

A large crowd of people is gathered for a protest. In the foreground, a woman with dark skin, wearing a purple jacket, a yellow headscarf with pink flowers, and an orange face mask, holds a white sign that reads "DE-FUND THE POLICE". She is also holding a raised fist. Behind her, a woman with curly hair and a green face mask is visible. The background is filled with other protesters, some wearing masks, and a large white peace symbol is overlaid on the bottom right. A large red "Z" logo is in the top left corner.

Ron Daniels on Trampling on the Graves of Our Ancestors

Jeffrey Sterling on
Whistleblowing, the
Pandemic and Injustice

July 2020

JULY TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMENTARY/1

Trampling on the Graves of Our Ancestors/1

Ron Daniels on Trump's rally in Tulsa

Let Us Name the System: Racial Capitalism/4

Jeff Cohen on racism and the economy

Policing is Irrelevant for Public Safety/6

Justin Podur on alternatives to the police

COVID-19 and the Military/12

H Patricia Hynes looks at the military and the budget

Trading One Uniform for Another/16

Suzanne Gordon and Steve Early on soldiers becoming cops

The Uprising is Only Beginning/19

Margaret Flowers & Kevin Zeese on building power

Let Them Eat Weapons/26

Lawrence Wittner looks at Trump's bizarre arms race

Defending "Justified" Murder/29

Robert C. Koehler on reinvesting in people

How Workers Can Win the Class War/32

Richard D. Wolff on mobilizing to fight a class war

Organizing Against White Supremacy/36

Ted Glick on strategies for fighting racism

FEATURES/42

U.S. Has Knee on Necks of Black & Brown People/41

Don Rojas on America at a crossroads

The Statues of Our Discontent/49

Boaventura de Sousa Santos on racism and history

Whistleblowing, the Pandemic and Injustice/53

Jeffrey Sterling on race and crime

Second COVID-19 Wave and the U.S. Economy/59

Jack Rasmus on re-opening

Rising Above State Violence/65

Jonathan Cook on violence and protesting

Black Lives and the Green New Deal/77

Jeremy Brecher on building a movement for structural change

Trampling on the Graves of Our Ancestors: Trump's Juneteenth "MAGA" Rally in Tulsa

By Ron Daniels

“Their Blood Cries Out.”

The Tulsa Massacre and the Destruction of Black Wall Street was the moving theme of a Virtual National Forum on May 31 sponsored by the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and a dedicated group of local Sponsors which included the African Ancestral Society, Terrence Crutcher Foundation, the Historic Vernon AME Church and Tulsa Community Remembrance Coalition. The Forum was convened on the

99th Anniversary of the most horrific massacre of African Americans and destruction of Black property in the history of this nation. The goal was to remind America and the world that reparations have never been awarded to the descendants of this unspeakable crime against humanity; a terrorist act intentionally and brutally executed by a crazed white mob infected with the virus of racism and white supremacy. Hence, the haunting words “Their Blood Cries Out,” was a libation remembering our ancestors whose blood consecrates the soil of Greenwood (Black



TULSA, OK – JUNE 20, 2020: Protesters at Trump rally

Photo by RiseImages/Shutterstock.com



TULSA, OK – JUNE 20, 2020 : Black Lives Matters protesters stand in front of police officers and National Guard vehicles leaving downtown Tulsa after a Donald Trump rally.

Photo by Riselimages/Shutterstock.com

Wall Street) as sacred ground.

It is against this backdrop that there were instant expressions of collective outrage by African Americans and people of goodwill of all races, ethnicities, nationalities and faiths as the word reverberated across the nation that Donald J. Trump would hold his first Make America Great Again (MAGA) re-election campaign rally in

Tulsa on Juneteenth—the African American holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the U.S. Since I began to pen this article, under immense pressure, the Orange man changed the date for the MAGA rally to June 20. But it does not matter. As Eddie Glaude, the brilliant MSNBC Contributor put it, there is no way of escaping the fact that Trump intentionally

chose Tulsa for his first carnival-style rally to feed and capitalize off the “white resentment” which fuels much of his “base.”

The change of date does not change the character of the demented person Spike Lee has named “Agent Orange,” nor does it change the insidious intent of this MAGA charade. Donald J. Trump has elected to stage a political

This is chillingly reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's calculated decision to launch his 1980 presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi near the site where the martyred civil rights activists Schwerner, Goodman and Cheney were buried

rally on the ground soaked with the blood of Black bodies, sacred ground, to proclaim by this act that Black Lives Do Not Matter. Their Blood Cries out.

This is chillingly reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's calculated decision to launch his 1980 presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi near the site where the martyred civil rights activists Schwerner, Goodman and Cheney were buried. The "great communicator" invoked reactionary phrases like "black racism" and "reverse discrimination" to feed and capitalize on white resentment. Ronald Reagan traveled to sacred ground in Mississippi to communicate to southern segregationists that they would have a sympathetic resident in the White House. He was willing to trample on the graves of martyrs to effectuate his anti-Black "southern strategy."

And, so it is with the Or-

ange man, who declared that there were well-meaning people on "both sides" of the riot carried out by a racist, anti-Semitic, neo-fascist mob in Charlottesville; the founder of the birther movement; shameless defamer of the Central Park Five; relentless purveyor of racist anti-immigrant sentiments; a would-be strong-man who bristles at the suggestion that the names of military bases named after confederate traitors should be renamed; a depraved person who blatantly denies that police departments and the criminal justice system are infected by racism and white supremacy; this is the braggadocious, mentally diminutive person who will mount the podium during the Juneteenth holiday season in Tulsa, 99 years after the slaughter of more than 300 Black people and the destruction of Black Wall Street by a resentful, hate-filled White mob.

Like Ronald Reagan, Don-

ald Trump will desecrate sacred ground to shamelessly promote his hollow but dangerous political ambitions. A change of the date will not change this fact. African Americans and people of conscience are right to be outraged by this perfidious act. But this outrage must be harnessed to intensify the local and national struggle for reparations for the descendants of the Tulsa massacre whose Blood Cries Out for Justice. We must never forget Trump's, unconscionable trampling on the graves of our ancestors. Their blood and suffering must be vindicated by the victories of the mass movement in the streets demanding fundamental structural changes to America's racialized Capitalist system. Trumpism and all that it represents must not prevail. Therefore, the mass movement in the streets must also march on ballot boxes in November to defeat the Orange

man and all of the political cowards and opportunists who were complicit in his ascension to power. The Blood of our ancestors Cries Out. A new social order rooted in reparative justice and a new democratic economy must be born. Z

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Let Us Name the System: "Racial Capitalism"



By Jeff Cohen

If you've been watching mainstream TV news programs lately, you've probably noticed that a number of corporate journalists—prod-
ded by the marvelous protests against police violence—seem to have learned a new

phrase, which they invoke regularly: “systemic racism.”

That's an improvement from a dozen years ago, when some in establishment media were hailing our society as “post-racial” because of the election of President Obama.

While anti-racist activists have been explaining for decades that the problem of racism goes beyond the big-

oted attitudes of individual elected officials (like Rep. Steve King) or law enforcement chiefs (like Sheriff Joe Arpaio) or Fox News hosts (take your pick), mainstream TV news has always preferred to focus on individual racists rather than address the systemic racism embedded in housing, policing, schooling, employment and healthcare



policies—institutionalized racism going back to the foundations of our country.

So it's oddly disconcerting nowadays to hear regular mentions of the phrase “systemic racism” from mainstream journalists who adamantly refuse to criticize (or even name) the system that U.S. racism is entrenched in. That system is “CAPITALISM.”

Or as historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad calls it: “racial capitalism.”

The sad and deadly history began with the savage exploitation of African people as slaves. What history books euphemistically refer to as “Southern plantations” were really “slave labor camps” benefitting financial elites from New England to old England. After “emancipation” came the capitalist exploitation of African American workers in the worst and dirtiest jobs—not just as sharecroppers.

In the 1930s, when labor and socialist activism forced some concessions from U.S. capitalism, the two groups of workers excluded from

the landmark National Labor Relations Act of 1935 were farmworkers and domestic workers. The exclusions subjected millions of Black and Latinx workers to super-exploitation and mistreatment. (Although agricultural workers today from California to Florida are largely Latinx, farmworkers in Florida were heavily African American when Edward R. Murrow produced his acclaimed *Harvest of Shame* documentary in 1960.)

At every stage in U.S. history—beginning with the brutal dispossession of Native Americans and continuing through modern methods of injustice from redlining to mass incarceration and private prisons—U.S. racism has been inextricably embedded in the system of profiteering.

So it's fascinating to see pundits on CNN, MSNBC and other networks now discussing “systemic racism” after they'd spent months during the Democratic presidential primaries in panicked overdrive propping up “the system.” Reforms aimed at

reducing the wealth/poverty extremes of neoliberal capitalism—whether proposed by Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren—were relentlessly dismissed as unrealistic, unaffordable, extreme. These were “shoot-the-moon policy ideas” (*Washington Post*) threatening to push Democrats “over a liberal cliff” (*New York Times*).

- Medicare for All? “Too expensive.” Except it isn't. For months, mainstream media pundits vehemently defended a system that ties one's (private) health insurance to one's job...and then COVID-19 threw tens of millions out of those jobs.
- Green New Deal, providing millions of high-wage jobs while transforming our economy? Unaffordable.
- A wealth tax on ultra-millionaires to provide universal childcare and better schools—or

Defund, disband, abolish—people who would never have even heard these words in discussions about the police are now seriously considering them

a Wall Street transaction tax to provide free public college? Unworkable.

Corporate liberal news outlets were aggressive in policing the Democratic primaries for structural reforms that went “too far” in addressing systemic racism and classism.

Despite the media naysaying, the good news is that progressive reforms remain popular with the public.

