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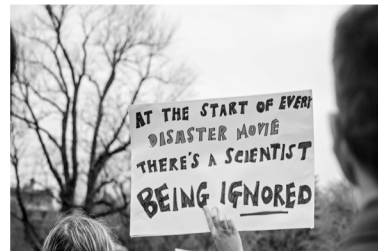
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Chileans Revolt After Being Told, “Get Up Earlier”

By Danica Jorden

A few words that captured the arrogance of the ruling class have set in motion a popular movement and widespread unrest that started in Santiago, the capital city of Chile. In response to dissent after a 30-peso increase in public transportation tickets, Harvard-educated Labor Minister Nicolás Monckeberg told lower income people to “get up earlier” and buy cheaper off-peak fares. Squeezed by the economic pressures of high utility rates, poor social services, expensive housing, and low wages, Chileans were outraged by the government’s flagrant in-

difference to their situation.

On Thursday, October 17, public high school students started refusing to pay for transport on the Santiago Metro, standing on the turnstiles and waving other riders to join them in their protest. By Friday, metro stations were in flames and President Sebastián Piñera, another Harvard alumnus, declared a state of emergency, imposing a 7:00 PM curfew, something the country has not experienced since 1987. Even though the fare increase was reversed, anger had already spread beyond the teenagers to other age groups and outward to other cities in Chile. At least 15 have died to date in clashes with the state police, and there have been many injuries, thousands of arrests, and extensive destruction of property.

Piñera, one of Chile’s richest businesspeople, a billionaire, was quick to resort to tactics that predate the high schoolers but are still within the memories of many Chileans. Descendant

of a former president, Piñera amassed the rest of his fortune under the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, who took power through a violent coup d’état and the death of President Salvador Allende in 1973. Thursday’s youthful civil disobedience in the subways was met with outsized militarized force, resulting in three deaths and a shutdown of the entire system. As the general public came out to the street banging pots and pans in support of the protest, tear gas, helicopters, water cannons and military might was deployed against them.

“Chile despertó” (Chile woke up) read the handmade signs. “There’s a curfew in many parts of the country, a déjà vu I never thought I would experience after fighting the dictatorship in the 1980s. What my generation and the country is reliving is shocking,” writes Juan Pablo Sutherland in a plaint published in *Página/12*.

In contrast with the last cen-



Santiago, Chile, October 20, 2019, by Ignacio Bustamante/Shutterstock.com



**Santiago, Chile, 19/10/2019, by
abriendomundo/Shutterstock.com**

tury's dictatorships, the 21st century has seen the phenomenon of elected neoliberal governments built on a false sense of popular support. Gabriel Morales writes that in just a couple of days, a hidden Chilean dictatorship has been disrobed: "This can only be understood in the context of a country where social rights have been kidnapped by private corporations and delivered to a market that ultimately depends on people paying for their rides, their rent or mortgage, their debts and tuition fees. The student fare evasion was exemplary in this sense, because they encouraged all riders not to pay. And the power of this example is what those in power fear most."

The privatization of utilities, deregulation of economic and environmental protections and unrestrained market forces offer a freedom only the rich can enjoy. And the powerful do seem to be fearful. Media outlets are

portraying protestors as instigators and hooligans, with Piñera, who used to own the Chilevisión television network, declaring, "We are at war against a powerful enemy who will resort to limitless violence."

That assertion may be modulated by memories of the 1973-1990 dictatorship, under which tens of thousands were tortured and thousands "disappeared." Among the tortured and murdered was the father of former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, who served two distinct terms, 2006-2010 and then 2014-2018. Now United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bachelet, a socialist like Allende and her father, was also tortured and driven into exile for four years in East Germany. Bachelet declared that "the use of inflammatory rhetoric will only serve to aggravate the situation and runs the risk of creating fear among the people." **Z**

Trident Is the Crime

By Kathy Kelly

On October 24, following a three-day trial in Brunswick, Georgia, seven Catholic Workers who acted to disarm a nuclear submarine base were convicted on three felony counts and one misdemeanor. The defendants face 20 years in prison, yet they emerged from their trial seeming quite ready for next steps in their ongoing witness. Steve Kelly, a Jesuit priest who has already spent ten years in prison for protesting nuclear weapons, returned, in shackles, to the local jail. Because of an outstanding warrant, Steve has been locked up for over 18 months, since the day of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 action.

On that day, April 4, 2018, the group had entered a U.S. Navy Submarine base which is a home port for the Trident nuclear missile fleet. Just one of those nuclear missiles, if launched, would cause 1,825 times more damage than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The Plowshares activists aimed to expose illegal and immoral weapons that threaten all life on earth.

They had spent two years in prayerful preparation for their action. Two of them, Mark Colville and Liz McAlister, spent most of the months before their trial began in the Glynn County jail. Three others, Martha Hennessy, Carmen Trotta

and Clare Grady, wore “ankle monitors” and were subject to strict curfews for many months while they engaged in outreach and prepared for trial. Because federal law requires 60-90 days before sentencing, to allow for background checks, the 7 probably won’t be sentenced before late December.

My colleague Brian Terrell, who attended all of the trial, described the chief prosecutor as a bully. In a series of accusations, this prosecutor claimed that Clare Grady and her co-defendants believed themselves to be “a law unto themselves.” Clare calmly pointed out that “the egregious use of weapons is bullying, not the painted peace messages.”

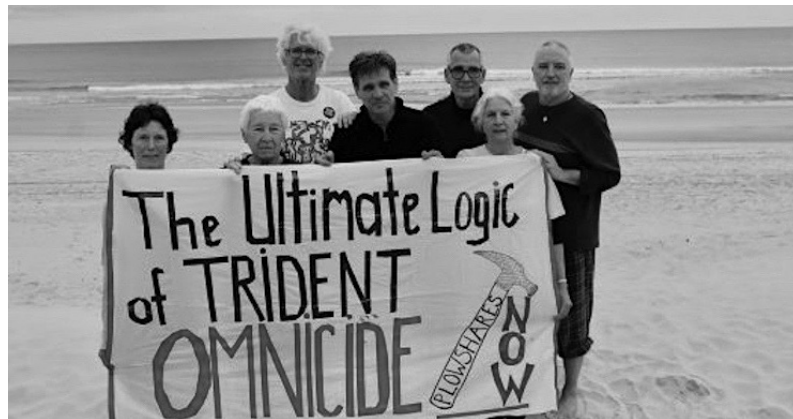
Emerging from the courthouse, the defendants and their lawyers earnestly thanked the numerous supporters who had filled the courtroom, the overflow court room and the sidewalks outside the court. Bill Quigley, the main lawyer for the defense, thanked the defendants for their efforts to save “all of our lives,” noting the jury was not allowed to hear about weapons with enough power to destroy life on earth as we know it. Liz McAlister, who, with Phil Berrigan, had helped found the Plowshares movement, turned 79 years old while in jail. She thanked supporters but also urged people to be active in opposing nuclear weapons and the abuses of the U.S. prison system.

When I learned of the jury’s verdict, I had just signed a postcard to Steve Kelly. The

Glynn County jail only allows correspondence crammed into one side of a pre-stamped 3 x 5 postcard. In tiny cursive, I told him about events in Kashmir where the Muslim majority has engaged in 80 days of civil resistance to the Indian government’s abrogation of 2 articles of the Indian constitution which allowed Kashmiris a measure of autonomy. India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed states, have twice gone to war over control

on the planet of resources needed for food, shelter and housing.

After learning of the verdict I wrote a second postcard telling Steve that we who love him, long for his release, but know we must also be guided by his choice to remain silent in the court. Steve believes the U.S. nuclear weapon arsenal should be tried in the court of public opinion. He says the U.S. legal system protects those who maintain and build the criminal,



The Kings Bay Plowshares 7 activists at oceanfront in Georgia
Photo by: Kings Bay Plowshares

of Kashmir. It’s a deeply disconcerting flashpoint representing the possibility of nuclear armed states triggering an exchange of bombs which could cause a nuclear winter, mass starvation and widespread, long-lasting environmental destruction.

Some years ago, Steve and I had participated in a delegation to visit human rights advocates in Pakistan, and I recall marveling at Steve’s grasp of the nuclear threat manifested in conflict between India and Pakistan. Yet he and his companions have clearly asserted that U.S. possession of nuclear weapons already robs the poorest people

deadly arsenal of nuclear weapons. Inside the court, people didn’t hear Steve’s strong, clear voice. His friends can’t help but imagine the sound of shackles hitting the floor of the Glynn County jail, followed by heavy doors clanging as Steve and other prisoners are ordered into their cells

In 1897, from England’s Reading Gaol, Oscar Wilde wrote a letter, entitled “De Profundis.” He was serving the final four months of a two-year sentence to hard labor. One of his main jailers was certain he would never survive the harsh conditions. Wilde found him-

self transformed during the prison time, and he developed a profound understanding of human suffering. “Where there is sorrow,” Wilde wrote, “there is holy ground.”

The U.S. nuclear weapon arsenal creates anguish, fear and futility worldwide. Yet “holy ground” exists as activists work toward abolition of nuclear weapons. **Z**

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Civil Rights Are on the Chopping Block in New Supreme Court Term

By Marjorie Cohn

This term, the Supreme Court will decide whether people can be fired for being transgender or LGBTQ, if people brought to the U.S. as children can be deported, whether states can impose restrictions on abortion that disproportionately harm poor women, how firm the separation between church and state is, the scope of the Second Amendment, and whether criminal defendants can be convicted by less-than-unanimous juries.

Millions of people will be impacted by the results of these cases. “The court’s decisions will affect 800,000 ‘dreamers,’ in the DACA case...millions of LGBTQ workers in deciding whether federal discrimination laws protect on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, and ‘half the country’ in the abortion case,” *The Washington Post*’s Robert Barnes wrote, summarizing an interview with ACLU legal director David Cole.

These are some of the cases the Court will decide by the end of June 2020:

Dreamers’ Rights

Barack Obama instituted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012 to protect from deportation people who arrived in the United States as children. They are known as “Dreamers,” a reference to the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which Congress has failed to pass for nearly

two decades. Donald Trump rescinded DACA in 2017, in furtherance of his anti-immigrant, anti-Obama agenda. The Trump administration claims that Obama’s establishment of DACA was an “unconstitutional exercise of authority.”

In *Department of Homeland Security v. University of California*, the plaintiffs—the University of California and a number of states and DACA recipients—argue that Trump’s rescission of DACA was illegal. Trump argues that his decision to rescind DACA is not reviewable by the courts. The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed with Trump, saying his rescission of DACA was based “solely on a misconceived view of the law.” The appellate court found meritorious plaintiffs’ claims that the rescission was arbitrary and capricious and violated equal protection, due process and the Administrative Procedures Act.

The high court has recently come to different conclusions in two immigration-related cases.



By Rena Schild/Shutterstock.com

In a 5-4 decision, the Court affirmed Trump's Muslim Ban, holding that the president has broad authority over national security. But Chief Justice John Roberts joined the four liberal justices on the Court to prevent Trump from adding a citizenship question to the census, calling the administration's stated reasons "contrived."

Oral arguments in the case are set for November 12.

LGBTQ Rights

On October 8, the Court heard oral arguments in three cases that test whether Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which forbids discrimination "because of ... sex," protects transgender and LGBTQ employees from being fired. *Bostock v. Clayton County* and *Altitude Express v. Zarda* were brought by men fired for being gay. *Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC* was filed by a woman fired for being transgender.

These are the first cases involving LGBTQ rights to reach the Court since Justice Anthony Kennedy retired. Kennedy wrote the opinions in four cases protecting gay rights and provided the fifth vote to uphold the right to same-sex marriage.

Three U.S. appeals courts and 22 states prohibit the firing of gay and transgender employees. It seems like a no-brainer. "Firing someone because they identify with a sex different from their assigned sex at birth is obviously firing them because of their sex," ACLU lawyer Gabriel Arkles wrote for Truthout.



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"And firing someone because they are attracted to people of the same sex is also obviously because of sex."

Ironically, Justice Neil Gorsuch may cast the deciding vote. During argument, he conceded that the text of Title VII was "close." But Gorsuch wondered whether the justices should consider the "massive social upheaval" if the Court ruled for the plaintiffs.

Gorsuch will hopefully channel his mentor, Justice Antonin Scalia, who authored the 1998 opinion for a unanimous court which held that Title VII covers harassment between members of the same sex. Scalia wrote that although Congress may not have anticipated such harassment when it wrote the law in 1964, "statutory prohibitions often go beyond the principal evil to cover reasonably comparable evils, and it is ultimately the provisions of our laws rather than the principal concerns of our legislators by which we are governed."

Abortion Rights

The Court will decide a case challenging a Louisiana law which, if upheld, would permit only one doctor in one clinic in the state to perform abortions. This law requires that in order to perform abortions, doctors must have admitting privileges at a local hospital. That restriction, plaintiffs in *June Medical Services v. Gee* argue, imposes an "undue burden" on the right to abortion forbidden by the 1992 case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* because it restricts access to abortion without protecting the health of women.

In *June Medical Services*, the district court made extensive factual findings that closing the other Louisiana clinics would impose a heavy burden on low-income women. It found that those who pursue abortions are disproportionately poor and closure of the clinics would force them to travel long distances.

Roberts joined the four liberal

justices to halt Louisiana's law from going into effect during the pendency of the appeal. That was a curious move, since, in 2016, Roberts had dissented from the majority decision in *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt* that held unconstitutional a Texas law nearly identical to the one in Louisiana.

