallis’s point when he mentioned that, verbatim, “The oppressed knows the oppressor better than *vice versa*. This is because the oppressor has an outsized role in the life of the oppressed, which makes understanding the oppressor’s *modus operandi* a matter of great importance—sometimes a matter of life and death—to the oppressed.”

At the core of *Socialist Practice*, it provides a blueprint for the current and future generations for ways to fight for a better and radically different world, and I believe this is a book worth a read by anyone.

Write to: Minister of Education-New Afrikan Black Panther Party/United Panther Movement, Comrade Pitt at:

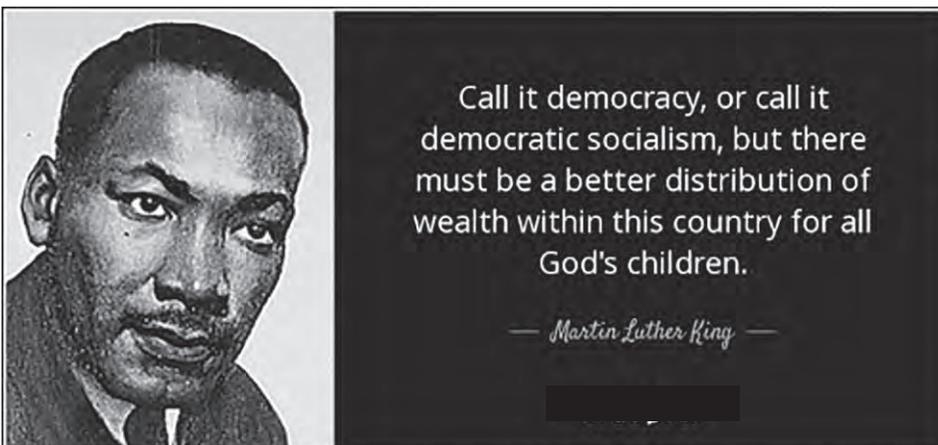
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Red Onion state prison

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## LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,

Some thoughts on communism, *i.e.*, living together as one. We once lived as one with the earth and universe. We weren't somehow separate or above other forms of life. We just were people—animals among the animals. Then we developed civilization, and began drawing lines and creating categories and set judgments based off of these designs. We began to live separately from those who weren't in our category. We started to mine the earth for ore for weapons. We no longer viewed earth as the giver of life and began to see it as property, and let greed and pride overtake and drive human relationships and society.

We have gotten to the point where the evidence is clear and we are beginning to

realize that in order to live as a species on this planet, we need to remember what it is to live with the earth and together as one. Let's balance our collective priorities so our grandchildren's grandchildren don't have to live in a space station. It's about facing facts and accepting the reality that the capitalist way of life has outlived its usefulness in human history and evolution. It's not easy, like growing up in a dysfunctional home thinking that it's normal until something devastating happens. Well it's happening, we are in a state of collective suicide, but we can change the trajectory of humanity—life on Mars is NOT a solution. The theory, practice and system based on living together as one in solidarity, is the solution. United by our essential commonalities let's live in celebration of our diversity.

Com: together

Uni: the unit for measurement of the number one

Ism: a practice system or philosophy

Communism: The practice system and philosophy of living together as one.

Leaders of revolutions are leaders of evolution.

And we need as many as we can get.

Let's us, the masses of people, join hands and arms to build sustainable peace.

—Johnny Gould, November 12, 2020

Follow @tandino415 on Instagram

# COMMUNISM

**com-** prefix + **uni-** prefix + **ism-** noun

**Definition of *com-***

: with : together : jointly

**Definition of *uni-***

: one : single

**Definition of *ism***

: a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory



# SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

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### ***Note to Readers:***

*Socialist Viewpoint* magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, racism, sexism and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

# MOVE Family Says: Free Mumia!

MOVE family statement regarding the “apology” by Philadelphia officials for the 1985 bombing of their home.

December 7, 2020—ONA MOVE Everybody!

This is a statement from the MOVE family to let y’all know that the MOVE family ain’t interested in no apology from any officials in Philadelphia for the 1985 bombing of our family, causing the murder of 11 of our MOVE family members (five of our children and six of our adult sisters and brothers.) If city officials are sincere about rectifying the debacle of 1985, they

would release our brother, Mumia Abu-Jamal immediately! They can’t give us back our 11 family members they murdered in 1985, but they can give us back our brother, Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has been in prison 39 years for a crime he didn’t commit, and everybody knows this—including the mouthpiece for the Fraternal Order of Police—Maureen Faulkner. MOVE is saying that if Philadelphia officials think offering an apology is the answer,

they should be offering apologies to the families of Walter Wallace, Winston Hood, William Green and the families of the countless other victims of police brutality and murder in the city of so-called “Brotherly Love.”

We’re saying an apology without action is meaningless!

Release Mumia Abu-Jamal!  
Long Live John Africa!

—The MOVE Family



Remember MOVE: Bombed from Above, Persecuted, Mass Murdered, Politically Imprisoned!  
Artwork by Kevin “Rashid” Johnson: <http://rashidmod.com/?p=1207>



June 2, 2020: Black Lives Matter Protest at Clifton City Hall - Clifton, NJ, (Shutterstock) Read *Colin Kaepernick: Free Mumia* on page 58.

On the Front Cover: ►

June 07 2020: Peaceful protest against racism and recent U.S. police brutality—Palma de Mallorca, Spain (Shutterstock). Read *Finding the Road to Utopia* on page 2.



(Art by Nick Roney)  
Read *Liberalism and Fascism: Partners in Crime* on page 16.



Read *Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop* on page 29.



## Attention Prison Mail Room:



Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safley* ruling. [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”