The bad news is that too many people still rely on media outlets entrenched in the corporate system for news on “systemic” racism. **Z**

Jeff Cohen is co-founder of the activism group RootsAction.org and founder of the media watch group FAIR. Forty years

ago, he co-chaired the Campaign for a Citizens’ Police Review Board in Los Angeles.

Policing Is Irrelevant for Public Safety

By Justin Podur

Recent protests, catalyzed by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, call for an end to racist police violence. With their actions, the protesters have also moved beyond many of the stale policing debates of the re-

cent past. Defund, disband, abolish—people who would never have even heard these words in discussions about the police are now seriously considering them.

The breakthroughs in the police debate would not have been possible without the protesters, who have remained steadfast despite being beaten and abused by police everywhere in the United States. But this is not about making a breakthrough in the debate. This is about life and death. To stop police from killing people, 1,000 a year, year after year, changes will have to be made to the system. The protesters will be vindicated only if the changes made are the right ones.

Reform programs will only be successful if they start



from the premise that the policing institution has lost its social legitimacy, which it never deserved. Reforms that assume police legitimacy—whether they involve more body cameras, better oversight, a more diverse force, or more prosecution of killers among the police—do not do the job.

Once the police are viewed as an illegitimate institution, we are well on our way. As Mariame Kaba argues in the *New York Times*, we could do worse than to make a 50 percent cut to police budgets and let the logic of austerity get the job done, as it has with the rest of the public sector. But 50 percent can be bargained down to 10 percent, and 10 percent to 2 percent, as long as police and their advocates can continue to link public safety with policing. The backlash against abolishing police as “politically unrealistic” in light of public safety has begun at the local level where the issue is being debated.

The goal has to be to abolish the class of people who have the legal right to end lives (and to lie to you while you must tell the truth).

Do police currently have the right to kill? Absolutely. Using conservative estimates and public data, writer Lee Camp calculated that police killed an average of 900 peo-

ple per year—in other words, at least 12,600 people from 2005 to 2019. In this period, Camp writes, a total of three police officers were convicted of murder and had those convictions stand up to appeal. That is less than one-tenth of one percent, but it rounds off cleanly to zero.

The license to kill, above all, must be taken away from police. It survives because of a mystique—helped by ubiquitous cop shows, books, and movies—which is based on three notions: the idea that they are courageous because their job is dangerous, the idea that they keep society safe, and the fact that you can call them in an emergency.

Courage? Yes, policing is the 16th most dangerous job in America, behind logging workers, fishing workers, pilots, roofers, refuse collectors, truck drivers, farmers, steelworkers, construction workers, landscapers, power-line workers, grounds maintenance workers, agricultural workers, construction trade helpers, and the first-line supervisors of mechanics, installers, and repairers. But no worker in any of the top 15 most dangerous jobs has the option of killing when they subjectively feel unsafe—police do.

Safety? Police have no special function keeping society safe. In Alex Vitale’s

book *The End of Policing*, he cites criminologist David Bayley’s earlier book *Police for the Future*, in which Bayley calls this one of the “best kept secrets of modern life. Experts know it, the police know it, but the public does not know it.” We have known for 50 years that police don’t help public safety. French anthropologist Didier Fassin, in his 2013 book *Enforcing Order*, cites the Kansas City experiment of the 1970s: “This unprecedented study, unique at the time, compared three zones of the city: in the first, ‘reactive,’ crews limited their activity to responding to residents’ calls; in the second, ‘proactive,’ they at least doubled the time they spent on patrol; in the third, serving as a ‘control’ zone, they continued their previous mixture of activity. The results of a full year of operations and measurement appeared identical: neither attacks on persons, whether assault and battery, sexual assaults or muggings, nor attacks on property, whether burglary or damage to vehicles, varied significantly as a result of the different systems implemented; similarly, the experience of crime and the feeling of insecurity as reported by residents and business owners showed no variation between the zones, nor did the level of satisfaction with the police;



and it turned out that in all three cases, 60 percent of the officers' time was spent on activities not directly related to law enforcement, including a quarter bearing no relation at all to police work... Ultimately, it was evident that the patrols used preventatively had no effect on crime, either in terms of offenses recorded by law enforcement or from the point of view of residents' perception of risk."

The results were ignored: police kept patrolling for the next five decades. Fassin, who hung out with Paris police as part of his study, made his own calculations of how they spent their time: "In my experience, time spent in response to calls often amount-

ed to approximately 10 percent of the shift time; it was rare that it rose to 20 percent (5 calls per team per night shift was a maximum that was rarely reached), with the rest of the time being devoted to random patrols, and to the administrative recording of actions taken."

Think Paris is anomalous? Think again: "A number of studies conducted in the United States reveal that officers on patrol spend between 30 and 40 percent of their time responding to calls (on average 5 calls per team per hour in cities), only 7–10 percent of which are related in some way to offenses or crimes, and between 40 and 50 percent of their working

day on random patrol and paperwork, with the rest of the time devoted to various tasks."

Here's how Fassin describes the daily work of the police he observed: "Cruising around quiet streets and peaceful neighborhoods, the police wait for occasional calls that almost always turn out to be pointless, either because they relate to mistakes or hoaxes, or because the teams arrive too late or bungle the case due to their clumsiness, or because there is no cause for any official questioning or arrest."

Fassin cites a criminologist from Ontario, Richard Ericson, who in 1982 found that police spent 76 minutes out of



an 8-hour shift responding to calls, arguing that “the presence of police officers has become an end in itself.”

So, police have the 16th most dangerous job, and they are irrelevant for public safety—but society needs someone to call in an emergency. This role can be filled by trained civilian workers who will have to learn to solve daily social problems without a license to kill, which could be the direction Minneapolis goes given city councilors’ vow to disband the police in their city. Last year Canada’s *Globe and Mail* reported about a police force in Yukon that carried no weapons and could lay no charges. Some cities have child protection workers that operate to protect children with greater or lesser degrees of intrusiveness. Social workers can be trained to intervene in domestic disputes and in active mental health crises in the field. They can be deployed in teams that ensure one another’s safety, like in other professions. There are detailed proposals for taking responsibility for safety into the hands of the community:

- Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò de-

scribes one in *Dissent Magazine*;

- Zach Norris reframes the issue in his new book *We Keep Us Safe*;
- and Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha describe community approaches to safety in their edited volume *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*.

There should be some cultural reforms too. Boots Riley suggests removing police and military consultants, who act like state censors, from movie and TV production. The #MeToo movement led to the creation of an intimacy coordinator role in film production, to ensure that sex scenes could be filmed without sexist exploitation. Studios could be responsive to this movement by drastically reducing their cop show production while removing censors for the shows that remained. This would go some way to reduce police mystique and police worship.

Police advocates may argue there might be some financial losses from abolition. Some police forces “eat what they kill” through civil asset forfeitures, fines, and tickets, keeping taxes low while making poor people’s lives miserable. Overall, however, money will be saved.

Initially, much of the money saved by defunding police would have to go to easing the transition of the people currently in police roles into other jobs. Pensions are a mechanism for taking police off the line for whatever reason, which police organizations use generously indeed. But pensioning every police officer indefinitely, while it would save lives, would not make any resources available for public safety. Instead, governments can provide retirement and retraining packages (the courageous police might look at retraining for one of the 15 more dangerous jobs) for them, as they do with other workers who are laid off.

For the duration of current union contracts, police could be paid to prepare for other jobs or simply to stay home—expensive in the

Social workers can be trained to intervene in domestic disputes and in active mental health crises in the field. They can be deployed in teams that ensure one another’s safety, like in other professions

short term, but it would save thousands of lives. After that initial period, the hundreds of billions of dollars that are spent on policing could be redirected to create and expand public services. The possibilities would be limited only by the number of billions that could be moved from police. Social workers, certainly, are a strong candidate to redirect funds toward, as well as free transit and other free basic services (especially health care in the United States).

Criminological data has told us for decades that police are irrelevant for public safety. Other data tells us a lot about what does influence safety. British researchers Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their classic 2009 book *The Spirit Level* show that a large number of social problems, including violence, correlate strongly with inequality. Their work also shows different options for achieving equality: high wages by private employers (as in Japan) or high taxes and redistribution (as in Northern Europe). In the United States, every option for increased equality has been blocked by the wealthy who have—as Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page make clear in their important 2014 study—captured politics. A real Green New Deal would do more for public safety than any conceivable

able police reform short of abolition. **Z**

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COVID-19 and the Military

By H Patricia Hynes

On May 18, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a Salvation Army-like charity drive asking the public for donations of money, food and mobile phones to help an estimated 40,000 homeless veterans during the pandemic. More than one-half of all homeless veterans are African American and Hispanic, while they account for only 15 percent of

U.S. veterans, another punishing consequence of pervasive racism.

How is it that a country that spends nearly \$1 trillion each year on the military, national security, cybersecurity and weapons manufacture, a country that touts itself as the military superpower of the world, with soldiers and weapons on every continent except Antarctica, needs charity for its veterans?

The final end for World War II veterans at the Holyoke Soldiers Home in Massachusetts tragically mirrored their wartime experiences. Feted when first built in 1952, the Soldiers Home has suffered serious shortages of protective gear during COVID-19 and has been chronically underfunded and understaffed, such that the administrator combined wards of uninfected and infected men. Of the 210 veterans living there, 89 had died by late May—among the highest death tolls of any end-of-life facility in the country.

In late March, Captain Brett Crozier sent an email up his chain of command regarding the hazardous conditions for the 4,800-crew members aboard the tightly quartered aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt*, on which cases of coronavirus were growing. “We are not

We need to redefine militarism. The traditional military empire in which we live and grow is a cop machine that treats us as citizens of states that refuse to rethink community safety and military police.