June Medical Services will test Roberts's claimed devotion to upholding precedent, as the Court could use it to overrule *Whole Women's Health*. In the three years since *Whole Women's Health* was decided, Justice Brett Kavanaugh replaced Kennedy. "It will reveal probably more than any case this term this emerging role of Roberts as the swing vote," George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley told *The Washington Post*.

The Right to a Unanimous Jury Verdict

In 2016, Evangelisto Ramos was found guilty in Louisiana of second-degree murder after 10 of the 12 jurors voted to convict him. He was sentenced to life in prison at hard labor with no possibility of parole. Ramos contends in *Ramos v. Louisiana* that he had the constitutional right to a unanimous jury verdict.

All states except Louisiana and Oregon require that jury verdicts in criminal cases be unanimous. Although Louisiana changed its law to require unanimity in felony trials, it only applies to crimes committed on or after January 1, 2019.

In 1972, the Court held in *Apodaca v. Oregon* that the Sixth Amendment right to trial by an impartial jury requires that juries in federal criminal cases be unanimous. But the Court did not find that defendants in state cases are entitled to a unanimous jury.

The Court has used the incorporation doctrine to hold that most of the protections of the Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the Constitution—apply to the states through the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment.

Indeed, last term, a unanimous Court held that the Eighth Amendment prohibition on excessive fines applies in state courts via the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause, which forbids the states from depriving a person of "life, liberty or property, without due process of law."

During the October 7 oral argument in *Ramos*, Kavanaugh asked, "Do the racial origins of this rule have an impact on how we think about stare decisis [following precedent] in this case?"

Louisiana adopted its non-unanimity rule to make it easier for white jurors to convict Black defendants after it was forced to allow Black Americans to serve on juries. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund noted in its amicus brief in support of *Ramos*, "Up until 2018, when Louisianans voted to remove the non-unanimous jury provision from their constitution, black defendants were more likely to be convicted by non-unanimous juries,

and black jurors were more likely than white jurors to be in the dissent."

The Scope of the Second Amendment

For the first time in over a decade, the Court will hear a case involving the scope of the Second Amendment's right to bear arms. The Court will decide in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, v. City of New York* whether New York City's prohibition against transporting a licensed, unloaded and locked handgun to a home or shooting range outside the city limits violates the Second Amendment, the commerce clause and the constitutional right to travel.

Since the five right-wing justices favor an expansive interpretation of the Second Amendment, it would seem the result in this case is preordained. But after the Court agreed to hear the case, New York City amended the regulation to allow licensed gun owners to transport handguns to their second homes or shooting ranges outside of city limits.

New York City's changed regulation should have made the case moot. The justices, however, could use it as a vehicle to establish a broad interpretation of the Second Amendment.

"The court is going to have to decide this question of mootness against the backdrop of several recent highly-publicized episodes of gun violence and heated debate between the two parties about solutions to gun violence," Irv Gornstein, executive director

of the Supreme Court Institute at Georgetown, told *The New York Times*. “For some, this is a reason to dig in and plunge ahead to decide the case. For others, sitting this one out may be an inviting prospect.”

On December 2, the high court will hear arguments in this case.

Church-State Separation

The First Amendment says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The Court will decide in *Espinoza v. Montana* whether a state that gives grants and scholarships to students in private schools must also provide them to students in church schools.

Montana’s constitution, like that of many states, forbids giving tax money to churches. The Montana Department of Revenue prevented a state scholarship fund from providing money to students who attended church-affiliated schools.

This case will test the limits of *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*, the 2017 decision in which the Court held that Missouri could not prevent religious schools from receiving funds to replace pea gravel under playground equipment with a rubber surface. The Court found that refusing to provide the church with an otherwise available public benefit on account of its religious status violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.

Other Cases the Court



By Rena Schild/Shutterstock.com

Might Hear

The Court will continue to accept cases as the term proceeds. Here are some issues the Court may agree to consider.

As Trump obstructs the impeachment inquiry, we will see cases that measure the constitutional impeachment process against unfettered assertions of executive power.

Trump has made unilateral changes to asylum and immigration law, which is within the purview of Congress. Many of those changes have been challenged and will probably be reviewed by the high court. And a federal district judge granted an injunction to halt Trump’s diversion of military funds to the construction of his border wall.

Whether Trump must turn over his tax returns and whether his family’s financial transactions with foreign governments violate the Emoluments Clause will also likely be decided by the Court. A federal district judge ordered Trump to provide his tax returns to New York state prosecutors, and a panel of the DC Circuit Court of Ap-

peals ruled that Congress has the right to see Trump’s financial records.

The Court may also determine whether cities can prevent homeless people from camping in public places or sleeping on sidewalks. The Ninth Circuit ruled that if no alternative indoor sleeping areas are available, such restrictions would constitute cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment.

Two cases that pit religious rights against civil rights might be reviewed by the Court. One involves a Christian florist charged with violation of Washington’s civil rights law after refusing to sell flowers for a same-sex wedding. The other is an appeal by Catholic Social Services, which was excluded from the foster care system for refusing to place foster children with same-sex couples.

And the high court may have the opportunity to gut the Voting Rights Act once and for all if the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals weakens the standard for finding discrimination in a case

pending before it.

As the Court moves increasingly to the right with the recent additions of Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, we can expect the continued evisceration of civil rights and civil liberties. The Court has failed to protect the right to vote by declining to strike down partisan gerrymandering; refused to find that Trump's Muslim Ban violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause; and held that, notwithstanding the Due Process Clause, immigrants who have been released from criminal custody can be detained without a hearing, even when arrested by immigration agents years after their release. The importance of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's continued vitality cannot be underestimated.

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The Official Secrets Movie vs. Joe Biden's Lies About the Iraq

War

By Norman Solomon

Joe Biden's recent efforts to deny his record of support for invading Iraq are marvels of evasion, with falsehoods that have been refuted by one well-documented appraisal after another after another. Biden recently claimed that his vote for war on the Senate floor was somehow not a vote for war. Ironically, while he was spinning anew to deny the undeniable, theaters nationwide began screening a movie that exposes the deceptive approach to the Iraq war that Biden exemplifies.

Historically factual, *Official Secrets* is concerned with truth—and the human consequences of evading or telling it. Katharine Gun, portrayed by actress Keira Knightley, was a worker at the British intelligence agency GCHQ. Risking years in prison, she did everything she could to prevent the Iraq war, and took responsibility for doing so.

Biden did everything he could to enable the Iraq war, and—still—takes no responsibility for doing so.

More than 16 years ago, Biden and Gun were at cross purposes as the Iraq invasion neared. Subterfuge vs. candor. Misinformation vs. information. War vs. peace. Today, their public voices contrast just as sharply.

Gun recalls that both President George W. Bush and especially British Prime Minister Tony Blair were “desperate to get UN

cover” for the impending invasion of Iraq in early 2003. On the last day of January of that year, Gun saw a memo from the U.S. National Security Agency that showed the two governments were working together to wiretap and otherwise surveil diplomats from countries on the UN Security Council—for purposes such as blackmail—to win a vote to authorize an invasion.

Gun became a whistleblower by providing the memo to the *Observer* newspaper in London. As she said in a recent interview with *Salon*, “My intention was to prevent the war.... I felt there was this information that was absolutely crucial, it had the potential to derail the rush to war, and I felt people had the right to know.”

Biden—who played a pivotal role in the rush to war as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—proceeded as though people had no right to know. He excluded critical voices and key information from the committee's high-profile hearings in mid-summer 2002, deceptively serving as the most important lawmaker ushering the war resolution to the Senate floor, where he voted for it in mid-October. The war began five months later. It has never ended.

But now, on the campaign trail, Biden is eager to scramble and rewrite history. He's displaying the kind of disregard for facts that paved the way for the invasion of Iraq in the first place.

A basic flaw in Biden's latest Iraq doubletalk has to do with

his inversion of actual timing. Either he can't remember when the Iraqi government agreed to allow UN weapons inspectors back into Iraq, or he's so desperate to keep lying about his actual record on the Iraq war that he can't bring himself to be truthful.

Biden is claiming that he voted for the war resolution so it would be possible to get UN weapons inspectors into Iraq. During an ABC debate, Biden said that he voted for the Iraq invasion authorization "to allow inspectors to go in to determine whether or not anything was being done with chemical weapons or nuclear weapons." But his claim has the timing backwards.

The Iraqi government announced on September 16, 2002—with a letter hand-delivered to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan—that it would allow the UN weapons inspectors back in "without conditions." *The New York Times* reported the big news under the headline "UN Inspectors Can Return Unconditionally, Iraq Says." That was a full 25 days before Biden voted with virtually every Republican and most Democratic senators to approve the Iraq war resolution.

How could that resolution he voted for on October 11 be viewed as a tool for leverage so the Iraqi government would (in Biden's words) "allow inspectors to go in," when the Iraqi government had already agreed to allow inspectors several weeks earlier?

I have a vivid memory of when the news of that agree-

ment broke. I was in Baghdad near the end of a trip with an independent delegation organized and sponsored by the Institute for Public Accuracy (where I'm executive director) that included then-Congressperson Nick Rahall and former Senator James Abourezk. We had just met with Iraq's number two official, Tariq Aziz. In its coverage, *The Wash-*



By Rena Schild/Shutterstock.com

ington Post reported on September 16: "Iraq maintains that all its weapons of mass destruction have been destroyed. The deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, insisted . . . that even if his government readmitted the weapons inspectors, the United States and Britain would proceed with military action. 'It's doomed if you do, doomed if you don't,' he said."

Hours later, when the news came that Iraq would allow UN weapons inspectors without restrictions, it removed the get-the-inspectors-into-Iraq excuse for the war resolution that was then making its way through Congress. But it's an excuse that Biden has now dusted off and pressed into service, twisting the

timeline of actual events.

The congressional resolution that Biden spoke for and voted for on the Senate floor was clear, stating: "The President is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing

threat posed by Iraq; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

Four months later, in February 2003, at a time when Katharine Gun was anxiously waiting to see whether the NSA document that she had leaked to a British news outlet would actually be revealed to the public, Biden was proclaiming his support for the imminent invasion. He told a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Delaware: "I supported the resolution to go to war. I am not opposed to war to remove weapons of mass destruction from Iraq."

After the invasion, Biden continued to support the war. At the end of July 2003, four months

after the war began, he said in a speech at the Brookings Institution: “Nine months ago, I voted with my colleagues to give the president of the United States of America the authority to use force, and I would vote that way again today. It was the right vote then and it would be a correct vote today.”

After another year had gone by, Biden wrote a magazine article that tactically criticized how the war was being waged while still defending his role in helping to launch it: “A year and a half ago, I voted to give President Bush the authority to use force in Iraq. I still believe my vote was just—but the president’s use of that authority was unwise in ways I never imagined.”

As *The Washington Post* recently noted, “Not until November 2005 did Biden acknowledge that his vote was a mistake.” Even then, on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” Biden tried to shift the blame onto President Bush for turning out to be unworthy of his trust. “In hindsight,” the interviewer asked, “knowing everything you know now about the absence of weapons of mass destruction, was your vote a mistake?” Biden replied: “It was a mistake. It was a mistake to assume the president would use the authority we gave him properly.”

Only one of Biden’s opponents for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination was in Congress at the time of the Iraq war resolution. Bernie Sanders (who I’m actively supporting) voted no.

This summer, Biden has spun out with new mendacity about the Iraq invasion. On the debate stage at the end of July, he upped the dishonest ante by claiming: “From the moment ‘shock and awe’ started, from that moment, I was opposed to the effort, and I was outspoken as much as anyone at all in the Congress.” The historical record shows that claim to be preposterous.

And backwards timing is not the only major flaw in Biden’s claim that he voted for the war resolution to increase the prospects for UN weapons inspectors to get into Iraq. An underlying problem with his current narrative is the reality that going to the United Nations Security Council for authorization to launch a war on Iraq was always a quest for a fig leaf to cover U.S. plans for naked aggression.

New York Times pundit Thomas Friedman was unusually candid when, on November 13, 2002—one month after Biden had voted to approve the war resolution—he wrote in a column: “The Bush team discovered that the best way to legitimize its overwhelming might—in a war of choice—was not by simply imposing it, but by channeling it through the U.N.”

It was this bogus push to supposedly legitimize the pending invasion that Katharine Gun took such a huge personal risk to expose, informing the world about the intense surveillance underway to gain illicit leverage over UN Security Council delegations.

“Gun’s revelation showed that the U.S. and British gov-

ernments were not only lying to get to invade Iraq, they were engaging in outright violations of international law to blackmail whole countries to get in line,” Institute for Public Accuracy senior analyst Sam Hussein wrote. He told me: “The insidiousness of Biden is that he’s effectively saying that Bush should have manipulated the U.N. better.”

As he pursues the presidency, Joe Biden is persisting with dismal innovations to falsify his record on the Iraq war. In the process, he’s operating completely at odds with what the *Official Secrets* film and Katharine Gun are all about. **Z**

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How We Win

By Ted Glick

“How we’re going to do it is through a mass mobilization of working class people at the ballot box. It’s the only way that we’re going to win, defeat the system of which Trump is a symptom. We need to organize a fundamentally positive and welcoming movement, one that is mindful of the ugly histories



“Unrelenting revolutionary activity, coupled with a boundless humanity—that alone is the real life-giving force of socialism. A world must be overturned, but every tear that has flowed and might have been wiped away is an indictment, and a man hurrying to perform a great deed who steps on even a worm out of unfeeling carelessness commits a crime.” -- Rosa Luxemburg, by Everett Historical/Shutterstock.com

that led to our present reality, the inequalities, racism, sexism, the imperialist and colonialist histories that contribute to endless wars and the immigration crisis. We need to recognize the principles that will drive us forward. The logic that got us into this mess is not going to get us out of it. We need to build a mass movement centered on working class, poor, middle class people, that is actively anti-racist, rooted in principles of universality, everyone has a right to health care and education, on principles of cooperation, that is participatory. We need to actively center those principles, combat misogyny, anti-queer discrimination. To drive us forward we need a U.S. that is operated and owned and decided by working and all people, our future is in

publicly-owned systems. I don't want Mark Zuckerberg making decisions over my life. We need to be multi-racial, multi-gendered, multi-generational and multi-geographic. We need to come together listening to each other, to our differences, prioritizing understanding them.”