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Photo by Mauro Pedro da Silva/Shutterstock.com

at war. Sailors do not need to die,” he wrote. “If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset—our Sailors.” When his message was leaked to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the captain was removed from his post. “We all have one mission and that’s to defend the nation,” said then Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modley who removed Crozier, suggesting the sailors at risk were dispensable. As of June 10, 1,200 of the 4,800 crew members aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* had contracted the coronavirus.

If soldiers and veterans are so disposable, what does matter to the deepest pocket of our tax dollars, the Depart-

ment of Defense?

Since the inception of the pandemic, the Washington consensus assured that major weaponsmakers, such as Lockheed Martin and Raytheon would receive payment in advance of work. The chief pandemic profiteer Lockheed Martin received an estimated \$450 million to keep its supply chain for weapons funded. So generous is the advance funding that the company is advertising thousands of new jobs. This while millions of unemployed waited desperately for their belated \$1,200 aid and relief payment from the federal government.

Elsewhere, tucked away in the House Heroes Act is a provision to reimburse defense contractors, not only for

unemployed workers but also for executives’ salaries and business costs of marketing and sales.

Why the preference for the industry of war and death, over its vets and soldiers? For one, the Pentagon is driven to remain the macho military superpower of the world, given China’s economic prowess. Marshall Billingslea, the U.S. arms control negotiator, has sets his sights on spending Russia and China “into oblivion” in an arms race. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper worries that the \$3 trillion infusion into the economy for, among others, the now 16 percent unemployed, those who can’t pay for rent or food or medications, “may throw us off course of increasing the

DOD budget 3 to 5%.”

Every “good” in our federal discretionary budget—education, housing, health, renewable energy, diplomacy, and more—is cut in Trump’s proposed 2021 budget, while weapons of mass destruction, fossil fuels, anti-immigration staffing and resources are increased. Worse, the DOD has insulated the weapons manufacturers from the economic crash of COVID-19 in order to assure our military dominance in the world.

With a new administration, we have a chance to cut the defense budget. However, as one analyst writes “even the most liberal legislators are likely to rush to the defense of plants [and jobs] in their own district.” But, an aggressive Green New Deal here, like Germany’s economic recovery plan, could replace lost defense jobs with solar and wind technology jobs.

We need to redefine our militarized national security embodied in weapons and global top cop mentality as urgently as cities and states need to rethink community security embodied in militarized police. We need to replace the “necessary” arms industry with a more necessary Green New Deal that can revive our economy, slow the climate crisis upon us, and forge a path to peace in our world. **Z**

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Trading One Uniform for Another

By Suzanne Gordon & Steve Early

Calls for de-militarization of law enforcement have gained new momentum in the wake of nationwide protests against police brutality. That process won’t be easy in a nation where nearly one-fifth of all cops are military veterans—including Derek Chauvin, George Floyd’s killer in Minneapolis and Robert McCabe, 1 of 2 officers charged with felony assault for knocking down a 75-year-old protester in Buffalo.

When loaded down with cast-off Pentagon gear, police officers from any background are more likely to regard peaceful protestors as ene-

my combatants, particularly when the Pentagon’s own top official refers to their protest scenes as “battle space.” But studies show that employing people with experience in war zones abroad has not been a boon to “community policing” either. Getting police departments to stop acting like an occupying army will require many fundamental changes, including much closer screening of job applicants who are veterans and ending their preferential hiring treatment.

Policing is currently the third most common occupation for men and women who have served in the military. It is an option widely encouraged by career counsellors and veterans’ organizations like the American Legion. As a result, several hundred thousand veterans are now wearing a badge of some sort. Although veterans comprise just 6 percent of the U.S. population, they represent 19 percent of all law enforcement personnel.

This disproportionate representation is due, in part, to preferential hiring requirements, mandated by state or federal law. In addition, under the Obama Administration, the Department of Justice provided local police departments with tens of millions of dollars to fund veterans-only positions.



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As noted [EF1] by the Marshall Project, in its 2017 report, “When Warriors Put On the Badge,” this combination of hiring preferences and special funding has made it harder to “build police forces that resemble and understand diverse communities.” The beneficiaries have been disproportionately white, because 60 percent of all enlisted men and women are not people of color.

Justice Department officials, particularly under President Trump, have shown little interest in tracking the later job performance of recently hired veterans or how their military background might affect their behavior vis-à-vis the public. As former DOJ official Ronald Davis told Marshall Project researchers: “I reject the notion that a returning veteran, who has seen combat, should cause concern for a police chief. I would even hire more if I could.”

However, a 2009 report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police raised multiple concerns about “the integration of military personnel” into law enforcement after their service in post 9/11 conflicts. According to this study, “veterans returning from the Vietnam War could easily distinguish their combat environment—mostly jungle, farm, or open

terrain—from their urban or suburban policing environment. In the case of returning combat veterans from Iraq or Afghanistan, their combat environment and their policing environments may appear surprisingly similar.” The report warned that past-deployments “may cause returning officers to mistakenly blur the lines between military combat situations and civilian crime situations, resulting in inappropriate decisions and actions, particularly in the use of less lethal or lethal force.”

More Involved in Shootings

Co-sponsored by the DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Police Chiefs’ report also noted that combat veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and related “depression, anger, withdrawal, and family issues” may have greater propensity for “inappropriate use of force.” Some chiefs felt that veterans under their command came back “ill prepared for the civilian world” because their PTSD left them with “exaggerated survival instincts.” Nearly a third believed that veterans on their force often had “psychological issues” of some sort, 14 percent had received more

citizen complaints about officers who were veterans than they did about non-veterans, and 10 percent reported instances of “excessive violence” involving former military personnel.

Veterans, of course, got high marks for their physical fitness, weapons-handling experience, habituation to discipline, and leadership qualities. Yet the report notes that some had trouble “readjusting to receiving rather than giving orders, trusting others, and changing the rules of engagement.”

A study by researchers at the University of Texas School of Public Health, which focused on the Dallas Police Department, found that officers with military experience used their guns while on duty more than non-veterans. During a 10-year period, nearly a third of all 516 Dallas cops involved in a shooting incident were veterans. Those who had been deployed overseas were nearly three times as likely to have fired their weapon; those who had not been deployed were still twice as likely to be involved in a shooting. The study concluded that some veterans employed by the Dallas police department lacked “critical thinking skills” when confronted with “high stress scenarios.”

Similar findings were reported by the Marshall Proj-

Seattle Police disperses demonstrators with flash bangs and pepper spray near a Seattle Police precinct

Photo by Mauro Pedro da Silva/ Shutterstock.com

ect after it studied use-of-force complaints and fatal police shootings in several other cities. In Boston and Miami, officers with military experience generated more civilian complaints of excessive force. Nearly a third of the Albuquerque officers involved in a total of 35 fatal shootings between January 2010 and April 2014 were veterans. A lawsuit against one of those officers, who killed an unarmed motorist, revealed that he was an Iraq war veteran, whose PTSD caused flashbacks, nightmares, and blackouts. Nevertheless, as the Marshall

Project discovered, he was “assigned to patrol a high-crime area of town known as ‘the war zone.’”

The Marshall Project recommended that police departments have clear and consistent policies to “evaluate employees’ mental and physical fitness ...to ensure public safety and guarantee a stable, reliable, and productive workforce.” Yet, it found that actual screening practices are far from standardized or effective. “Some agencies employ the use of administrative interviews and psychological evaluations to assess how veteran officers will per-

form the essential functions of their position, while other agencies revert to their department medical officer, or lack any policy at all.”

Another Hazardous Occupation

An additional concern is that veterans will be more vulnerable to well-known occupational hazards of police work—like alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence, divorce, and high rates of suicide. As Blue Health, a mental health advocacy group for police officers and their



families, reported in January, far more cops died by their own hand (228) last year than were killed in the line of duty (132).

One of the many veterans that we interviewed for a forthcoming book is a soldier who returned from Iraq with severe PTSD but became a deputy sheriff. After his wife threatened to leave him unless he gave up policing, he sought residential treatment twice and was finally forced to choose between his family and his job, which left him angry, irritable, and often volatile. “I don’t like gray areas,” he confessed. “If I’m in for a penny, I’m in for a pound. What that means is I can play cop, or I can play family man.” With vocational rehabilitation help from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), he became a skilled construction worker instead.

Other veterans, well known for their criticism of “forever wars” and the harm they’ve done to ordinary soldiers, are joining the fight against militarization of public safety. Common Defense, the progressive veterans’ group, has launched a “No War On Our Streets” campaign. Among those involved is Kyle Bibby, a former Marine Corps infantry officer, Annapolis graduate, and co-founder of the Black Veterans Project. Ac-

cording to Bibby, who served in Afghanistan, veterans have unique credibility as critics of putting of \$7 billion worth of military hardware in the hands of local police departments. “It was our equipment first,” he says. “We understand it better than the police do...It’s important that we have veterans ready to stand up and say: ‘These weapons need to go.’”

Tougher to tackle is the issue of ex-military personnel being over-represented in the ranks of domestic law enforcers. When you leave the service, says Danny Sjursen, a West Point graduate who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, “there’s no de-programming...They just load you up on meds and then you go straight to the police academy.” According to Sjursen, “military-style of policing is based on notion that high-crime areas should be treated like occupied countries.” So the “military-to-police pipeline” increases the chances “that a guy comes back to Baltimore, Camden, or Detroit and functions the same way we did when occupying Kabul or Baghdad.”

Among those also at risk when that happens are fellow veterans; since 2018, at least six African-Americans who served in the military have died in police shootings, including a trou-

bled young Air Force veteran killed in Indianapolis.

Retired Army colonel Andrew Bacevich, a distinguished military historian who served in Vietnam, argues that, in the past, it might have made “all the sense in the world for us to vector vets toward the police force.” But that was before the post 9/11 generation of veterans returned home with such high rates of PTSD, substance abuse, and suicide. “To the extent that we’ve got a bunch of damaged young people,” Bacevich says, “then maybe the last thing we want to do is put them in a job where they carry a gun in an environment that’s going to make things worse.” **Z**

Suzanne Gordon is the author of several reports and books on veterans’ health care, including *Wounds of War*.

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The Uprising Is Only Begin- ning: Building Power To Win Our Demands

By Kevin Zeese &
Margaret Flowers

The current uprising against police violence and racism is just beginning. It is rapidly shifting public consciousness on issues of

policing, violence against Black people and others, and systemic racism. The movement is deepening and becoming broader as well as putting forward solutions and making demands.

The confluence of crises including recent police violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and economic collapse along with the ongoing crises of lack of healthcare, poverty, inequality, homelessness, personal debt, and climate plus awareness of mirage democracy in the United States have created a historic moment full of possibilities.

If we continue to organize and build power, the potential for dramatic change is great.

As we wrote recently, there are dangers coming from liberal Democrats and the black misleadership class who are trying to quell the protests with distractions and weak reforms. To achieve changes that will solve the crises we face, demands must address the root causes of them. And, we must understand the dynamics of demands in social movements—what it takes to win and to hold the ruling class accountable for enacting them.





The confluence of crises including recent police violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty, inequality, homelessness, personal debt, and climate plus awareness of the possible future of the planet has created a perfect storm for protest.
Photo by Untitled Titled



omic, and economic collapse along with the ongoing crises of lack of healthcare, of mirage democracy in the United States have created a historic moment full of possibilities
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Demands to Defund and Abolish the Police

The demands to defund and abolish police are now part of the national dialogue. This is a major advancement for the movement against police violence. The pushback against these demands is coming from across the mainstream political spectrum from Donald Trump to Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders.

When the bipartisians unite, they are often wrong as they represent two parties funded by the millionaires and billionaires who put their interests first. Bipartisan means the various wings of the ruling class, represented by the two corporate parties, are uniting and that means a united attack on the people. They seek to protect systems that have created horrendous inequality and injustice. The police are the enforcement arm that protects the ruling class from the population impacted by that inequality and injustice.

Christy E. Lopez, a professor at Georgetown Law School who co-directs the Program on Innovative Policing, has worked inside the government on efforts to reform and control police for 25 years. Her conclusion: “it

has become clear to me that ‘reform’ is not enough. Making sure that police follow the rule of law is not enough. Even changing the laws is not enough.”

There is tension within the movement against police violence between those who seek reform and those who want to change the whole system—to abolish policing as it exists and create alternatives. In 2016, activists across the country built encampments to heighten awareness for the demand to abolish the police, provide reparations for victims, and invest in black and brown communities. They demanded “community-based forms of policing in its place that are accountable to residents.”

Advocates of abolition consistently make the point that “abolition requires more than police officers disappearing from the streets... Police abolition could mean and require society to decrease and eliminate its reliance on policing.” It also means decriminalizing many activities that result in police abuse, i.e. decriminalizing or legalizing drugs and the untaxed sale of cigarettes that create illegal markets. Police spend more than 90 percent of their time on things people find annoying or social and health issues that police are ill-equipped to handle. These lead to po-

lice interactions that result in police violence, especially in black and brown communities.

Kali Akuno of Cooperation Jackson writes that the



movement needs to become more radical, not more moderate. He points out that the solutions to the current crisis are deeper than reforming the police, explaining there

are “calls to eradicate white supremacy, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and settler-colonialism that have been on clear display.” The founding of police came out of the most

extreme form of capitalism, slavery, where those with money owned other people as unpaid workers. Slave patrols developed into modern-day police so the very root of po-



licing is rotten.

Max Rameau and Netfa Freeman write: “The core issue is POWER, not racism. We cannot change our reality by ending ‘racism,’ or the attitudes and opinions others hold of us. Our conditions will only change when we shift power into our own hands and exercise self-determination, thereby rendering the opinions of racists irrelevant.”

When it comes to changing the power dynamic, one demand—democratic community control of the police—stands out among the others. Communities being able to hire and fire police officers, review their budgets, impanel a grand jury to investigate crimes, and approve police contracts among other changes, reverse the power dynamic. The people would be in democratic control of how their communities are policed and by whom. This is a long-term demand dating back to the Black Panthers, as Green presidential candidate Howie Hawkins points out. This transition to people-power over police is seen by many as the key transition step to abolition or replacement of the police.

Rameau and Freeman conclude that “the police MUST exist in order to protect property and wealth from those who do not have.” They argue

that defunding police without changing that dynamic means the wealthy elites will find other ways to protect themselves, private police who are even less accountable than the public institution.

Akuno urges “the demand for abolition should be raised to heighten the contradictions. But, it must be accompanied by the call for revolution, and the organizing effort to dismantle the entire system.” He adds we “have to resist the elevation of the liberal and Democratic party narratives and positions. We have to assert a counter-narrative in all arenas—one that aims towards transforming the Floyd rebellion into something potentially transformative.”

Building Power for Positive Change

The power structure has started to make some concessions over the past few weeks of protests, but none of these has altered the systems that maintain the current inequalities and injustices.

Some police have been fired and charged for committing violence and murder. It remains to be seen if they will be convicted and kept from policing anywhere in the future. Some cities are talking

about defunding or disbanding the police, but it remains to be seen what the details will be. Schools are breaking contracts with police. More segments of the population from the media to athletes to tech companies are challenging racism and oppression in our society. These changes are happening because the people power being displayed has exposed injustice, garnered support and put the elites in a panic. The elites need to give the people something to stop the protests.

The widespread actions of militarized police using extreme violence across the country backfired and resulted in the protests growing. Federal courts in Colorado and Washington ordered governments to stop using chemical warfare against U.S. citizens. Adding 17,000 National Guard troops in 23 states caused the National Guard troops’ morale to plummet in embarrassment over using military force to stop people from exercising their constitutional rights. President Trump’s threat of military force caused divisions in the military as retired and active generals, GI’s and National Guard troops spoke out against it.

Popular power is growing in the United States, but to build enough power to win demands that significantly

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Photo by Ren



alter the economic and political systems will require sustained effort. While some reforms are significant because they may meet some needs of those in the movement, we can't stop there.

As we describe in the second class of the Popular Resistance School, if movements make concessions too early, before they have the power to make sure their demands are met and to hold leaders accountable for their actions, they will fail. The ruling class will often feign

concessions to quiet the rebellion knowing all along that they are still in control.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, after signing a police reform bill, exemplified this when he said, "You don't need to protest, you won. You accomplished your goal."

When negotiating demands, it is all about power. If the sides coming together to negotiate do not have equal power, then the weaker side will lose. They may be given promises, but they can't force the power holders to keep

them. It is significant that elements in the society are opposed to military attacks on people expressing their First Amendment rights, but we must continue to heighten the conflict until there are real splits within the power structure.

In order to maintain their power, the ruling class requires support from the people.

- They require people to give them authority. That is why the auton-

to build relationships with others in our community to raise awareness of the and how to stop them. We need to support each other through mutual aid and alternative systems to meet basic needs. Through our collective effort, we can destructive machine and create a new world

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omous zone in Seattle is so powerful, it is challenging that legitimacy.

- They require people to do the actual work, from the bureaucrats to city maintenance workers to other essential workers. That is why the call for a general strike is so powerful. If workers slow down or withhold their labor, governments and cities won't function.
- They require skills and knowledge of people. The ruling elites don't know how to run the machines or systems on which they depend.
- They require control over material resources such as energy, water and property. Last December, electrical workers in France cut off power to the police stations, big businesses and management and turned the power on for workers and the poor.
- They require the ability to punish people who disobey them. If guards and police refuse to stop people, courts refuse to prosecute and jails refuse to hold people, the

power elites lose that control.

The bottom line is that we have the ability to remove power from the ruling class and that must be our goal if we are to win the changes we need in this moment of multiple crises. The seeds of transformation have been planted, now it is our task to nurture them.

We do that by putting out a vision of the changes we require and continuing to protest in support of that vision. We need to build relationships with others in our community to raise awareness of the crises and how to stop them. We need to support each other through mutual aid and building alternative systems to meet basic needs. Through our collective effort, we can stop the destructive machine and create a new world. **Z**

Let Them Eat Weapons: Trump's Bizarre Arms

Z MAGAZINE PAGE 26

Race

By Lawrence Wittner

In late May of this year, President Donald Trump's special envoy for arms control bragged before a Washington think tank that the U.S. government was prepared to outspend Russia and China to win a new nuclear arms race. "The president has made clear that we have a tried and true practice here," he remarked. "We know how to win these races and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion."

This comment was not out of line for a Trump administration official. Indeed, back in December 2016, shortly after his election, Trump himself proclaimed that the United States would "greatly strengthen and expand" the U.S. government's nuclear weapons program, adding provocatively: "Let it be an arms race. We will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all." In a fresh challenge to Russia and China, delivered in October 2018, Trump again extolled his decision to win the nuclear arms race, explaining: "We have more money than anybody else, by far."

And, in fact, the Trump

administration has followed through on its promise to pour American tax dollars into the arms race through a vast expansion of the U.S. military budget. In 2019 alone (the last year for which worldwide spending figures are available), federal spending on the U.S. military soared to \$732 billion. (Other military analysts, who included military-related spending, put the figure at \$1.25 trillion.) As a result, the United States, with about 4 percent of the world's population, accounted for 38 percent of world military spending. Although it's certainly true that other nations engaged in military buildups as well, China accounted for only 14 percent of global military spending that

year, while Russia accounted for only 3 percent. Indeed, the United States spent more on its military than the next 10 countries combined.