—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortes, October 18, 2019, Queens, New York rally announcing her endorsement of Bernie Sanders

A “welcoming movement.” I like that. And I like the rest of what Alexandria Ocasio-Cortes (AOC) said at the huge, 25,000-person rally in Queens as she explained why she had decided to publicly endorse Bernie Sanders for President.

It is so important that young leaders like AOC are providing leadership not just on the big issues like climate, health care, economic inequality, mass incarceration, immigrant rights and more, but are also being very explicit about the necessity of a qualitatively superior movement, a principled mass movement, as compared to what the Left has too often produced in the past.

“Positive.” “Welcoming.” “Participatory.” “Listening.” “Universal.” “Understanding Differences.” From my experience going back to the Vietnam war, the Left's record on these principles has been decidedly mixed.

One of my favorite quotes is from Rosa Luxemburg, a leader of the European socialist movement in the late 1800s and first 2 decades of the 20th century. It is undoubtedly a statement made as a result of many difficult personal experiences with socialist men who had difficulty matching their noble socialist sentiments with the way they lived their lives. Luxemburg wrote: “Unrelenting revolutionary activity, coupled with a boundless humanity—that alone is the real life-giving force of socialism. A world must be overturned, but every tear that has flowed and might have been wiped away is an indictment, and a man hurrying to perform a great deed who steps on even a worm out of unfeeling carelessness commits a crime.”

When Bernie spoke after AOC introduced him, he actually used the word “love” at one point to

describe how we should be as we are making social change. He spoke movingly about how all of us need to be committed to change not just for ourselves but for others who are suffering. It was as if he was trying to put into different language Jesus of Nazareth's words about how we should "love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

There are an awful lot of reasons for hope these days: Trump in big political trouble, Bernie and Elizabeth right up there at the top of the polling for the Democratic nomination, our movement of movements staying active on issues and winning some victories despite all against us. To know that AOC has internalized and is speaking articulately about the qualitatively different mass movement we need to build, and Bernie is picking up on some of that, is so, so hopeful.

I believe that we can win. **Z**

Ted Glick has been a progressive activist and organizer since 1968. Past writings and other information can be found at <https://tedglick.com>, and he can be followed on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jtglick>.

What George Carlin Taught Us about Media Propaganda by Omis-

sion

By Jeff Cohen

In the old George Carlin joke, the TV sportscaster announces: "Here's a partial score from the West Coast—Los Angeles 6."

For a brilliant comedian like Carlin—who skewered corporate power, class structure and political/media propaganda—that's one of his more innocuous jokes. But it's sharply relevant today as corporate TV news outlets serve up a series of partial scores. Call it "propaganda by omission."

Take the coverage that followed a Democratic debate.

Bernie Sanders didn't object in the debate when Joe Biden hung a price tag on Sanders' "Medicare for All" plan of \$30 trillion (over 10 years). Sanders responded by offering the other score: "That's right, Joe. Status quo over 10 years will be \$50 trillion. Every study done shows that Medicare for All is the most cost-effective approach to providing health care to every man, woman, and child in this country."

The \$50 trillion figure for continuing the status quo (actually \$47 trillion) comes from the "National Health Expenditure Fact Sheet" of the federal government's Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

I checked the post-debate news coverage. As in the Carlin



By Shutterbug67/Shutterstock.com

joke, I found many references to the partial score: the \$30-32 trillion estimated cost of Sanders' legislation. But not the other score: the more costly estimate of sticking with a system in which health insurance is provided by for-profit corporations.

I watched, for example, the next day's in-depth report on CBS "Evening News" lasting a full two minutes. (That's "in-depth" nowadays on nightly newscasts.) The \$32 trillion estimate was prominent, but the other score was omitted—no estimate for staying with the status quo. When the report ended, anchor Nora O'Donnell accentuated the bias by saying: "That's an expensive plan, Ed. Thank you."

CBS opened its report speaking of "government-run healthcare plans being touted by liberal Democrats." It's well-known that "government-run healthcare" is a GOP/Fox News/insurance industry talking point. As is "government takeover" of healthcare. Just ask GOP propagandist Frank Luntz.

Of course, when Medicare simply provides the coverage—whether to older people today or everyone tomorrow—that's not "government-run healthcare."

As I recently wrote to the *L.A. Times* in response to a biased poll question: "Doctors and hospitals are private today within Medicare in the U.S. (I know because I'm old enough to be on Medicare)—and they would remain so under a Medicare for All system, just as doctors and hospitals are private today under Canada's Medicare for All system. Insurance is govern-

ment-provided; not the healthcare itself."

It's easy to explain why Medicare for All is more cost-effective than the corporate-insurance system. Less bureaucracy and wasteful paperwork. No sales commissions. No exorbitant CEO compensation—averaging \$18 million per healthcare CEO last year. No insurance company profits; the "big 8 health insurers" raked in \$7 billion in one quarter last year.

But confusion, not clarity, is the job of TV news—which is so heavily sponsored by drug and healthcare companies. (Night after night, Big Pharma is the main sponsor of network newscasts.) And confusion is the job of industry ads and corporate politicians like Biden, who receives more healthcare industry donations than any other Democratic candidate.

That's why we keep getting partial scores.

Besides the reduction in financial cost, imagine the reduction in human cost—hardship and anxiety—if our country joined every other wealthy country in achieving truly universal health coverage.

Which brings us to a partial score on another crisis causing hardship and anxiety today: climate change. The Green New Deal proposal in Congress to address the problem, while creating millions of high-paying jobs, has been savaged as "too expensive"—with Mitch McConnell and Republicans incessantly invoking a concocted and ridiculous figure of \$93 trillion.

As with Medicare for All, moneyed elites want to omit the other score—the price tag of sticking with the status quo into a future that Bill McKibben describes as "a modern Dark Ages." From science-denying Republicans to solution-denying corporate Democrats who seek a go-slow "middle-ground," there's an attempt to downplay the more expensive cost of deny and delay, including: rising seas and rivers, more damaging hurricanes and floods, worsening droughts and wildfires, buckling bridges and roads, increased air pollution and hospitalizations, premature deaths, crop failures, extinct species, spread of new diseases, intensified migration and more brutal civil wars.

McKibben argues that the Green New Deal "costs pennies on the dollar" compared to the bleak and costly future predicted by scientists. McKibben, of course, doesn't sponsor TV news. The fossil fuel industry does.

In a country as wealthy as ours—when progressive proposals to address the crises of climate, healthcare and social inequality are routinely shot down by corporate politicians and media as "too expensive"—George Carlin's quip reminds us to demand the other score: the horrific cost of our unequal and unsustainable status quo. **Z**

Jeff Cohen was an associate professor of journalism at Ithaca College and founder of the media watch group FAIR. In 2011, he co-founded the online

activism group RootsAction.org. He is the author of *Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media*.

The War on Truth: How Israel's Social Media Trolls Conquered Facebook

By Ramzy Baroud

On October 9, the social media platform, Facebook, deleted the page of the popular Palestinian news website, the Palestinian Information Center (PIC). This act, which was carried out without even contacting the page administrators, confirms that Facebook's war on pro-Palestine voices is continuing unabated.

PIC had nearly five million followers on Facebook, a testament to its popularity and credibility among a large cross section of Palestinians and their supporters internationally. For Israel's trolls on social media, PIC was simply too effective to be allowed to spread its message. As usual, Facebook obliged.

This oft-repeated scenario—where pro-Israeli social media trolls zoom in on a Palestinian media platform while working closely with Facebook management to censor content, bar individuals, or delete whole pages—is now the norm. Pal-

estinian views on Facebook are simply unwanted, and the margin of what is allowed is rapidly shrinking.

"Sue," a Facebook user, told me that she had been warned by the platform for alleged "hate speech/bullying" for claiming that, "Israelis are militarized in their psychology," and that the "perceived threat of and real hatred for the Palestinians [are] kept alive by the [Israeli] government."

"Sue" is, of course, correct in her assessment, a claim that has been made numerous times, even by the Israeli president himself. On October 14, 2014, President Reuven Rivlin, said that, "...the time has come to admit that Israel is a sick society, with an illness that demands treatment." Moreover, the fact that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been stoking the fire of fear, hatred and racism to win a few votes in the Israeli elections has made headlines around the world.

It is unclear where exactly "Sue" had gone wrong, and what portion of her comment constituted "hate speech" and "bullying."

I asked others to share their experiences with Facebook as a result of their pro-Palestinian speech. The responses I received indicated the unmistakable pattern that Facebook is indeed targeting, not hate speech, but criticism of Israeli war, siege, racism and apartheid.

For example, "José" was censored for writing, in Spanish, that, "there is nothing more cowardly than attacking or kill-

ing a child."

"Damned coward army, assassins of Palestinian children, this is not a war, this is a genocide," he commented.

Meanwhile, "Derek" has been suspended from using Facebook for 30 days "many times" in the past on "various charges." He told me that, "all it takes is a certain number of reports by trolls who have secret groups on who to target."

The same pattern was repeated with "Anissa," "Debbie," "Erika," "Layla," "Olivia," "Rich," "Eddy," and countless others.

But who are these "trolls" and what are the roots of Facebook's unrelenting targeting for Palestinians and their supporters?

The Trolls

According to a document obtained by the *Electronic Intifada (EI)*, the Israeli government has funded a "global influence campaign" with a massive budget with the sole aim of influencing foreign publics and combating the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS).

Writing in *EI*, Asa Winstanley reported on a "troll army of thousands" that is "partly funded by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs."

"To conceal its involvement, the ministry has admitted to working through front groups that 'do not want to expose their connection with the state,'" Winstanley wrote.

One such troll, group estimated to include 15,000 active members, is Act.IL.

Writing for the *Jacobin Magazine* website, Michael Bueckert describes the main function of Act.IL app users: “With the mobile application and online platform Act.IL, Israel aims to recruit a mob of slacktivists and trolls to join their war against the most insidious forms of violence: pro-Palestinian tweets and Facebook posts.”

Act.IL is only the tip of the iceberg of a massive, centralized effort led by the Israeli government and involving legions of supporters around the world. However, Israel would never have achieved its objectives were it not for the fact that Facebook has officially joined the Israeli government in its social media “war” on Palestinians.

In 2014, Sohaib Zahda was reportedly the first Palestinian to be arrested by the Israeli army for his social media post, in a new strategy of cracking down on what Israel sees as “incitement.” The arrest campaign since then has expanded to include hundreds of Palestinians—mostly young artists, poets, and student activists.

But Israel only started monitoring Facebook in earnest in 2015, according to the *Intercept*.

“The arrests of Palestinians for Facebook posts open(ed) a window into the practices of Israel’s surveillance state and reveal social media’s darker side,” Alex Kane wrote. “What was once seen as a weapon of the weak has turned into the perfect place to ferret out potential resistance.”

Israel quickly manufactured a legal basis for the arrests (155

cases were opened in 2015 alone), thus providing a legal cover that was used in its subsequent agreement with Facebook. The Israeli Penal Code of 1977, art. 144 D.2, was repeatedly unleashed to counter a social media phenomenon that was established much more recently, all in the name of cracking down on “incitement to violence and terror.”

The Israeli strategy began with a massive hasbara (propaganda) campaign aimed at creating public and media pressure on Facebook. The Israeli government activated its then-nascent troll army to build a global narrative centered on the purported notion that Facebook has become a platform for violent ideas, which Palestinians are utilizing on the ground.

The Facebook-Israel Team

When, in September 2016, the Israeli government announced its willingness to work with Facebook to “tackle incitement,” the social media giant was ready to reach an understanding, even if that meant violating the very basic freedom of expression it has repeatedly vowed to respect.

During that period, the Israeli government and Facebook agreed to “determine how to tackle incitement on the social media network,” according to the Associated Press citing top Israeli officials.

The agreement was the outcome of two days of discussions involving the Israeli interior minister, Gilad Erdan, and justice minister, Ayelet Shaked, among others.

Erdan’s office said in a statement that, “they agreed with Facebook representatives to create teams that would figure out how best to monitor and remove inflammatory content.”



By PixieMe/Shutterstock.com

In essence, this meant that any content related to Palestine and Israel is now filtered, not only by Facebook's own editors, but by Israeli officials as well.

For Palestinians, the outcome has been devastating as numerous pages, like that of PIC, have been deleted and countless users have been banned, temporarily or indefinitely.

Quite often, the process of targeting Palestinians and their supporters follows the same logic:

- Israel trolls fan out, monitoring and commenting on Palestinian posts.
- The trolls report allegedly offensive individuals and content to the Facebook/Israeli "team."
- Facebook carries out recommendations regarding accounts that have been flagged for censorship.
- The accounts of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian pages and individuals are deleted or banned.

While PIC did not receive any warning before their popular account was axed, chances are the decision followed the same pattern as above.

When social media was first introduced, many saw in it an opportunity to present ideas and advocate causes that have been, for one reason or another, shunned by mainstream media.