The vast military superiority enjoyed by the United States, however, was not nearly enough for the Trump administration. In February 2020, the administration introduced a 2021 fiscal year budget proposal that would devote 55 percent of the federal government's \$1.3 trillion discretionary spending to the military. By 2030, the military proportion of the federal budget would rise to 62 percent.

Today, about four months later, this top priority for military spending might strike many Americans as

bizarre. After all, a disease pandemic continues to plague the nation (with more than 117,850 deaths thus far), a large portion of the economy has collapsed, unemployment has reached the catastrophic levels of the Great Depression, and American cities are torn by strife. Wouldn't this be an appropriate time to focus America's financial resources on public health-care, educational opportunity, decent housing, and a major jobs program—or, in the words of the U.S. constitution, to “promote the general welfare”? But Republican officials argue that these and other public assistance measures are “too expensive.”

What are not “too expensive” are the administration's



big-ticket weapons programs, which, even by military standards, are of dubious value. Not surprisingly, Trump continued pouring money into purchasing Lockheed Martin's F-35 combat aircraft, which, though an operational disaster, had cost U.S. taxpayers \$1.4 trillion by 2017. Another pet project, quickly embraced by Trump, was the newest and costliest U.S. aircraft carrier, delivered with fanfare to the Navy in late May 2017 for \$13 billion. Its only problem was that it had difficulty launching planes from its deck and facilitating their landing. Yet another very expensive military project is U.S. missile defense. Originally derided as "Star Wars" when Ronald Reagan began promoting it in the 1980s, it has become an obsession with Republicans, who have managed to secure more than \$250 billion in U.S. government funding for it thus far. Nevertheless, it continues to fail most of its tests against intercontinental ballistic missiles, despite the fact that these tests are heavily scripted.

One of the most cutting-edged of the U.S. government's current military weapons projects is the hypersonic missile. Capable of traveling 5 times faster than the speed of sound (3,800 MPH), hypersonic missiles

with nuclear warheads are immensely appealing to the military establishments of Russia, China, and the United States. In this case, too, however, there is a serious problem: given the missile's incredible speed, it produces immense heat while traveling through the atmosphere, thus diverting or destroying it before it reaches its target. Even so, this weapons project should produce yet another bonanza for Lockheed Martin, the world's largest arms manufacturer, which has already received \$3.5 billion for preliminary work on it.

Of course, the Trump administration has not forgotten about an array of its high tech weapons that do work. America's 5,800 nuclear weapons, capable of being launched from land, sea, and air, provide staggering firepower—more than enough to destroy most life on earth. The current nuclear arsenal, however, is viewed as insufficient by the Trump administration, which is engaged in a vast "modernization" program to rebuild the entire nuclear weapons complex, including new production facilities, warheads, bombs, and delivery systems. The price tag for this enormous nuclear buildup, which will occur over the next three decades, has been estimated as at least \$1.5 trillion.

Against a backdrop of economic and social collapse, plus potential global destruction, the obvious thing to do is to pull out of this immensely costly and bizarre arms race and, instead, foster arms control and disarmament agreements with other nations. But Trump seems determined to cast off whatever progress in this direction his predecessors have made, scrapping the INF Treaty, withdrawing from the Iran nuclear agreement, terminating the New START Treaty, and scuttling the Open Skies Treaty. For a variety of reasons—rewarding giant corporations, getting reelected, and dominating the world—Trump remains fixated on "winning" the arms race.

When it comes to increasingly desperate Americans, their lives and livelihoods spiraling downward, his message seems to be: Let them eat weapons. **Z**

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Defunding “Justified” Murder

By Robert C. Koehler

Well, he deserved to die, didn't he? He fought, he ran, he grabbed the cop's taser and fired it. And he was intoxicated, apparently. And he was blocking traffic.

“If an officer is hit with that Taser, all of his muscles will be locked up, and he'll have the inability to move and to respond,” said a Georgia county sheriff, referring to the killing of Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta on June 12. “This was a completely justified shooting.”

Completely. Justified.

Between the global outrage over police killings and the defenders of the police lies a void—a complete lack of common ground—that must be crossed. The killing of Rayshard Brooks, like the killings of so many other men and women of color over the years and in recent weeks, is only justified from the narrowest possible perspective: Did he or she violate the rules of the game? Usually some “violation,” however minor or irrelevant, can be found





and, voila, shooting justified.

What's cruelly missing from this case-closed attitude—interrupted over the last five or six years by the prevalence of videos posted on social media that often completely shatter the police story of what happened—is a sense of humanity for the victim and, beyond that, a willingness to acknowledge America's insane level of violence, institutional and otherwise.

"Rayshard Brooks was killed a day before he planned to celebrate his daughter's birthday," CNN informs us. "Family attorneys say

the 8-year-old daughter waited for her father in her birthday dress that morning. But he never came home."

Something is profoundly wrong.

Abdullah Jaber, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Georgia, put it this way: "A phone call about a man sleeping in a car should never escalate into a police shooting." He goes on, pointing out that shooting a man in the back as he flees is the epitome of police brutality, but I think the key point is that such minor social problems—a man blocking a drive-through lane

at Wendy's—must never be addressed in such a way that lethal violence is possible.

This is what defunding the police is all about:

- defunding a system that sees social order as obedience to armed authority;
- that is growing increasingly militarized;
- that has no complex understanding of human behavior;
- and that has deep roots in white racism, which not only goes back centuries but is alive and well in the present moment, in the form of

poverty, voter suppression and endless forms of discrimination.

Indeed, as Trevor Noah put in on “The Daily Show”: “Racism is like the corn syrup of society. It’s in everything.”

Defunding the police is part of an enormous process of social reorganization. It doesn’t mean simply abandoning all maintenance of social order or eliminating everything that police do, but it does mean disarming—demilitarizing—much, if not all, of that maintenance; reinvesting socially in programs that help people improve their lives, as opposed to punishing them for breaking various rules; and envisioning public order as something that involves the public itself, so that all of us, not just those with badges, guns and official authority, are participants in the process.

“Keeping us safe” is a public relations ploy, that is to say, a lie, which is used to defend and endlessly prolong militarism and war, both internationally and domestically. At its core, there is always an enemy, conveniently dehumanized so that his or her death is virtually always justified. Justification is so easy when you don’t imagine a victim’s 8-year-old daughter waiting for him in her birth-

day dress.

And as Noah Berlatsky points out, writing at *Foreign Policy*: “...prioritizing the military and war means de-prioritizing the resources that make peace possible, like education. In the same vein, Black Lives Matter and the American Civil Liberties Union have called to defund the police in order to redirect money to mental health services and investments in black communities—like, for example, schools. Police officers themselves have pointed out how they’ve become a service of last resort, struggling to deal with the fallout of austerity elsewhere.”

Get it? As we pull money out of programs that actually help people, poverty remains unchecked and disorder—including crime—spreads, thus justifying ever-increasing police budgets and, eventually, ever more militarized police. Impoverished communities, communities of color, must now be kept under control with occupying armies. This is currently the status quo—which is suddenly facing global outrage and is coming apart even as its defenders try desperately to hold it together.

But speaking of armies of occupation: “The military also directly benefits from, and relies on, domestic dis-

investment and poverty,” Berlatsky writes. “The armed services focus recruitment efforts on lower-middle-class and poor households.... Governments skimp on social services and education spending in poor and minority communities. They spend lavishly on police who stop and harass black people in those neighborhoods with terrifying frequency. And then the well-funded military sets up recruiting stations in poor neighborhoods to fill its ranks, as kids with few other options sign up to go shoot others and be shot at in turn in the United States’ endless foreign wars.”

All of which leads me to U.S. Representative Barbara Lee’s new resolution before Congress, calling for a \$350 billion cut in military spending—almost half the Pentagon’s bloated annual budget. Cuts would include closing overseas military bases, terminating our endless wars, eliminating Trump’s proposed Space Force military branch and much, much more.

“Redundant nuclear weapons, off-books spending accounts, and endless wars in the Middle East don’t keep us safe,” Lee said. “Especially at a time when families across the country are struggling to pay the bills—including more than 16,000 military families

on food stamps—we need to take a hard look at every dollar and reinvest in people.”

Reinvest in people? Are we really ready for that level of common sense? **Z**

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How Workers Can Win the Class War Being Waged Upon Them

By Richard D. Wolff

Organized labor led no mass opposition to Trump’s presidency or the December 2017 tax cut or the failed U.S. preparation for and management of COVID-19. Nor do we yet see a labor-led national protest against the

worst mass firing since the 1930s Great Depression. All of these events, but especially the unemployment, mark an employers’ class war against employees. The U.S. government directs it, but the employers as a class inspire and benefit the most from it.

Before the 2020 crash, class war had been redistributing wealth for decades from middle-income people and the poor to the top 1 percent. That upward redistribution was U.S. employers’ response to the legacy of the New Deal. During the Great Depression and afterward, wealth had been redistributed downward. By the 1970s, that was reversed. The 2020 crash will accelerate upward wealth redistribution sharply.

With tens of millions now a “reserve army” of the unemployed, nearly every U.S. employer can cut wages, benefits, etc. Employees dissatisfied with these cuts are easily replaced. Vast numbers of unemployed, stressed by uncertain job prospects and unemployment benefits, disappearing savings, and rising household tensions, will take jobs despite reduced wages, benefits, and working conditions. As the unemployed return to work, most employees’ standards of consumption and living will drop.

Germany, France, and other European nations could

not fire workers as the United States did. Strong labor movements and socialist parties with deep social influences preclude governments risking comparable mass unemployment; it would risk deposing them from office. Thus their antiviral lockdowns keep most at work with governments paying 70 percent or more of pre-virus wages and salaries.

Mass unemployment will bring the United States closer to less-developed economies. Very large regions of the poor will surround small enclaves of the rich. Narrow bands of “middle-income professionals,” etc., will separate rich from poor. Ever-more rigid social divisions enforced by strong police and military apparatuses are becoming the norm. Their outlines are already visible across the United States.

Only if workers understand and mobilize to fight this class war can the trends sketched above be stopped or reversed. U.S. workers did exactly that in the 1930s. They fought—in highly organized ways—the class war waged against them then. Millions joined labor unions, and many tens of thousands joined two socialist parties and one communist party. All four organizations worked together, in coalition, to mobilize and activate the U.S. working class.

Weekly, and sometimes daily, workers marched across the United States. They criticized President Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies and capitalism itself by intermingling reformist and revolutionary demands. The coalition's size and political reach forced politicians, including FDR, to listen and respond, often positively. An initially "centrist" FDR adapted to become a champion of Social Secu-

rity, unemployment insurance, a minimum wage, and a huge federal jobs program. The coalition achieved those moderate socialist reforms—the New Deal—and paid for them by setting aside revolutionary change.

It proved to be a good deal, but only in the short run. Its benefits to workers included a downward redistribution of income and wealth (especially via homeownership), and

thereby the emergence of a new "middle class." Relatively well-paid employees were sufficient in number to sustain widespread notions of American exceptionalism, beliefs in ever-rising standards of working-class living across generations, and celebrations of capitalism as guaranteeing these social benefits. The reality was quite different. Not capitalists but rather their critics and victims had forced the

Mass unemployment will bring the United States closer to less-developed economies. Very large regions of the poor will surround small enclaves of the rich. Narrow bands of "middle-income professionals," etc., will separate rich from poor. Ever-more rigid social divisions enforced by strong police and military apparatuses are becoming the norm. Their outlines are already visible across the United States

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New Deal against capitalists' resistance. And those middle-class benefits bypassed most African Americans.

The good deal did not last because U.S. capitalists largely resented the New Deal and sought to undo it. With World War II's end and FDR's death in 1945, the undoing accelerated. An anti-Soviet Cold War plus anti-communist/socialist crusades at home gave patriotic cover for destroying the New Deal coalition. The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act targeted organized labor. Senate and House committees spearheaded a unified effort (government, mass media, and academia) to demonize, silence, and socially exclude communists, socialists, leftists, etc. For decades after 1945—and still now in parts of the United States—a sustained hysteria defined all left-wing thought, policy, or movement as always and necessarily the worst imaginable social evil.

Over time, the New Deal coalition was destroyed and left-wing thinking was labeled “disloyal.” Even barely left-of-center labor and political organizations repeatedly denounced and distanced themselves from any sort of anti-capitalist impulse, any connection to socialism. Many New Deal reforms were evaded, amended, or repealed. Some simply

vanished from politicians' knowledge and vocabulary and then journalists too. Having witnessed the purges of leftist colleagues from 1945 through the 1950s, a largely docile academic community celebrated capitalism in general and U.S. capitalism in particular. The good in U.S. society was capitalism's gift. The rest resulted from government or foreign or ideological interferences in capitalism's wonderful invisible hand. Any person or group excluded from this American Dream had only themselves to blame for inadequate ability, insufficient effort, or ideological deviancy.

In this context, U.S. capitalism strode confidently toward the 21st century. The Soviet threat had imploded. A divided Europe threatened no U.S. interests. Its individual nations competed for U.S. favor (especially the UK). China's poverty blocked its becoming an economic competitor. U.S. military and technological supremacy seemed insurmountable.

Amid success, internal contradictions surfaced. U.S. capitalism crashed three times. The first happened early in 2000 (triggered by dot-com share-price inflation); next came the big crash of 2008 (triggered by defaulting subprime mortgages); and the hugest crash hit in 2020 (trig-

gered by COVID-19). Unprepared economically, politically, and ideologically for any of them, the Federal Reserve responded by creating vast sums of new money that it threw at/lent to (at historically low interest rates) banks, large corporations, etc. Three successive exercises in trickle-down economic policy saw little trickle down. No underlying economic problems (inequality, excess systemic debts, cyclical instability, etc.) have been solved. On the contrary, all worsened. In other words, class war has

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been intensified.

What then is to be done? First, we need to recognize the class war that is underway and commit to fighting it. On that basis, we must organize a mass base to put real political force behind social democratic policies, parties, and politicians. We need something like the New Deal coalition. The pandemic, economic crash, and gross official policy failures (including violent official scapegoating) draw many toward classical social democracy. The successes of the Democratic Socialists of

America show this.

Second, we must face a major obstacle. Since 1945, capitalists and their supporters developed arguments and institutions to undo the New Deal and its leftist legacies. They silenced, deflected, co-opted, and/or demonized criticisms of capitalism. Strategic decisions made by both the U.S. New Deal and European social democracy contributed to their defeats. Both always left and still leave employers exclusively in positions to (1) receive and dis-

tribute their enterprises' profits and (2) decide and direct what, how, and where their enterprises produce. Those positions gave capitalists the financial resources and power—politically, economically, and culturally—repeatedly to outmaneuver and repress labor and the left.

Third, to newly organized versions of a New Deal coalition or of social democracy, we must add a new element. We cannot again leave capitalists in the exclusive positions to receive enterprise profits and make major enterprise decisions. The new



element is thus the demand to change enterprises producing goods and services. From hierarchical, capitalist organizations (where owners, boards of directors, etc., occupy the employer position) we need to transition to the altogether different democratic, worker co-op organizations. In the latter, no employer/employee split occurs. All workers have equal voice in deciding what gets produced, how, and where and how any profits get used. The collective of all employees is their own employer. As such an employer, the employees will finally protect and thus secure the reforms associated with the New Deal and social democracy.

We could describe the transition from capitalist to worker co-op enterprise organizations as a revolution. That would resolve the old debate of reform versus revolution. Revolution becomes the only way finally to secure progressive reforms. Capitalism's reforms were generated by the system's impacts on people and their resulting demands for change. Capitalism's resistances to those reforms—and undoing them after they happened—spawned the revolution needed to secure them. In that revolution, society moves beyond capitalism itself. So it was in the French Revolution: demands for re-

form within feudal society could only finally be realized by a social transition from feudalism to capitalism. **Z**

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Unlearning and Organiz-

ing Against White Supremacy

By Ted Glick

*(This is an excerpt from the "Lessons Learned" chapter of my just-published book, **Burglar for Peace: Lessons Learned in the Catholic Left's Resistance to the Vietnam War**, available at PM Press. It feels very appropriate to circulate this right now.)*

Without any doubt, it was my 11 months in prison (for destroying draft files and other resistance during the Vietnam war) that got me firmly onto the road to consciously attempting on a daily basis to be anti-racist and a strong ally of people of color, because of the many black and brown people I met, befriended, and interacted with every day. I already believed intellectually that all people should be treated equally and fairly. In prison I came to see that all people are, in essence, the same, with similar feelings, ideas, hopes, and dreams.

Prison was also where I very clearly saw the way in which class and race are interconnected. I saw the class system of the prison: at the

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top, the warden, then the other administrators, followed by the prison guards (with their own hierarchy), the prisoner “trusties,” and the white-collar prisoners, all of whom are very predominantly white. Trusties and white-collar prisoners tend to be the ones who get extra privileges, including work release and single-cell dorms. Finally, there’s the general prison population, a majority of which are black and brown. Seeing this in prison left me much better equipped to understand the class/race structure in society at large. It’s not as stark and clear-cut, but it’s definitely there.

Ever since, I’ve tried to put these understandings into practice, taking action and speaking out in support of genuine equality, true justice, and human rights for all people. This has meant participation in more demonstrations than I can remember against police killings or beatings of people of color. In 1999, after Amadou Diallo was shot 41 times, I was arrested in front of the New York City police headquarters, joining with others to call for a swift indictment of the police officers responsible. From 1993 to 2001, it meant fasting for the first 12 days of every October for freedom for Leonard Peltier and for Columbus Day to be renamed Indigenous Peoples

Day. It has meant speaking up at meetings when something has been said that is overtly or subtly racist. Sometimes I don’t do so, truth be told. It’s not always easy, and my fear sometimes wins out over my best intentions.

It has meant joining organizations that are predominantly African American and following, and sometimes taking part in, those groups’ leadership. And it has meant continuing to wrestle with whether I am doing enough, whether I should be doing something more or something else, whether I really am being a good anti-racist ally.

There’s a particular responsibility that those of us who are white have in this work—the responsibility to interact with and organize among white people, particularly low-income and working-class white people, those who should be more open than they sometimes are to the message that to improve their living conditions, they need to join with working people of all races and cultures. We need to help them realize that white supremacist ideology in particular, as well as other divisive and oppressive ideologies and practices, are not in their best interest.

To sharpen the point: white progressives need to be willing to intelligently risk being uncomfortable, unpopular, or

even victims of psychological or physical abuse for speaking up among a predominantly white group of regular folks. I don’t mean so much a predominantly white group of progressives, though there are often subtler, less overt issues there too. I am talking about average working-class or middle-class white people. Usually, in that kind of setting, sooner or later, there’s going to be white supremacist ideas expressed. That’s not necessarily because the group as a whole or the person(s) expressing them are hard-core KKK members. It’s because, as the mass response to the racist (and everything else) Trump campaign and presidency has shown us, white supremacy is very much alive and well among a huge portion of the U.S. white population.

It is critical that more and more people of European ancestry in the U.S. appreciate that a hopeful future for them and their families lies in joining together with, not being hostile to, Blacks, Latinos, Indigenous people, and Asian/Pacific Island people. It was put this way in a 2016 statement by the group Showing Up for Racial Justice: “While people of color bear the brunt of racism, large numbers of white people have also been failed by the system—facing job loss, inadequate housing



and cutbacks in core services. Instead of addressing real fears and insecurity, racist elites actively target white working class white people into blaming people of color for the problems their families and vulnerable communities face.”