Palestine suddenly found a new, welcoming media platform, one that is not influenced by wealthy owners and paid advertisers, but by ordinary individuals—millions of them.

Israel, however, may have found a way to circumvent the influence of Facebook on the discussions pertaining to Palestinian rights and the Israeli occupation.

When exposing apartheid, condemning child killers, and discussing the fear-mentality pervading in Israel become "hate speech" and "bullying," one should then ponder what has become of social media's promise of freedom and popular democracy.

While Facebook has done much more to discredit itself in recent years, no other act is as sinister as censoring the voices of those who dare challenge state-sponsored violence, racism and apartheid, anywhere, with Palestine remaining the prime example thereof. **Z**

Romana Rubeo, an Italian writer and editor, contributed to this article.

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist, author and editor of *The Pales-*

tine Chronicle. His last book is *The Last Earth: A Palestinian Story* (Pluto Press, London) and his forthcoming book is *These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons* (Clarity Press, Atlanta). Baroud has a Ph.D. in Palestine Studies from the University of Exeter. His website is www.ramzybaroud.net.

One Member/ One Vote: California Health Care Workers Show How To Endorse, Democratically

By Steve Early



Members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) at the 2019 Leadership conference, where they debated which presidential candidate to endorse, by Simone Hogan/Shutterstock.com

At the national, state, and even local level, union political endorsements are often made with insufficient membership involvement.

Union leaders and legislative/political directors like to get their favorite candidates endorsed, without too much debate or discussion.

Instead of giving every member a voice in such decisions, a pliant local executive board, a meeting of union delegates, or an appointed political action committee decides which candidate to back—and support financially.

As *Labor Notes* just reported, this top-down approach is increasingly controversial, particularly among Bernie Sanders supporters who were not consulted about their unions' ill-fated embrace of Hillary Clinton three years ago. (See: labornotes.org)

To avoid being bypassed again, some union activists are demanding a bigger say in 2020 presidential primary endorsements. Now, thanks to the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), they have a good working model for making candidate endorsements more democratic, by opening up the process to all members.

NUHW represents 15,000 hospital and nursing home workers in California. Like the United Electrical Workers (UE), it's not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. And, along with the UE, NUHW was one of only seven national unions that backed Sanders in 2016.

A Dual Endorsement

On Thursday, September 26, the NUHW announced that it was endorsing both Sanders and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren because “the union’s executive board decided that [was] the most appropriate reflection of the will of the membership.”

But, to determine the will of the members, NUHW didn’t just rely on the judgement of a few union officials. Every NUHW dues payer was invited to designate his or her first choice for president or top three picks.

This online voting was conducted by email or text and overseen by an outside firm. Balloting was held after information on presidential candidates was posted on the union’s website, utilizing their own responses, if any, to a detailed NUHW questionnaire. (See: nuhw.org)

In the results just announced, the final tally showed what percentage of the ballots mentioned each candidate’s name. The names of Warren and Sanders appeared on 61 and 50 percent of the ballots respectively, resulting in the NUHW decision “to offer grassroots support to both the Warren and Sanders campaigns” (along with a \$5,000 donation to each).

Kamala Harris and Joe Biden were listed on 34 and 32 percent of the ballots respectively, while Pete Buttigieg appeared on 21 percent of the electronic votes cast.

President Donald Trump’s name appeared on 12 percent of the ballots, even though his

campaign declined to answer the NUHW candidate questionnaire or send a video message to its annual stewards’ conference. (For the full tally, see: nuhw.org)

Direct Questioning

At that statewide meeting in Anaheim on September 20-22, 400 NUHW stewards were able to question Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders directly via a live hook-up. Other candidates sent pre-recorded video messages that, to varying degrees, addressed the union’s top queries about health care, immigration, and labor law reform.

At the stewards’ conference, Sanders received the strongest audience response, followed by Warren. Both made a convincing argument that strengthening the labor movement would be a central goal of their administrations, although Sanders’s explanation of his proposed Workplace Democracy Act provided a more detailed road map for doing that.

In a later, open-mike discussion of the relative merits of various contenders, some NUHW delegates, like Marie Chavez, seemed to favor a dual endorsement of Sanders and Warren.

“Bernie has really shifted the conversations we’re having about economic inequality and single payer healthcare,” Chavez said. “I also appreciate the things Senator Warren is doing.”

Meanwhile, Kamala Harris and Joe Biden each came under fire for a damaging faux pas involving the very union they

were wooing.

A Private Insurance Defender

In her endorsement pitch, Harris stressed her long history of involvement with California healthcare workers but made the mistake of repeatedly referring to her audience as “UHW,” rather than NUHW.

NUHW became an independent union rival to the SEIU-affiliated United Healthcare Workers ten years ago after many of its leaders were removed from office and their statewide local put under trusteeship by then-SEIU President Andy Stern. Some of NUHW’s largest bargaining units had to wage bitter fights to leave UHW.

On the issue of healthcare reform, Harris was similarly tone-deaf. She explained that her proposal for a “universal system that gives us choice” preserved a role for private insurers during a “10-year transition period” because union officials have urged her not to “give away our chance to negotiate on health benefits.”

That didn’t go over well because NUHW is a longtime Medicare for All supporter and heavily involved in healthcare industry disputes—including strikes—over benefit issues. None of its activists or leaders seem particularly eager to have President Harris help perpetuate these nightmarish bargaining situations for another decade.

In fact, one of NUHW’s ongoing contract campaigns involves the hugely profitable, but still concession-seeking, Kaiser

Permanente. As part of a long struggle by Kaiser mental health professionals for better staffing, some NUHW members in Los Angeles picketed a political fundraiser hosted by Dr. Cynthia Telles, a UCLA medical school professor and board member of the Kaiser Foundation.

Who was the special guest at Telles’s gathering of wealthy corporate Democrats? None other than former Vice President Joe Biden, a regular at such “high dollar donor” affairs.

“Say No To Joe”

For that reason, viewers of Biden’s video message were doubtful about his claim that, “under a Biden Administration, collective bargaining and the right to organize will be a sacred.”

Several speakers recalled that Biden never responded to NUHW requests that he encourage his friends and donors in Kaiser management to settle their long-running conflict with the hospital chain’s mental health therapists.

“Not only did Joe cross our picket line, he flat out refused to even acknowledge us,” reported Kaiser worker Stacy Cohen. “He does not love us, doesn’t care about us, and he is not with us.” After Cohen spoke, Deborah Silverman, a fellow Kaiser employee, took the floor, aired the same grievance against Biden, and led a rousing chant, “Say No to Joe!”

According to NUHW President Sal Rosselli, this kind of open debate (and related rank-

and-file endorsement vote) is essential to making political action “member-driven,” rather than leadership-directed. When union activists are questioned by skeptical co-workers about how and why the union is taking political stands, they can respond, as mental health therapist Marirose Occhiogrosso does, that they’re “proud to belong to a union where we decide which candidates to support.”

Although a longer voting period might have enabled more membership participation, NUHW’s unusual exercise in democracy stands in sharp contrast to organized labor’s usual endorsement procedures, not to mention the controversial method just used by the union-backed Working Families Party (WFP)

To engineer an endorsement of Warren, instead of Sanders, 50 WFP local and national leaders gave their candidate preference the same weight as the total vote by hundreds of Party members and supporters who participated in an online presidential poll.

This “super delegate” travesty generated membership complaints, bad press in the mainstream media, and sharp criticism on the left. (See: jacobinmag.com)

If unions and organizations allied with them, like the WFP, are serious about internal democracy and restoring membership confidence in their political endorsements, they need to give rank-and-file members the final say. And that means discontinuing their traditional top-down decision-making and not resorting to new methods similarly

wired to insure the preferred outcome of the labor officialdom. **Z**

Steve Early is the author of *The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor* and other books about labor and politics. He is a longtime backer of NUHW, one of the founders of Labor for Bernie, and a former supporter of the Working Families Party. He can be reached at Lsupport@aol.com.

Ecuador: From the middle of the world to the end of the world

By Boaventura de
Sousa Santos

As its very name suggests, Ecuador is geographically located in the middle of the world. And now, from all appearances, neoliberalism has decided to carry out its end-of-the-world maneuvers in this country. That is perhaps the reason it is coming to the realization that the Ecuadorean people are a tough, if not impossible, obstacle to overcome. As everyone knows these days, neoliberalism's deep interconnectedness with the in-

terests of finance capital makes it the most antisocial version of global capitalism. It recognizes no other freedom than economic freedom, and so finds it easy to sacrifice all other freedoms. The specificity of economic freedom lies in the fact that it is exercised strictly on the basis of one's economic power to exercise it. This, in turn, always entails a measure of asymmetrical imposition upon those social groups that are lacking in power and a measure of brutal violence upon those who have no power at all, which happens to be the vast majority of the world's impoverished population. The imposition and the violence led invariably to the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich (via the state's meager policies of social protection) and the plundering of natural resources as well as economic assets whenever available. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is the agent in charge of legalizing this transfer, which is viewed by the people as sheer theft and makes itself felt in the violent austerity policies imposed by finance capitalism.

The theft is so blatant that the amount of the loans is almost always as high as the publicly reported advantages granted to the international lenders and to the large multinationals connected to them. The most recent instances of this process include Greece and Portugal (2011-2015), Argentina, Brazil, and many African countries. The current situation in Ecuador is the height of neoliberalism's destructive will. In order to safe-

guard the right to legal theft on the part both of creditors and multinationals, the country was put to fire and sword, a state of emergency was declared and readily legitimized by the constitutional court, the Armed Forces—trained by the infamous U.S. Army School of the Americas (whose current name erases history while pursuing the same goals)—were mobilized, so they could practice in the fight against the domestic enemies, i.e., the impoverished majorities, protesters were murdered and injured, and hundreds of children were caused to disappear. It was a maximalist, end-of-the-world strategy, only too ready to raze the country if that's what it takes to enforce the will of the empire and of the local elites at its service.

The real tragedy in all this is that, during the first decade of this century, Ecuador was the country of hope. It was my great pleasure to be a consultant in the drafting of Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world and the first ever to enshrine the rights of nature among its articles, thereby offering an alternative to capitalist development. Such an alternative rested on the principles of harmony with nature and of reciprocity followed since times immemorial by the indigenous peoples, their approach to life so foreign to Western logic that it had to be conveyed in its language of origin, Quechua, as Sumak Kawsay, awkwardly translated as good living. The

following years were marked by innovative experimentation and high expectations, especially for the indigenous peoples, who, mostly since 1990, had fought for the recognition of their rights, respect for their ways of life, and for a dignified existence as survivors of the great colonial genocide of the modern age, perpetuated to this day by the new colonialism and racism that for decades has characterized the political parties on both the right and left.

The president of the Republic at the time was Rafael Correa. A great communicator, albeit one not too deeply rooted in the social movements, he had an anti-imperialist discourse, was always controversial in his positions, and had a low tolerance for dissent in his own political ranks. But he did a remarkable job of renegotiating the foreign debt and effecting social redistribution, even if these efforts were somewhat misguided and perhaps unsustainable, and that for two main reasons. On the one hand, it was difficult for him to see the indigenous peoples as more than poor people, their collective rights, culture and history being of little import; social redistribution meant control by the state and the destruction of indigenous self-government autonomy—a guarantee that dated at least as far back as the 1998 Constitution; and it didn't take long for him to refine his demonizing of the indigenous leaders. On the other hand, he ran afoul of the Constitution and invoked financial difficul-

ties to justify his embracing the neo-extractivist, capitalist development model (based on the extraction of natural resources, especially oil), although he broke with tradition in showing a preference for Chinese rather than U.S. investors. Because of his developmentalism and his fierce hostility to the indigenous leaders, over the last few years Correa has been abandoned by a large part of the Ecuadorean left. I myself have been a critic of Correa. But I never shared the excesses of those sectors of the left who, with the blessing of the European ecological left, went as far as calling him an authoritarian and ultra-rightist leader. These days they are faced with a reality check about the true meaning of the extreme right in Ecuador and across the subcontinent.

Rafael Correa stayed in power from 2007 to 2017 and was succeeded by president Lenin Moreno, who had served as Correa's vice-president for several years. At first it seemed that the only change would be one of style, not the substance of government. But those familiar with Moreno's background should pay better attention. No one seemed to notice that the Moreno-backed legal persecution of Correa on charges of alleged corruption was just another version of the new U.S. strategy aimed at neutralizing rulers who challenge the interests of U.S. companies, especially as far as oil is concerned. Enter the alleged fight against corruption, as was also the case with Lula

da Silva and Cristina Kirchner, among many others. Little by little, Moreno revealed his true goal, which was to realign Ecuador with U.S. interests, in an alliance that culminated with the agreement signed with the IMF. The October 1 decree with austerity measures—the so-called *paquetazo*—spells profound brutality for low-income families, which constitute the vast majority of the Ecuadorian people.

The tragic trajectory of the IMF recipes is only too well known. They yield no good results except for the investors, while impoverishing the vast majorities. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, they continue to be used, and each time they are heralded as the only alternative left to save the country. It is not surprising that the IMF is heedless of the ruinous social consequences of its recipes, because capitalism cannot be required to extend its philanthropy beyond its own interests (for which reason it does not qualify as real philanthropy). What is surprising is that, during the first 12 days of the crisis, Lenin Moreno seems to have forgotten how strong the resistance of the indigenous peoples can be, a resistance learned over the centuries and which has overthrown three presidents since 1990, with Moreno possibly the next in line. Most tragic of all, for the people of Ecuador, is the fact that the overthrowing of past presidents (in 1997, 2000 and 2005) was much less violent than what lay in store for the



Demonstration in Quito Ecuador, by Fabiana Lando/Shutterstock.com

next one. The timid statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose inability to stand for human rights with total autonomy is well known, is a sign of the authoritarian times in which we live.