How Whites Organize Whites

This is also critical. Guilt-tripping isn’t the way to do it. People who act primarily because they are feeling or have been made to feel guilty about their whiteness are people who are going to have a hard time interacting with whites who are suffering economic hardship or the white masses in general. Instead, while acknowledging the legitimacy of guilt felt over the historically brutal violence, oppression, and discrimination by huge numbers

of white people, generally, against Indigenous, African, Mexican, and Asian peoples, we, as whites, must move past guilt. We need to be clear that white supremacy also hurts white people, engenders guilt and fear, for example, and makes united action on common issues like housing, healthcare, or the right to organize more difficult.

It’s also critical that whites organizing whites take up the economic, health care, education, or other issues impacting predominantly white communities, to show that they are concerned about all forms of inequality and want a just society for everyone. This is key. A good organizer knows that you need to start with people where they are, make connections on the basis of issues, experiences, or other things held in common. As those connections are made, as people get to know and respect the organizer, they are more willing to listen

and think about constructive criticism from her/him/them or ideas other than those they are ordinarily exposed to.

Finally, white organizers who are serious about anti-racism need to have ongoing connections to people of color, by participating in a multicultural organization of some kind, at a minimum. It is better if that happens at the same time that healthy friendships are developed with individual people of color. We, as whites, need ways to be continually reminded about how white supremacy works. We need friends of color whom we support and who will support us, who criticize us for things we say or do that reflect our upbringing in a white supremacist culture and help us to develop into better and more conscious people, better organizers, better and stronger human beings. **Z**

Ted Glick is the author of the just published *Burglar for Peace: Lessons Learned in the Catholic Left’s Resistance to the Vietnam War*. Past writings and other information can be found at <https://tedglick.com>, and he can be followed on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jtglick>.



A person wearing a dark hoodie and a black face mask is holding a large, hand-drawn protest sign. The sign is made of two pieces of cardboard and features the text "You Can Fuck With Our Culture . Our Music But You Can't Fuck With OUR LIVES" in a bold, hand-drawn font. The person is standing in a crowd of other protesters, some of whom are also holding signs. The background is a city street with buildings and a traffic light.

You Can Fuck
With Our Culture
. Our Music
But You Can't
Fuck With
OUR LIVES

America has its Knee on the Necks of Black & Brown People

By Don Rojas



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Today America is at a crossroads, a turning point...at an intersection of the old imperial order at home and abroad with the birthing of a new order, “a new normal” if you will.

For millions of people in America, the un-

precedented street uprisings offer a glimmer of hope that after 350 years of oppression, meaningful change may actually be on the horizon. Will America finally start to lift its knee off the necks of Black and Brown people? Time will tell, but one thing is certain: the

brutal murder of George Floyd in the streets of Minneapolis will be recorded by historians as the spark of a mass movement the likes of which have not been seen in modern America.

A “perfect storm” is sweeping through hundreds of cities and towns across all 50 states: a ravaging pandemic, utterly mismanaged by a racist, criminally corrupt and inept administration whose inaction has resulted in the deaths of over 105,000 Americans, 40 percent of whom are Black and Brown people, led to tens of millions of unemployed, again with a disproportionate number of Black and Brown people, and to hundreds of thousands being fed by over-stretched food banks all across the nation and capped off by tens of thousands of protestors in the streets of America every day—all converging in the unforgettable Spring of 2020.

Meanwhile, Trump, the pathological narcissist and rage-tweeting little man in the White House becomes more desperate as he confronts a growing uprising in the streets. The “Law and Order President” resorts to the use of state terror as he moves closer to take authoritarian and neo-fascist measures against innocent people exercising their constitutional rights.

We are witnessing a convergence of powerful historical forces and the emergence of visible contradictions in the neoliberal order. The Empire is rotting at its core, and the cancer of violent White Supremacy is eating out the soul of America.

This is, indeed, a watershed moment. We are in the midst of not just another “movement moment” that comes around every two generations or so but one that has the potential to grow into a disciplined, organized mass movement militating for sweeping social and economic transformation.

For the most part, these uprisings started off as spontaneous outpourings, but as they



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continue to grow we are witnessing the young Black Lives Matter activists becoming the engine and the compass of the uprisings as they morph and evolve from an anti-racist police protest into an anti-systemic racism protest movement.

Hopefully, the protestors will come to a recognition that this deeply sick capitalist system cannot reform itself and thus has to be radically transformed into a functional political and economic democracy that expresses the will of the people and provides the material needs of the working people and the poor.

Playing a key role in documenting this rebellion is the mainstream corporate media narrative and its penchant for sensationalism, for focusing on scenes of confrontation, of looting, of police aggression and yet with too few interviews with the protestors themselves, too little analysis by the various “talking heads” about the underlying structural causes of the rebellion. Corporate media’s emphasis is always on the supremacy of property rights over human rights or on giving the opinions of public policymakers more merit than the views and motivations of the protestors themselves.

We have seen poignant images of white cops “taking a knee,” of protestors embracing and high-fiving with the national guard.... white police chiefs marching hand-in-hand with protestors. One particularly striking image was of a young white woman, not more than 18, standing defiantly in the faces of the heavily armed police barrier and holding a sign that said simply, “White Silence is Complicit.” These scenes bring hope and optimism to our hearts.

In the faces of the young multi-racial protestors one saw anger, pain, fearlessness, determination, resilience and resolve to stand up for justice and to march in the streets for an end to systemic racism and structural White Supremacy. These young people face daunt-

ing job and career prospects in a post-COVID economy that could easily slide into an economic depression as bad as the Great Depression of the 1930s. But for now, they are tired of the hatred and bigotry that has made a mockery of the so-called “American Dream” and they are tired of the daily indignities and humiliations meted out to Black and Brown Americans. They are acknowledging that Black and Brown people are humans too and deserve to be treated as such.

Neo-Nazi and white supremacist provocateurs have been spotted all over the country engaging in vandalism, instigating property destruction and appearing at rallies and demonstrations with semi-automatic rifles. These are opportunistic white domestic terrorists hoping to misuse the uprising to ignite a race war, even a second civil war. Their terrorist actions are designed to discredit the peaceful protestors and to whip up a frenzy among Trump’s rabid, racist, death cultists. They must be exposed and expelled from the peaceful protests.

The international protests that have brought thousands of people into the streets of Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other “white” countries to show their solidarity with the American protestors and also to condemn acts of racist police violence against Black and Brown people living in those countries, is a very significant development. Demonstrations of solidarity have also been held in Japan, Korea and the Middle East. The world is watching America and the world does not like what it is seeing when peaceful protestors (and even members of the international media) are teargassed, pepper sprayed and shot at with rubber bullets.

Militarized police forces across the country comprise the containment apparatus of the neoliberal state, functioning like an occupation army in Black and Brown communities, there primarily to suppress rather than to serve

and protect. The myth of white supremacy is deeply embedded in the culture of policing in America. And this bigotry is reinforced by the corrupt police unions and by the so-called “Blue Wall of Silence.” On top of the COVID pandemic we also have to cope with the pandemic of racist policing which tantamounts to a public health crisis for Black and Brown people in America.

There has been much breathless, holier-than-thou condemnations from Fox and other racist, right-wing media entities over the looting that has taken place in several cities, but the demonstrators know the real looters are liar-in-chief Trump, the racist Republican Party, the oligarchs of Wall Street, and the greedy lobbyists on K Street who have funneled hundreds of billions of taxpayers money to the thieving 1 percent under the guise of a “stimulus program” for working

Americans.

Are we witnessing the beginning of the end of white ignorance of America’s tortured history of race relations and callous white indifference to the plight of Black and Brown people? In a recent Op-Ed in the *Washington Post*, author and activist Stacy Patton raised a provocative yet profound question—how do we know that the white protestors mean what they say. “Solidarity can be helpful—or it can be performative.”

Patton asks, “Why are so many white people participating in this current uprising, given the long tradition in this country of silent complicity about racist police practices that have terrorized black and brown communities for generations. What are their intentions? Are they protesting because they are in honest solidarity, or because it helps to soothe their own conscience or assuage their guilt.”



Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, says that white people for whom black lives truly matter must demonstrate the political will to make substantive changes. This requires radical honesty about how race and privilege intersect.

For Malkia Cyril, founder of the Media Justice Center in Oakland, what white folks need to design is “a vision and a strategy for how to change the rules that are set up to benefit them. It is true that Black and Brown people cannot win alone. White people do have important contributions to make and no one should sit this moment out. But high-tech capitalism creates a real danger of turning rebellion into spectacle, into sport.”

The neoliberal order benefits from the racialized capitalism of North America and Eu-

rope, a brutal, super-exploitative socio-economic system built on the foundations of chattel slavery and the systematic theft of Black and Brown labor from abused Black and Brown bodies. Both the COVID virus and police brutality have ripped off the mythical masks to reveal in sharp relief the living legacies of slavery, colonialism and imperialism. Now, more than ever, reparations demands must be high on the agenda of transformations to make Black people whole, to repair the damages done to them by the historical crimes of slavery and segregation. Reparations is a moral imperative that requires the support of all persons of good will. (For more information about the global reparations movement visit the Institute of the Black World’s online Reparations Resource Center at <https://ibw21>).

Our struggles moving forward must be guided by the principles of “nonviolent revolution” and inspired by all our fallen ancestors who gave their lives in the fight to liberate Black and Brown people here and around the world

Photo by Allison C Bailey/Shutterstock.com



org/reparations-resource-center/).

Despairing and depressing as our contemporary realities may be, the left must remain hopeful and cease wallowing in our pain and anger, learn the hard lessons from our setbacks in previous “movement moments” re-gather our strength, coalesce our forces and prepare ourselves for the titanic race and class struggles that lie ahead. Critical thinking and wholesome self-criticism are key to the healing process.