Twelve days into the fight, Moreno finally gave in. He lifted Decree 883, which had established the austerity measures (first and foremost, the virtual doubling of the price of fuel). It is a backing down—and a poorly disguised one at that—for the sake of political survival. Decree 894 begins with a justification for repealing Decree 883—for technical reasons that basically consist in the impossibility of enforcing it due to resistance on the part of the people—and goes on to offer reasons having to do with the establishment of social peace and harmony and the desire to negotiate the new mea-

sures with the relevant social organizations. Article 2 of the new decree stipulates that the fuel subsidies will be restored and only made more rational and targeted, so that they do not end up benefiting those who do not need them or use them for contraband. Had that been the objective to begin with, the country would not have reacted the way it did.

With two years to go until the end of his term, Moreno is aware that his backing down is a personal defeat that will cost him dearly in the near future. Everyone will remember the arrogance of his professed purpose to go ahead with austerity at whatever cost. The rhetoric was directed at the IMF, not the people of Ecuador. With its pathetic and supposedly emotional undertones, the new rhetoric is directed at the Ecuadorian peo-

ple and amounts to little more than a surrender speech. In fact, the main defeat is not Lenin Moreno's, but rather a defeat of the IMF and its austerity policies. The final maneuvers were aborted, as military slang has it, as they were in Argentina, with other countries to follow. The IMF's difficulties are a reflection of the decline of neoliberalism in the second decade of this century.

Now that they have a better grasp of where Moreno is coming from, the Ecuadorian people are not expected to let up in the new phase of their struggle—a struggle, moreover, with which they are teaching the world a lesson: unjust power, no matter how strong, always comes with a vulnerable spot, a measure of injustice, and peaceful and organized resistance against it. **Z**

Feature



Protesting Turkey invasion of Kurdistan in front of Massachusetts State House in Boston, MA, by ab1358/Shutterstock.com

The Foreign Policy of a Con Man

C.J. Polychroniou interviews Noam Chomsky

C*.J. Polychroniou: Noam, since coming to office, Trump has shown on numerous occasions that he is not a normal foreign policy president. But can you make any sense out of his stance toward Syria?*

Noam Chomsky: The first of Trump's recent

steps was to withdraw the small U.S. contingent that was a deterrent to Turkey's expansion of its invasion of Syria and to authorize Erdoğan's plans to extend his atrocities and ethnic cleansing of Syrian Kurds. His second step was to move U.S. troops to "secure" the oil-producing areas. The

latter, apparently after he was told about the oil, is easy to understand. He has held all along that our only standing interest in the Middle East is to “secure” its oil for our own benefit. As for the first step, we can only speculate, but it seems quite likely that the motive is what guides him consistently: How will the action affect me? Trump is an effective con man who has a good sense of what animates his voting base. In this case, he presumably expected (correctly it seems) that withdrawing a few hundred troops would appeal to the sector of the population that resonates to his message that America is foolishly expending its blood and treasure to help “unworthy” people who don’t even thank us for our sacrifices on their behalf, and that Trump is the first president to stand up for the suffering American people instead of giving everything away to foreigners out of stupidity (or treachery).

It’s worth recalling that repeated polls have shown that Americans vastly overestimate the scale of foreign aid—and recommend that it be considerably higher than it actually is (putting aside what constitutes “aid”).

Much has been written and said about the betrayal of the Kurds, a U.S. ally in the war against ISIS (also known as Daesh). This isn’t, however, the first time that the U.S. has betrayed the Kurds and other former allies.

Betrayal of the Kurds has been virtually a qualification for office since Ford-Kissinger abandoned the Kurds to the mercy of Saddam Hussein when they were no longer needed. Reagan went so far as to support his friend Saddam’s chemical warfare campaign against Iraqi Kurds, seeking to shift the blame to Iran and blocking congressional efforts to respond to these hideous crimes. Clinton’s method was to provide the arms for the murderous government assault on Turkish Kurds, which killed tens of thousands, wiped out 3,500 towns and villages, and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes. (See Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism*, Chapter 3. London: Pluto Press, 1999.) Clinton’s flood of military aid increased along with the shocking crimes, as Turkey became the prime recipient of American arms (outside of Israel-Egypt, a separate category).

Trump’s contribution is particularly disgusting.

The Kurds lost 11,000 soldiers, men and women, leading the war against ISIS for which Trump claims credit, helped by some U.S. special forces (5 casualties are reported) and air support. Erdoğan demanded that Kurds eliminate defensive fortifications (filling in trenches, etc.) near the border, and at the request of the U.S. command, they complied, trusting Washington’s promise that it would protect them from a further Turkish assault. Trump’s tweet broke that promise, leaving Kurds exposed to the invasion by Turkish-backed forces, most it seems jihadis and criminals. For years, Turkey has been helping tens of thousands of jihadis to flood into Syria for its anti-Assad war and to establish a Turkish presence. No surprises in how the extended Turkish assault has been carried out.

Former prosecutor and UN investigator Carla del Ponte said Erdoğan should be investigated and indicted for war crimes. What about Trump? After all, isn’t he the one who gave Erdogan the green light to launch an invasion into the Kurdish semi-autonomous region in Syria?

Turkey had already invaded and occupied Kurdish-controlled regions of northern Syria, killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands, with credible charges of serious war crimes. Trump’s green light was for extending the operation with [the] alleged goal of ending a terrorist threat, in reality in order to put an end to the highly promising social and political achievements in Kurdish-led Rojava by violence and terror, ethnic cleansing, and resettling the region with Syrians of Turkey’s choosing.

On war crimes, it is well to remember the stirring words of Justice Robert Jackson, chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg Tribunal where Nazi war criminals were judged and hanged: “We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this Trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity’s aspirations to do justice.”

When we ask how these words have been heed-

ed since, we know how history should judge us, and what to expect of punishment for war crimes—even in perfectly clear cases of aggression with no credible pretext, the “supreme international crime” of the Nuremberg judgment: the U.S.-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003, to take a textbook example.

Continuing with the Nuremberg judgment, we might recall that “to initiate a war of aggression,” such as the invasion of Iraq, “is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.” Included in the accumulated evil of the whole is the recruitment of such militants as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who joined the resistance to the invasion and, after an education in Abu Ghraib, went on to lead the criminal enterprise ISIS, finally killed in a U.S. special forces operation on October 27.

Moving to the domestic front, are the Democrats likely to benefit from impeaching Trump, or will the gamble to do so prove to be a costly one for them?

My own guess is that it will turn out to be rather like the Mueller investigation. Trump will be impeached by the House, then acquitted in the Senate, where few Republicans are likely to be principled enough to face Trump’s adoring and militant voting bloc. Then Trump can declare victory for the Tribune of the People, [saying he] has once again protected “real” red-blooded Americans from the machinations of the Deep State and the treacherous liberal elites.

Economic models predict that if nothing changes with regard to the direction of the economy, Trump will win in 2020 with an even bigger margin. Is this a surprising development, given all the chaos that surrounds Trump’s presidency?



“20 percent of the country’s wealth is in the hands of 0.1 percent of the population while half the population has negative net worth.” Photo by arindambanerjee/Shutterstock.com

These models are largely based on public perceptions of current economic trends. These take no account of the fact that the Trump economy carries onward the slow Obama recovery from the Great Recession, now with a real unemployment rate of over 7 percent with almost stagnant real wages and declining benefits—and spectacular enrichment of a tiny sector to the point where over 20 percent of the country’s wealth is in the hands of 0.1 percent of the population while half the population has negative net worth.

In the past, these models have been accurate, though we should recall that the best predictor of electability, dramatically for Congress, is campaign spending, as Thomas Ferguson has shown, again in current work. But we are not in normal times. The Republican “radical insurgency,” as it was called several years ago by Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, has gone far off the traditional rails under Trump, undermining democracy and posing an extraordinary threat to the persistence of organized human life on earth—in the all-too-near future. How such factors will enter into the election is not easy to say, though it is unfortunately not difficult to predict the consequences of four more years of Trumpism.

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Feature



Youth protesting climate change on the steps of the capitol building, by Sheila Fitzgerald/Shutterstock.com

10 Ways that the Climate Crisis and Militarism are Intertwined

By Medea Benjamin

The environmental justice movement that is surging globally is intentionally intersectional, showing how global warming is connected to issues such as race, poverty, migration and public health. One area intimately linked to

the climate crisis that gets little attention, however, is militarism. Here are some of the ways these issues—and their solutions—are intertwined.

1. The U.S. military protects Big Oil and oth-

er extractive industries. The U.S. military has often been used to ensure that U.S. companies have access to extractive industry materials, particularly oil, around the world. The 1991 Gulf War against Iraq was a blatant example of war for oil; today the U.S. military support for Saudi Arabia is connected to the U.S. fossil fuel industry's determination to control access to the world's oil. Hundreds of the U.S. military bases spread around the world are in resource-rich regions and near strategic shipping lanes. We can't get off the fossil fuel treadmill until we stop our military from acting as the world's protector of Big Oil.

2. The Pentagon is the single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world. If the Pentagon were a country, its fuel use alone would make it the 47th largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world, greater than entire nations such as Sweden, Norway or Finland. U.S. military emissions come mainly from fueling weapons and equipment, as well as lighting, heating and cooling more than 560,000 buildings around the world.

3. The Pentagon monopolizes the funding we need to seriously address the climate crisis. We are now spending over half of the federal government's annual discretionary budget on the military when the biggest threat to U.S. national security is not Iran or China, but the climate crisis. We could cut the Pentagon's current budget in half and still be left with a bigger military budget than China, Russia, Iran and North Korea combined. The \$350 billion savings could then be funneled into the Green New Deal. Just one percent of the 2019 military budget of \$716 billion would be enough to fund 128,879 green infrastructure jobs instead.

4. Military operations leave a toxic legacy in their wake. U.S. military bases despoil the landscape, pollute the soil, and contaminate the drinking water. At the Kadena Base in Okinawa, the U.S. Air Force has polluted local land and water with hazardous chemicals, including arsenic, lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos and dioxin. Here at home, the EPA has identified over 149 current or former military bases as SuperFund sites because Pentagon pollution has left local soil

and groundwater highly dangerous to human, animal, and plant life. According to a 2017 government report, the Pentagon has already spent \$11.5 billion on environmental cleanup of closed bases and estimates \$3.4 billion more will be needed.

5. Wars ravage fragile ecosystems that are crucial to sustaining human health and climate resiliency. Direct warfare inherently involves the destruction of the environment, through bombings and boots-on-the-ground invasions that destroy the land and infrastructure. In the Gaza Strip, an area that suffered three major Israeli military assaults between 2008 and 2014, Israel's bombing campaigns targeted sewage treatment and power facilities, leaving 97 percent of Gaza's freshwater contaminated by saline and sewage, and therefore unfit for human consumption. In Yemen, the Saudi-led bombing campaign has created a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe, with more than 2,000 cases of cholera now being reported each day. In Iraq, environmental toxins left behind by the Pentagon's devastating 2003 invasion include depleted uranium, which has left children living near U.S. bases with an increased risk of congenital heart disease, spinal deformities, cancer, leukemia, cleft lip and missing or malformed and paralyzed limbs.

6. Climate change is a "threat multiplier" that makes already dangerous social and political situations even worse. In Syria, the worst drought in 500 years led to crop failures that pushed farmers into cities, exacerbating the unemployment and political unrest that contributed to the uprising in 2011. Similar climate crises have triggered conflicts in other countries across the Middle East, from Yemen to Libya. As global temperatures continue to rise, there will be more ecological disasters, more mass migrations and more wars. There will also be more domestic armed clashes—including civil wars—that can spill beyond borders and destabilize entire regions. The areas most at risk are sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South, Central and Southeast Asia.

7. The U.S. sabotages international agree-



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ments addressing climate change and war. The U.S. has deliberately and consistently undermined the world's collective efforts to address the climate crisis by cutting greenhouse gas emissions and speeding the transition to renewable energy. The U.S. refused to join the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord was the latest example of this flagrant disregard for nature, science, and the future. Similarly, the U.S. refuses to join the International Criminal Court that investigates war crimes, violates international law with unilateral invasions and sanctions, and is withdrawing from nuclear agreements with Russia. By choosing to prioritize our military over diplomacy, the U.S. sends the message that "might makes right" and makes it harder to find solutions to the climate crisis and military conflicts.

8. Mass migration is fueled by both climate change and conflict, with migrants often facing militarized repression. A 2018 World Bank Group report estimates that the impacts of climate change in three of the world's most densely populated developing regions—sub-Saharan Africa,

South Asia, and Latin America—could result in the displacement and internal migration of more than 140 million people before 2050. Already, millions of migrants from Central America to Africa to the Middle East are fleeing environmental disasters and conflict. At the U.S. border, migrants are locked in cages and stranded in camps. In the Mediterranean, thousands of refugees have died while attempting dangerous sea voyages. Meanwhile, the arms dealers fueling the conflicts in these regions are profiting handsomely from selling arms and building detention facilities to secure the borders against the refugees.

9. Militarized state violence is leveled against communities resisting corporate-led environmental destruction. Communities that fight to protect their lands and villages from oil drills, mining companies, ranchers, agribusiness, etc. are often met with state and paramilitary violence. We see this in the Amazon today, where indigenous people are murdered for trying to stop clear-cutting and incineration of their forests. We see it in Honduras, where activists like Berta Caceres have been gunned down for trying to preserve

their rivers. In 2018, there were 164 documented cases of environmentalists murdered around the world. In the U.S., the indigenous communities protesting plans to build the Keystone oil pipeline in South Dakota were met by police who targeted the unarmed demonstrators with tear gas, bean-bag rounds, and water cannons—intentionally deployed in below-freezing temperatures. Governments around the world are expanding their state-of-emergency laws to encompass climate-related upheavals, perversely facilitating the repression of environmental activists who have been branded as “eco-terrorists” and who are subjected to counterinsurgency operations.

10. Climate change and nuclear war are both existential threats to the planet. Catastrophic climate change and nuclear war are unique in the existential threat they pose to the very survival of human civilization. The creation of nuclear weapons—and their proliferation—was spurred by global militarism, yet nuclear weapons are rarely recognized as a threat to the future of life on this planet. Even a very “limited” nuclear war, involv-

ing less than 0.5 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons, would be enough to cause catastrophic global climate disruption and a worldwide famine, putting up to 2 billion people at risk. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has set its iconic Doomsday Clock to 2 minutes to midnight, showing the grave need for the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The environmental movement and the anti-nuke movement need to work hand-in-hand to stop these threats to planetary survival.

To free up billions of Pentagon dollars for investing in critical environmental projects and to eliminate the environmental havoc of war, movements for a livable, peaceful planet need to put “ending war” at the top of the “must do” list. **Z**

Medea Benjamin is cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace, and author of several books, including *Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran*. For a full understanding of the intersection between war and the climate, read Gar Smith’s *War and Environment Reader*.



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Feature



Protesters march against police shootings and racism, by Rena Schild/
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Politicians Agree: “Any White Cop Can Kill a Black Man”

By Don Fitz

In 2017, *ZNet* ran my article, “Any White Cop Can Kill a Black Man at Any Time,” which told how a St. Louis cop, Jason Stockley, killed a 24-year-old black man, Anthony Lamar Smith. Though Stockley claimed he had fired in self-defense when Smith pulled a gun on him, evidence showed that he had planted the gun after the kill-

ing. When Stockley was found “not guilty,” protests by thousands in St. Louis lasted for months, just as in 2014 when another white cop, Darren Wilson, killed Michael Brown in neighboring Ferguson.

Crises of cops indiscriminately killing black men keep intensifying throughout the area. In

2018, Stockley sued the city of St. Louis for putting him on trial in a case that could have created a precedent for cops being able to kill without ever being held accountable. Then, on September 20, 2019, news broke that in 2012, soon after the killing, the Missouri Attorney General's office had suppressed evidence regarding Stockley's DNA being found on the gun he claimed belonged to his victim. This is after months of the St. Louis Police Officers Association (SLPOA) harassing the city's first black female Circuit Attorney for attempting to defend citizens from racist attacks.

We cannot limit ourselves to looking at only actions by white cops because those killings are interwoven into a pattern which includes rampant police violence, political cover-ups, political scandals, courtroom injustice, orchestrated suppression of demonstrations, and attacks on any effort to challenge the status quo. Post-Michael Brown racism in St. Louis reflects a coordinated effort by multiple right wing forces for an all-out attack on civil liberties.

Let's back up to get a better picture of how the killing of Anthony Lamar Smith fits into the big picture. When Jason Stockley pumped 5-7 shots into Smith in 2011, the cop claimed that he had to defend himself from a heroin dealer. Local press briefly covered it as a drug deal gone bad. But it turned out to be much more than that. Kirkwin Taylor reported that he and his five-year-old son had been riding with Smith before going to a fast-food restaurant. Taylor disputed the claim that Smith had drugs and a gun. "I wouldn't have had my son in there if there was a gun."

When Stockley first approached Smith's car, he carried his own unauthorized AK-47 as well as his police gun. It is very possible that Smith sped away because he was terrified of the gun-toting cop. Stockley got a 30-day suspension for the AK-47 and resigned from the police force in 2013, moving to Houston Texas, where he took a lucrative management job.

Also in 2013, Missouri Assistant Attorney General Dana Tucker filed a summary report on the case that said, "the currently available evidence raises serious questions as to whether the shooting occurred as stated." The year before, investigators found Stockley's DNA on the gun he claimed he

took from Smith's car after killing him. Smith's DNA was not on the gun. Additionally, Stockley's DNA appeared on a screw in the gun, indicating that the cop had handled it considerably.

On Saturday, September 21, 2019, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that the Missouri Attorney General's office had concealed "that information from lawyers, city officials and reporters." The facts surrounding Smith's death were not available to his family in 2013 when they settled a wrongful death suit for \$900,000.

The DNA evidence was made available in 2016 when Stockley went to trial for murder. At the trial, it was brought out that a police car device recorded Stockley telling his partner, "I'm gonna kill that *****!" as they chased Smith at over 80 miles per hour through city streets. A video documented that after Stockley killed Smith, he went back to the police car, grabbed an object and placed it by the victim.

Pointing out that it would make no sense for an officer who had killed a suspect to handle evidence, the prosecuting attorney charged that Stockley had planted the .38-caliber revolver so he could claim "self-defense." Stockley decided to not request a jury trial, leaving his fate to a single judge. Of 83 cops charged with killing civilians during the previous 12 years, none has ever been convicted in a "bench trial."

As St. Louis waited for the verdict, media reviewed possible sentences of death or life imprisonment or conviction of second degree murder. The corporate press almost skipped over a theoretical option of "not guilty." But in the days leading up to revelation of the judge's decision, Missouri Governor Eric Greitens and St. Louis city politicians urged "calm," as if they knew a storm was about to break.

During the wait for the verdict, St. Louis civil rights activists remembered that on the first anniversary of Michael Brown's death, several police in Columbia Missouri announced they were having "Darren Wilson Day" in order to celebrate that cop's killing the unarmed Michael Brown. Two days before the judge's decision was made public, Richard Geisenheyner, of Liberty Plaza Missouri, hung a sign by his confederate flag saying "SLAVES 4 SALE." He explained that he

was “tired of the government telling him what to think.”

On September 15, 2017, the St. Louis community was stunned to learn that Jason Stockley would not get the death penalty or life imprisonment—and not even one day in jail. The judge decreed that Stockley was innocent and set him free—free to become a cause célèbre of the Ku Klux Klan.

Within minutes of the news hitting the air, Zaki Baruti, leader of the Universal African Peoples Organization and Green Party candidate for governor in 2000, had pulled together nine people to protest by the courthouse. The crowd of demonstrators soon mushroomed to hundreds.

The meaning of the verdict was clear: if Jason Stockley could not be convicted of any crime, the judge’s decision said that no white cop should ever be convicted of killing a black man, regardless of the evidence against him.

St. Louis police were pulled from many regular duties and announced that they were unable to provide security for weekend events which were canceled across the city. Investors bemoaned the loss of revenue from cancellation of concerts. Dozens of schools let students out early that day.

By Monday, students had walked out of class in at least three high schools and two universities. In addition to street demonstrations, hundreds marched through shopping malls. There have been so many spontaneous marches that no one knows for sure how many people have participated—several thousand for certain by Wednesday, September 20.

Demonstrations spread across St. Louis City and County and Governor Greitens reappeared with National Guard tanks announcing his willingness to do whatever necessary to maintain order. Area cops had a field day attacking and pepper spraying demonstrators after boxing them in or when they were trying to disperse.

The *Riverfront Times* reported that at 7:30 PM on September 17, a cop “driving an unmarked patrol car put the blue Impala in reverse and shot through an approaching crowd, narrowly missing protesters.” Everyone was acutely aware of the murder less than a month before of anti-racist Heather Heyer by a white supremacist racing his car into a crowd in Charlottesville Virginia.

The Green Party of St. Louis had intense internal discussions regarding how to respond to both the 2014 killing of Michael Brown and the 2017 acquittal of Stockley. Several Greens had led demands for body cameras and civilian oversight boards for the police. But many felt that these did not get to the heart of the matter, which was that killer cops walk free regardless of the evidence against them.

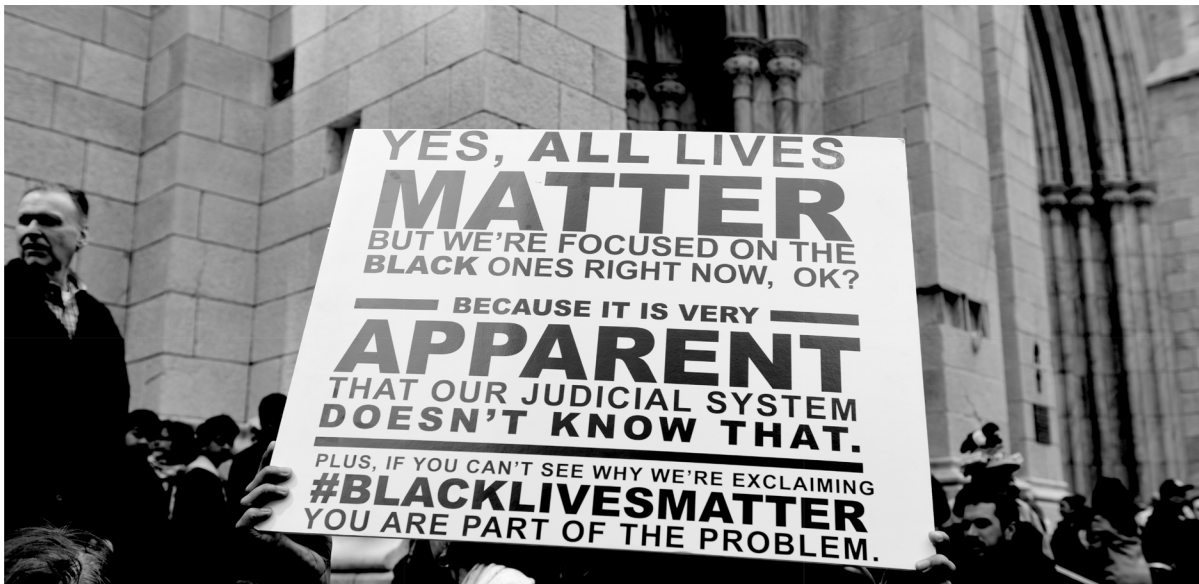
What cops need more than cultural sensitivity training is an understanding that they can and will go to jail for their own criminal behavior. With the idea in mind that the best therapy for a racist cop is witnessing another cop doing hard time behind bars, in 2014 St. Louis Greens had multiple signs printed advocating consequences for the killer of Michael Brown: “Jail Darren Wilson for Life!” In 2017, the Party recycled these signs by taping the name “Jason Stockley” over that of Wilson.

The months of protesting the freeing of Stockley was barely over when a new scandal shook Missouri, which was also covered in *ZNet*. The same Governor, Eric Greitens, who had urged calm while putting the National Guard on alert announced during his January 11, 2018 “State of the State” address that he had had an affair and that he and his wife had come to terms with it.

That admission left out details of bondage and sexual blackmail that made it the center of news stories for months. The woman in the affair had been Greiten’s hairstylist in 2015, when he asked her to his home. After she arrived he invited her to his basement for a “real thrill.” There, he allegedly taped her wrists to exercise equipment and blindfolded and began undressing her.

In a report from her husband, who secretly taped her confession, she had not objected to anything at that point. But she became terrified when seeing a camera flash from edges of the tape covering her eyes and heard the threat, “You’re never going to mention my name, otherwise this picture will be everywhere.”

As details of the scandal unfolded, Missouri Republicans became increasingly uneasy about their wonder boy in the governor’s mansion. They easily overlooked his being a former Democrat who campaigned for Obama. Greitens won them over during his 2016 run for governor when TV



By a katz/Shutterstock.com

ads featured him holding an automatic weapon. Once in office, he got the Missouri legislature to undermine unions by promoting laws on “right-to-work” and prohibiting cities from having a minimum wage above the state level.

Oozing self-confidence, he had reserved a “Greitens for President” website. Most Missouri Republicans would not come out against Greitens, instead having a wait-and-see attitude. If he could escape prosecution for terrorizing a woman, he might just be the gun-toting, union-busting guy to be their man in the White House.

Yet, this was not to be. Greitens lived in St. Louis, which allowed Circuit Attorney Kimberly Gardner to bring charges against him in January, 2018. The first black woman to hold that post, she pursued the case and kept the scandal in the public eye until he resigned in June 2018. Zaki Baruti clearly remembers Greitens’ vowing to “destroy her reputation” as he left office. Indignant that a black woman could bring down such a promising and handsome white man, Missouri Republicans have been seething ever since.

They soon found allies in their anti-Gardner crusade. The Circuit Attorney wants to develop a “diversion program” to keep first-time offenders out of prison by developing community supports. This is a direct affront to the “lock ‘em up”

mentality which seeks to punish and hurt whoever cannot afford to hire an expensive lawyer.

Even more upsetting to some, Gardner made a list of several dozen cops who should not be trusted as witnesses in court due to making racist remarks online or otherwise indicating that their testimony would be suspect. SLPOA became outraged and demanded that Gardner recant.

Instead of taking any action to reduce cop violence, SLPOA is going along with members who repeatedly file lawsuits against the City of St. Louis when attempts are made to discipline them. Thus, a city scrapped for money is forced to pay for both civil judgments resulting from police wrongdoing and suits brought by cops themselves.

Jason Shockley’s lawsuit charging “defamation and malicious prosecution” was the epitome of cops’ thumbing their noses at any efforts to make them abide by the same standards of human decency that the rest of us are held to. When it was thrown out of court on February 14, 2019, Kim Gardner called it a “tremendous victory” and condemned such “baseless lawsuits” and “shameful behavior” of the SLPOA.

This pattern of collaboration between cops who kill black men, courts who don’t charge them or let them off, politicians who cover up evidence, and police organizations that seek to undo any

challenges to white supremacy, could have repercussions throughout the U.S. and other countries. It forebodes coordinated efforts to protect cops from ever being arrested and tried not just for deadly racism, but also for homophobic killings, femicide and anti-labor and anti-environmental death squads.

Events in St. Louis are occurring in a context of a Trumpist cancer that is rampantly spreading throughout the global body. This disease is clearest in the case of anti-immigrant hatred directed against Hispanics who are victims of U.S.-inspired dictatorships and corporate-inspired climate change. People throughout the world are increasingly fleeing from climate disasters as right-wing forces increase vitriolic intolerance of “outsiders.”

In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro watches the rainforest burn so indigenous peoples and earth defenders can be driven out as resource extraction increases. In India, Prime Minister Modi declares war on dalits (“untouchables”), adivasi (native people) and Muslims of Kashmir. Throughout Europe, neo-Nazi cliques are on the rise, blaming the troubles of capitalism on immigrants who flee their homes for the same reasons immigrants seek asy-

lum in the U.S.

As climate catastrophe heightens, ruling classes are telling the more privileged to shut out the “other.” Yet, tomorrow’s definition of “privileged” will be narrowed so that most of those on the inside today will themselves become the “other” in the future.

We cannot afford for our separate efforts for human rights to be apart from each other while anti-human rights forces are sharpening their strategies of exclusion. It is an objective historic necessity to understand that barbarity against any group anywhere is a crime against all. Though it has been said many times before, it is critical that campaigns for human liberation hang together or divergent struggles will hang separately. **Z**

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Feature



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The Scourge of Neoliberalism, Part 1: Ideology vs. Historical Practice

By Jack Rasmus

Hundreds of books and articles, perhaps thousands, have been written to date on the meaning and consequences of what's called Neoliberalism. But clarity as to what it means, what has driven its evolution for the past four decades, and what its likely future trajectory is, remain insufficient at best.

Critics of Neoliberalism have yet to explain it

fully or adequately. They are, therefore, unable to say little about its future evolution.

Some key questions that remain unanswered are: Has Neoliberalism been unraveling since the 2008-09 recent economic crisis and the slow growth, often stagnant recovery that followed? Is it being restored under Trump? Will it survive the next capitalist crisis almost certain to occur

by the early 2020s? What are the material forces maturing within 21st century capitalist economy that will precipitate and drive that next crisis, and will Neoliberalism be able to successfully adapt? If not, what ideas and policies might replace the current Neoliberal era (1979-2019) of capitalism?

Most analyses concur that Neoliberalism represents an economic shift introduced by capitalists and their political elites—initially in the U.S. and UK—in response to the crisis capitalism encountered in the 1970s. In other words, it has something to do with capitalist economy in crisis.

Other accounts attempt to explain its origins and evolution primarily from the perspective of an idea that inspired, defined, and enabled U.S. and UK capitalist elites to respond successfully to the 1970s crisis.

Still others explain Neoliberalism as an historical practice, i.e. as a new regime of policies introduced in the late 1970s in the U.S. and UK—later adopted by other capitalist economies worldwide to varying degree and form—that emphasizes austerity in government spending and reliance in policy matters on free markets.

But all that doesn't really tell us much. Defined that way leaves its meaning still opaque and ambiguous—and therefore unable to predict where and how Neoliberalism may evolve in the future.

The analysis of Neoliberalism to date has produced so many interpretations, often contradictory, that readers remain confused as to what exactly it means. Is it about introducing free market principles into economic and social policy? Is it about austerity in fiscal spending? Is it just a substitute term for what was formerly referred to as imperialism abroad and class exploitation at home? As one analysis concluded: “imprecision would seem to characterize its use, sometimes even among those for whom the concept is central to their analysis, and its over-use is seen to have resulted in a loss of analytical value.”

The Ideology of Neoliberalism

According to those approaching Neoliberalism from the perspective of the evolution of an idea, the Neoliberal Idea originates around mid-20th century among ultra-conservative intellectuals like Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman in economics; in the philosophy of radical individualism by Karl Popper and Robert Nozick; and in policy proposals from right wing pundits like Charles Krauthammer, William Kristol and Robert Kagan—to name but a few of the more notable.

As these intellectual originators viewed it, their task was to adapt, repackage and resell some of the



Trump's policies should be viewed as a future attempt to restore Neoliberalism as policy, albeit in a new virulent and aggressive form that is still in progress. Photo by Matt Smith Photographer/Shutterstock.com

main tenets of Classical Liberalism, to plant and nurture the seeds of new ideas, and counterpose those ideas to the prevailing dominant Keynesian economic and otherwise social compact views that prevailed post World War II. The new ideas would be resurrected, and classic Liberal ideas would be adapted to the post-war environment. New ideas that were new-Liberal or Neoliberal, designed to displace the dominant Keynesian-social compact-collectivist ideas of the period and encourage and usher in a new set of policies based on the new ideas that would, in effect, represent pre-Keynesian, pre-social compact ideas once again. It was to be old classic Liberal wine in the new Neoliberal bottle.

But is Neoliberalism actually “Liberal”? How does it compare with the Classic Liberal economic and social theory of the 17th-18th century? Neoliberalism as an Idea claims it is based on Classic Liberal ideas of free markets and individual freedom. It claims that by adapting Classic Liberal principles and propositions to new economic and social policies, the new policies will succeed in promoting economic growth and stability, whereas the old Keynesian-collectivist policies failed to do so. Thus it is Neoliberal Ideas that drive the eventual policies that came to be known as Reaganomics in the U.S. and Thatcherism in the UK.

But Neoliberal Ideas have actually little in common with Classic Liberal; and it is an intellectual conceit to argue that Neoliberal Ideas drove and determined the Neoliberal policies that were eventually introduced in the late 1970s-early 1980s. In fact, a reasonable argument may be made to the contrary: it is Neoliberalism in Practice that reached back and adopted Neoliberal Idea propositions in order to justify and legitimize its policies. But what exactly are the basic propositions of Neoliberalism as Idea? What congruence is there between those propositions and the 17th-18th century Classic Liberalism? And do either have anything to do with Neoliberalism in Practice?

The Basic Propositions of Neoliberalism as Idea:

- Markets should always be free of government interference and the economy and pol-

icies should be based on free markets.

- Free markets require deregulation of business, as well as privatization of all public ownership of production of goods or services.
- Free markets are always and everywhere more “efficient” than regulated markets or government-provided goods and services.
- Free trade should always and everywhere govern the exchange of goods and services between economies and countries.
- Government should never intervene in markets—whether to provide public works, correct negative “externalities” created by those markets, or even to provide public education, health care, or other services.
- Taxes should be cut to stimulate economic growth—especially taxes on business and investors. Cutting taxes creates additional investment and therefore employment and growth.
- Government budgets should always be “balanced,” avoiding deficits and therefore accumulation of government debt.
- To ensure stable economic growth, the money supply should be increased according to a “monetary growth rule”—i.e. a set amount every year.

But these elements of the Neoliberal Idea have very little to do with Classic Liberalism. And have even less to do with Neoliberalism in actual practice.

The Basic Ideas of Classic Liberalism:

- Markets should be free only to the extent that they foster superior moral behavior and enable the development of the individual.
- Free markets are more efficient only if they promote competition among capitalists, resulting in goods being produced at the lowest cost, and therefore lowest price, while providing the greatest possible amount of goods to the greatest number of individuals.
- Not all business activity should be deregulated or privatized. Some things markets would not produce, even if socially neces-

sary and demanded by the public; or they would produce them for only a wealthy minority who might afford them only at the much higher prices that markets might have to charge a smaller, privileged number of buyers.

- Markets sometime behave badly and at times must be regulated. Not all government services should be privatized. In fact, services like public education must be provided by government since markets would not find it profitable to provide them.
- Free trade is not always appropriate everywhere, nor beneficial to all.
- Economic growth is stimulated by raising taxes on business, not cutting taxes. Higher taxes force business to introduce more efficient ways of producing to offset the cost of the tax increase. The new technology that results actually increases jobs and stimulates economic growth.
- Budget deficits are justified for purposes of spending on defense, public safety, and critical social services (education) and public works that markets may not provide.
- Money is “neutral.” An increase in its supply cannot, by itself, lead to economic growth and stability. Growth is generated only by increasing available land, labor, and capital and by raising its productiveness.

A close reading of the actual works of 17th-18th century Classic Liberal economists like Adam Smith, David Hume, and others shows that the preceding points represent fundamental ideas of Classic Liberalism. But, as a comparative reading clearly shows, they are in sharp contrast to the basic propositions that define Neoliberalism as of the late 1970s. In short, insofar as Classic Liberalism is concerned, Neoliberalism is not “Liberal” at all. Neoliberalism is not “new” Liberalism or any kind of Liberalism. What it represents is something quite the contrary.

Comparing Neoliberalism as Idea with Neoliberalism in Practice

But what about Neoliberalism in actual, historic practice? How does it compare to Classic Liberalism as well as Neoliberalism as Idea? Neoliberalism in Practice differs from both. It is even further removed from Classic Liberalism. And in a number of ways it is even the opposite of Neoliberalism as Idea.

1. Neoliberalism in Practice is not at all about expanding free markets. There are few, if any, free markets under Neoliberal capitalism. The fiction created by Neoliberalism as Idea writers is that, just because industry is deregulated and public goods privatized, deregulation is equivalent to the creation of “free markets.” Neoliberal capitalism is about the destruction of market competition and the concentration of economic power among fewer and fewer remaining businesses in an industry. It is about eliminating “free markets” whenever and wherever possible. Capitalism always drives toward eliminating competition, and without competition there are no “free” markets in the Liberal sense. So Neoliberalism in Practice is the antithesis of free markets.

It is also different in that, in practice, governments in the Neoliberal era of capitalism are deeply and increasingly involved in the economy on behalf of capitalist interests in general, and in particular involved in assisting mergers and acquisitions and thus in advancing the concentration of capital and business into fewer producers and sellers. And the larger and fewer the remaining producers, the less “efficient” they become, that is, the higher costs of their production and in turn the higher the prices they charge consumers. Markets, in effect, become more concentrated, less efficient, and less “free” as a consequence of Neoliberalism in Practice.

2. One might add to Neoliberalism’s contribution to “micro”-level inefficiency the even more massive macro-inefficiency of capitalist Neoliberalism. How efficient is Neoliberal capitalism when it creates economic crashes like 2008-09, when 14 million homeowners in the U.S. alone were foreclosed and lost their homes? Or when 20 million were left unemployed, and then underemployed for years more after 2009. Or when \$4 tril-

lion in lost interest income occurred for retirees as a result of the near zero interest rate policy of the central bank, the Federal Reserve, in effect from 2009 to 2016? Or the additional \$4 trillion in collapsed retirement benefit program values. Meanwhile the same central bank zero rates resulted, in contrast, in more than a \$1 trillion a year on average in stock buybacks and dividend payouts to shareholders every year from 2010 through 2019. Corporations borrowed virtually “free” money at near zero interest rates—either from loans or by issuing corporate bonds—and turned around and distributed most of it to shareholders at the rate of \$1 trillion plus a year. Or what of the macro-inefficiency of spending \$7 trillion in U.S. war products that were either blown up or dumped in deserts when declared obsolete. The “macro-inefficiencies” of Neoliberal capitalism are massive and almost incalculable in the U.S. economy alone.

In short, there is nothing “free” or “efficient” about markets in the Neoliberal era in practice. The founding intellectuals of Neoliberalism as Idea, when promoting that notion, are therefore

simply peddling a lie—i.e. they are promoting the ideology of Neoliberalism, not its reality. They are peddling a notion of Neoliberalism that doesn’t exist in the real world of Neoliberal practice. What Neoliberalism in Practice has done is simply use the lie that free markets are more efficient in order to justify and “sell” the actual policies of industry deregulation and public goods privatizations. In other words, deregulation and privatization have nothing to do with free and efficient markets. The latter are just the intellectual veil, the cover to justify the Neoliberal policy.

3. Nor is the Neoliberal idea that tax cuts create jobs and economic growth any more the case in fact. Tax cutting in the Neoliberal era since 2000 has amounted to more than \$15 trillion—80 percent of which has accrued to investors, businesses, and the wealthiest households. In turn, that \$15 trillion has resulted in the weakest rate of investment, job creation, wage increases, and general economic growth in the U.S. in the past half century. In other words, business-investor tax



Tax incentives strongly encourage U.S. multinational corporations to move operations offshore, by Yabresse/Shutterstock.com

cuts did not create jobs, they destroyed them, as tax incentives strongly encouraged U.S. multinational corporations to move operations offshore. Trump's 2018 tax cuts—the latest iteration of this “business tax cuts create jobs” shell game—alone provide another \$2 trillion for U.S. multinational corporations over the next decade. They can now produce offshore tax free. Why then should they expand production and jobs in the U.S., one might ask, when they can now produce offshore and pay no taxes?

4. Neoliberalism as Idea further maintains that free trade should be the norm everywhere. But in Neoliberal Practice, free trade means incentives to further move U.S. production offshore. U.S. businesses then produce offshore at lower costs

Free trade also means banks and finance capitalists, who get to borrow at near zero interest rates, invest the money offshore instead of in the U.S. Free trade is more about such international money flows from the U.S. as it is about goods and product flows produced abroad back to the U.S. All this is the reality of Neoliberal free trade, compared to the fiction of the Neoliberal Idea of free trade where all parties somehow benefit from free trade—workers, consumers, as well as capitalist producers and bankers.

5. Perhaps nowhere is the distinction between Neoliberal Idea and Neoliberal Practice greater than when we look at deficits and debt. The former declares the objective is to balance the budget and reduce government debt; whereas Neoliberal-



Neoliberalism in Practice means incentives to further move U.S. production offshore. U.S. businesses then produce offshore at lower cost and ship the goods produced back into the U.S., now without tariffs, for U.S. workers to buy. Photo by CURAphotography/Shutterstock.com

and ship the goods produced back into the U.S., now without tariffs, for U.S. workers to buy—with lower-paid service jobs replacing the higher paid manufacturing jobs that were offshored due to free trade. Instead of higher wages, workers are now allowed to borrow (credit) to buy the products, incurring debt, the interest on which they now pay banks and stores issuing the credit cards.

ism in Practice is about allowing the uncontrolled escalation of annual budget deficits and, therefore, government debt. At barely \$1 trillion when Neoliberalism in Practice began in 1979-80, deficits and debt had escalated to \$4 trillion by 2000, rising to \$10 trillion by 2009, and to nearly \$23 trillion by year-end 2019. Trump's 2018 tax cuts and annual war-spending escalation will raise debt to

more than \$35 trillion by 2028.

6. The monetary growth rule of Neoliberalism as Idea also contrasts sharply with the practice of Neoliberalism. Instead of allowing the central bank to slowly and steadily increase the supply of money in the economy according to an objective rule, or fixed formula, the practice of Neoliberalism has been to have the central bank continually inject massive amounts of money into the economy—in times of banking crises and afterward as well. The result is chronic low interest rates, which enable lending at low cost to investors and corporations alike, much of which is borrowed and then diverted to offshore investments, to re-investment in stock, bond and other financial markets, to distribution to shareholders in the form of stock buybacks and dividend payments, or into merger and acquisition of competitors by businesses.

The function of Neoliberalism as Idea is therefore to provide logic and pro-individual, pro-personal freedom arguments in order to justify the Neoliberal policies that occur in practice—i.e. policies that are often quite contrary to those arguments and that Idea. The practice of Neoliberalism is thus neither Classical Liberal nor even Neoliberal.

Contrary to many accounts of Neoliberalism, the Idea of Neoliberalism does not give rise to, or enable, Neoliberalism as actual historical Practice. The role of Neoliberal Ideas is to legitimize—after the fact—the actual policies and practice of Neoliberalism.

A problem with many accounts and analyses of Neoliberalism is that they assume that Neoliberalism as an Idea is what gave rise from the mid-1970s on to Neoliberalism as an actual historical practice. Somehow the ideas are what convince capitalists, their lobbyists, their business organizations, their trade associations, etc. to propose to their political elites in Congress and legislatures the actual Neoliberal policies. The policies are thus a reflection of their ideas. So how can the ideas drive the actual historical practice, i.e. the policies, if they are different?

Perhaps the causation is actually the reverse: the policies and practices are developed by the capitalists and their political elites. The ideas of

Neoliberalism—a strange amalgam of classic and non-classic liberal propositions—are after the fact then employed as justifications and legitimization of those policies. Embalmed in a veneer of personal freedom, individualism, efficiency, benefits from employment, etc., the dead body of Liberalism is resurrected in decayed form to argue that the corpse is still alive and liberal even though it has long deceased.

Nonetheless, many critics of Neoliberalism simply slip back and forth between the Idea and the Practice of Neoliberalism, with little explanation of how the one, the Idea or the Practice, causally determines the other.

Neoliberalism in Practice

What, then, are the policies associated with actual, historical Neoliberalism? Here too critics of Neoliberalism fail to provide a comprehensive explanation. As noted previously, major attention is given to Neoliberalism as austerity policy, or as industry deregulation and privatization, or as free trade. But little attention is paid to Neoliberal monetary policy or Neoliberal external policies apart from trade—i.e. currency exchange rate policy or what is called the “twin deficits” policy solution. Nor is much explanation given to how Neoliberal policy promotes the financialization of the global economy, financial deregulation, and cross-border money capital flows. While fiscal policy and industrial policy (i.e. deregulation, privatization, de-unionization, wage compression, etc.) are addressed in most accounts of Neoliberalism, not much in the way of analysis and critique is given to External Policy and Monetary Policy. But Neoliberalism in Practice, i.e. as policy, is more than just Fiscal Policy and Industrial Policy.

Neoliberalism in Practice represents a particular policy regime, consisting of Fiscal policy (tax, spending, deficit-debt management), Industrial policy (deregulation, privatization, de-unionization, wage compression, financialization), Monetary policy (excess liquidity injection, chronic low interest rates), and External Policy (trade, low U.S. dollar exchange rate, twin deficits).

Neoliberalism represents a particular mix of these policies. Before Neoliberalism, the four main policy areas also existed but in a different

mix and different relationship to each other. It was a different policy “regime.”

The policy regime before the Neoliberal policy shift originated in the wake of World War II, originating roughly in the period, 1944-53. A still different policy regime was created in the U.S. just prior to World War I, in the period 1908-13. Thus the U.S. experience has been to restructure the economy in a major way at least three times in the last century: 1908-13, 1944-53, and 1979-88. The latter, third, restructuring is simply called Neoliberalism. Its policy mix differed from the two prior regimes.

The policy restructuring in all three cases was designed to change policies in order for U.S. capitalism to confront a challenge or crisis. In 1908-13 U.S. capitalism prepared to restructure its economy in anticipation of becoming a more or less equal competitor with UK and European capital in general on the stage of the world economy after WW I. In 1944-53, capitalists restructured once again as the U.S. became the sole hegemon in the global economy following World War II. Both re-

structurings represent U.S. capital shifting policy fundamentally in order to confront a major crisis and opportunity. In each case the restructurings were accompanied by a particular policy reordering. That reordering occurred a third time as a response to the crisis of the 1970s, not war. In that sense it differed from the earlier two restructurings and policy shifts.

In the Neoliberal case, the U.S. re-established itself as the hegemon in the global capitalist economy for at least several more decades. Challenges domestically and abroad in the 1970s were successfully contained, and U.S. capital emerged once again, globally and internally, as the key dominant player in the global economy.

Neoliberalism in Practice—i.e. as a particular new policy mix of the four areas—continued to expand and evolve throughout the 1990s and after 2000. The global crash of 2008-09 halted its development and evolution, however. As argued in this writers’ book, *The Scourge of Neoliberalism*, Neoliberal policy evolution hit a wall with the 2008-09 crash. Obama tried but failed to restore



Neoliberalism represents a basic economic system restructuring that involves a resurgence and aggressive expansion at the expense of both foreign capitalist competitors as well as domestic working classes. Photo by Christopher Penler/ Shutterstock.com

it and regain its momentum. Trump's policies should be viewed as a future attempt to restore Neoliberalism as policy, albeit in a new virulent and aggressive form that is still in progress.

Whether Trump will succeed remains to be seen. However, there are fundamental real and material forces in development—involving changes in technology, Artificial Intelligence and machine/deep learning, the nature of money, production processes and distribution channels, new business models, product-capital-labor markets, and in political resistance both domestic and foreign—that may well prevent Trump's restoration attempt.

Over the past four decades Neoliberal policy has evolved and expanded. It has also begun to develop its own internal contradictions. As a partial summary of Neoliberalism in Practice at this point, the following elements may be said to now constitute Neoliberalism in Practice as of 2019:

- Social program policy cuts, focused heavily on reducing and eliminating government programs introduced from 1934 through 1965;
- Aggressive deregulation of industries, especially banking and finance, communications, public and private transport, education and healthcare;
- Privatization of employer-contributed healthcare and retirement services introduced with the second restructuring, privatization of military services, and privatization of public goods and services including federal lands access;
- Deep reduction of business-investor-wealthy household taxation on profits and capital incomes (interest, dividends, business rent, etc.);
- Chronic escalation of war and defense spending amidst social spending austerity;
- Tolerance of rising budget deficits, the national debt, and interest on that debt;
- Central bank monetary policies based on chronic liquidity injections designed to ensure long term low bank interest rates that subsidize business costs of investment;
- Incremental de-unionization and weakening of collective bargaining, as well as compression of wage incomes;
- Promotion by government of radical changes in the labor markets, creating millions of contingent labor employment, low-paid service jobs, atrophy of minimum wages, massive offshoring of manufacturing employment, and encouragement of on-shoring of skilled labor visa policies;
- Substituting free trade for traditional trade policy measures based on tariffs, quotas, and administrative measures as the primary means to maximize U.S. corporate exports;
- Acceptance of U.S. trade deficits in exchange for a “twin deficits” solution ensuring U.S. offshore dollar recycling arrangements with major allies and global trading partners;
- Encouraging a long-term, low U.S. dollar exchange rate and U.S. money capital outflows and foreign direct investment;
- Promotion of financialization of the U.S. economy at the direct expense of real asset investment based economic growth.

Thus, Neoliberalism in Practice is not simply a set of policies associated with social program cutbacks and fiscal austerity, or industry deregulation or privatization, as many identify; it is much broader than that. It represents a basic economic system restructuring that involves a resurgence and aggressive expansion at the expense of both foreign capitalist competitors as well as domestic working classes. It is an attempt to re-establish U.S. economic hegemony in the late 20th century and well into the 21st. In that it succeeded—until the crash of 2008-09, from which it has yet to fully recover.

What's Missing in Critiques of Neoliberalism

A part from not adequately addressing the material origins of the restructuring that gives rise to Neoliberalism, critics of Neoliberal policy fail to address key elements of its unique policy and program mix. To begin with, analysis of what's called external policy—i.e. twin deficits, external debt, currency exchange rates, foreign di-

rect investment and global money capital flows—are often largely missing. Neoliberalism is characterized by a particular set of external policies that differ from prior restructurings. Consideration of trade or goods flows, and perhaps free trade treaties, are the limited focus of most critiques. Another area where critics fall short is a superficial treatment of Industrial policy. While de-unionization, job offshoring, general wage compression, and industry deregulation are addressed by critics, fundamental developments like the rise of contingent labor and the even more destructive now just emerging phenomenon—Artificial Intelligence and machine learning—are ignored for their effects on labor markets and the shift in capitalist versus worker relative power they represent.

Also missing, in all but minor terms, is the financialization of the global capitalist economy. Here the role of capital markets, shadow banks, derivatives, the rise of the new global finance capital elite, and the relative shift to financial asset investing, crowding out real investment, are left largely unconsidered; in other words, that which might be classified as the new phase of imperialism and U.S. versus global capitalist class

competition and conflict is not adequately addressed. Not least, what is also missing in most accounts of Neoliberalism is how its advance is closely correlated with the atrophying and decline of Democracy in America—i.e. the norms, practices, parties, the electoral system, and even government institutions. **Z**

Part two of this article will address the various emerging and growing contradictions at the core of Neoliberalism in Practice. The theme is how, in today's current period of late Neoliberalism, the implementation of certain elements of Neoliberal policy increasingly result in the negation of other Neoliberal policy elements.

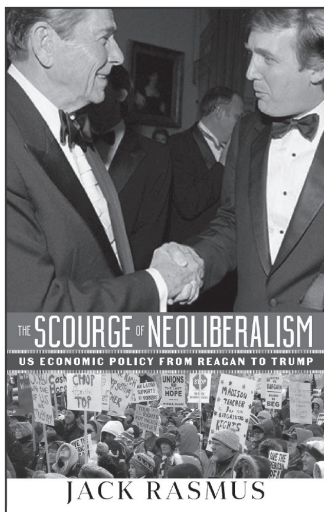
Dr. Jack Rasmus is the author of the just-released book, *The Scourge of Neoliberalism: US Economic Policy from Reagan to Trump*, Clarity Press, October 2019, which is available for purchase at discount from the author's blog, jackrasmus.com, and website, <http://kykloproductions.com>. Rasmus hosts the weekly radio show, "Alternative Visions," and tweets at @drjackrasmus.



Neoliberalism's advance is closely correlated with the atrophying and decline of democracy in America—i.e. the norms, practices, parties, the electoral system, and even government institutions. Photo by lev radin/Shutterstock.com

US ECONOMIC POLICY IN CRISIS

Trump and the End of an Era



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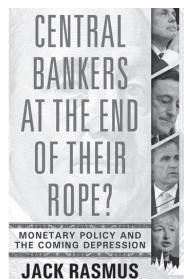
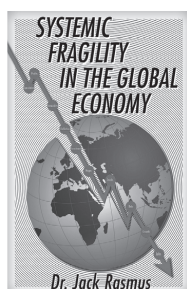
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While the capitalist system has undergone numerous restructurings throughout its history, capitalist elites' purpose in restructuring has remained the same: to restore and/or extend their hegemony. The current restructuring, operative since 1978, is called Neoliberalism.

This book examines Neoliberalism as both an Idea and an historical practice composed of a particular mix of fiscal-monetary-trade-industrial policies that began with the latest US capitalist restructuring in the late 1970s, continuing to evolve to this day.

It further explains the deeper material forces giving rise to—as well as now undermining—the Neoliberal policy regime, with special focus given to the crisis of Neoliberalism in the wake of the 2008-09 global crash, Obama's failure to resurrect it, and Trump's current doomed effort to restore it in a new, more aggressive form.

Dr. Jack Rasmus is the author of various books on the US and global economy and currently teaches economics at St. Marys College in California. He hosts the weekly NY radio show, *Alternative Visions*, on the Progressive Radio Network. He is a contributor to various magazines, journals, and radio and TV talk shows; his articles and podcasts are available at his blog, jackrasmus.com.



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