In a recent media interview, Professor Cornel West, one of America’s most prominent public intellectuals, described America as a “failed social experiment.” He argued that America’s capitalist economy could not generate and deliver in such a way that people could live lives of decency. “The nation-state

with its criminal injustice system, its legal system could not generate protection of rights and liberties, And, now our culture, of course is so market-driven—everything for sale, everyone for sale—it can’t deliver the kind of nourishment for soul, for meaning, for purpose.”

Reverend William Barber, leader of the Poor Peoples Campaign and one of America’s great moral voices says, “America must listen to its wounds. They will tell us where to look for hope...only if the screams and tears and protests shake the very conscience of this nation, can we hope for a better society.”

These young multiracial demonstrators must begin to educate themselves in the long history and practice of white supremacy over the past 350 years, from the enslavement of



Africans through the lynchings of innocent black men and women, the 100 years of Jim Crow apartheid that followed the abolition of slavery, and racial discrimination in all areas of civil society.

So we have arrived at a seminal moment, a significant milestone in the modern history of America and the world? Leveraging the momentum of the uprising, we progressives and leftists must start planning for a post-Minneapolis and post-COVID world, one that we must shape ourselves, one that prioritizes the needs of people over profits and reorganizes society along the lines of social and economic justice.

This “Movement moment” is also a teaching moment for all who are standing up for peace and justice, an opportunity to learn about the history and practice of enslavement and American apartheid and about the systemic character of institutional racism. This is a good time to probe the “inconvenient truths” of America’s history, to read about the Black Panthers in the 1960s and 1970s, the Black Power and Civil Rights movements in the U.S. in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the anti-colonial movements in Africa and the Caribbean in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This is a good time to learn how America became an empire with a U.S. military presence in 140 countries today, how Washington invaded and occupied countries in the Caribbean and Latin America and with its “Monroe Doctrine” has arrogantly claimed the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of every country in the larger Americas.

As we move forward into a future that we must build in our own image and likeness, we must also be aware of the risks and dangers of Trumpism, the fascist cult of personality, not unlike those that emerged in the 20th Century under Mussolini and Hitler. Trumpism will continue to scapegoat the left and progressive movement and will not hesitate to unleash

state terror and a tidal wave of lies on this movement as it gets stronger in the weeks and months ahead. Be prepared.

Nonetheless, there will be opportunities, challenges and responsibilities for the movement and reasons for hope and optimism. There is strength in the multiracial unity we see emerging in the streets, a unity of diverse forces that is rooted in our collective hopes and aspirations.

Cornel West is calling for a “nonviolent revolution” for the democratic sharing of power, resources, wealth and respect. “If we don’t get that kind of sharing, we’re going to get more violent explosions.” He’s absolutely correct.

The struggle for justice and social transformation must continue in the weeks and months ahead. This is not a time to pause. Older people and people of faith must join the youth in the streets. Our struggles moving forward must be guided by the principles of “nonviolent revolution” and inspired by all our fallen ancestors who gave their lives in the fight to liberate Black and Brown people here and around the world.

Long Live the memory of George Floyd.

Reparations Now.

Forward Ever, Backward Never.

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The Statues of our Discontent

By Boaventura de Sousa Santos



Photo by Sandor Szmuto/Shutterstock.com

Statues look a lot like the past, which is why, whenever they are called into question, we turn to historians. The truth is that statues are a thing of the past only as long as they stand quietly in squares, as

indifferent to us as we are to them. At such times, which may actually last centuries, they are visited more intentionally by pigeons than by humans. But when statues come under assault, they leap from the past to become part





of our present. Otherwise, how could there ever be any dialogue between us and them? Of course, there are statues that never come under assault, either because the past to which they belong is just too remote for them to make the leap to the present, or because they belong to art's eternal present. Such statues are safe from everything and everyone except insane extremists, as was the case with the 5th century Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, blasted by the Taliban in 2001.

The statues that do make the leap and engage in dialogue are part of our present and are bound to come under assault because they represent unsettled accounts and unredressed depredations and injustices. Those who assault them are not asking for a settling of accounts nor do they demand any reparations from them. The accounts have to be settled and reparations have to be made by those who inherited and now hold the unjust power represented by the statues. Whenever the power that had them erected was toppled, whether justly or unjustly, the statues have been promptly removed, without much fuss and maybe even to the sound of applause. The reason today's movement against the statues, which was initiated by the #blacklivesmatter movement, remains strong lies in the fact that to this day the power that once ordered the depredations and injustices to which the statues bear involuntary witness still holds sway. And if the power lives on, so do the depredations and injustices, which are truly the ones under assault.

What power is this? In the European, Euro-descendent context, this power goes by the name of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, three interconnected forms of power that have been dominant for almost six centuries. The former dates from the 15th century and the other 2 existed long before that, but were reconfigured by modern capitalism and then placed at its service. All three are so inter-

twined that it is impossible for any of them to exist without the other two. Therefore, what we see as the past is an optical illusion, a blindness to the present. Is colonialism a thing of the past? Certainly not. Historical colonialism—a specific form of colonialism in which a given territory is occupied by a foreign power—may, indeed, be said to be a thing of the past (although not entirely, as attested by the cases of Western Sahara, West Papua and Palestine). But colonialism has persisted to this day in other guises, from neo-colonialism to the plundering of the natural resources of former colonies to racism. If there was nothing in this that was part of our present, the statues would still be standing there, quietly left to the pigeons.

To be specific, if there were no ghettoized neighborhoods like Bairro da Jamaica in the Greater Lisbon area; if, instead of being what it is, the skin of the populations most exposed to the virus were the same color as the skin of those who are teleworking; if the police did not resort to racist brutality or allow neo-Nazi groups to infiltrate its professional organizations, the statues would still be undisturbed in their stony or metal repose. Isn't patriarchy on the way out, what with all the gender equality laws and policies? Certainly not. Had the feminist movements been fully successful, femicide would not be on the rise, nor would the pandemic have caused a sharp increase in violence against women in every single country. Hasn't capitalism come to an end? Certainly not. This is probably the most perverse illusion of all, one disseminated by the media and by economists and many social scientists. For many, capitalism used to be an ideology; now we have markets, associates, entrepreneurs, market economy, GDP, development. In fact, over the last 40 years capitalism has increased its capacity to produce injustice, as plainly reflected in the erosion of workers' rights and in wage stagnation (since 1969, in the U.S.).

This stew of unjust power favors the rise of racism, the negation of other stories, violence against women, and homophobia. This power is what the assault on the statues is directed against. The assaults tend to emphasize the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles, but let us not forget that the anti-sexist and anti-capitalist struggles are just as important.

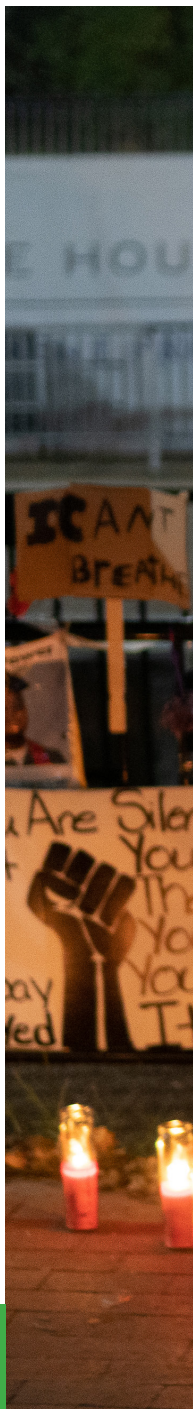
The statues will not find peace as long as these forms of power exist, especially if the current virulence persists. Besides, the statues only appear to be innocent, ill-chosen targets because of today's pervasive politics of resentment: having ceased to grasp the causes of our discontent, we've turned on the consequences. That is why the impoverished white U.S. worker believes that his worst enemy is the Hispanic immigrant worker, who is actually poorer than he is. That is also why the European middle class, fearful of losing all its recent gains, believes that its worst enemies are the immigrants and refugees. As long as this power lives on, if those who wield it have a shred of historical awareness and are at all willing to make concessions, they should prudently have the statues removed in orderly fashion and build a museum for them. Next they should ask artists, writers and scientists from the country and from what we hastily call our brother countries to engage in intercultural dialogues with the statues and thereby start building a creative liberation pedagogy. The moment that happens, the past will leave the present through the front door.

The conditions are now in place to take that step, because in addition to having endured so many humiliations, the wronged peoples are creative and even well capable of seeing that the power which has wronged them is also seeking liberation. Let me share two stories from my research experience as a sociologist. I was told the first story in 2002, when I was doing field work on the Island of Mozambique, in the northern part of the country.

There is a statue of Portuguese poet Luís de Camões (1524-1580) on the island, placed there in colonial times. During the turbulence that spread across the country after its independence in 1975, the statue was removed and stored in the captaincy's warehouses. There followed a several-year drought on the island. The local sages gathered together, performed their rituals and came to the conclusion that the lack of rain had probably been caused by the statue's unseasonable removal. They asked that the statue be brought back, so there stands Camões again, gazing at the expanse of the Indian Ocean and bringing the rain to fill the cistern. In this way, Camões's statue and history have been reclaimed by the Mozambican people.

The second story took place on July 24, 2014, when the descendants of the indigenous children that are part of the polemic statue of Father António Vieira (1608-1697) in a Lisbon square visited the University of Coimbra's Center for Social Studies. This delegation of Brazilian indigenous leaders, the largest ever to come to Europe, included representatives from the Guajajara, Macuxi, Munduruku, Terena, Taurepang, Tukano, Yanomami and Maya peoples. They came to thank me for my pleading before Brazil's Federal Supreme Court in the process that led to the demarcation of the Raposa Serra do Sol indigenous land. Without wishing to belittle Canada's McGill University—the first on the list—or any of the 18 universities that followed in granting me honorary degrees, I consider the headgear and the baton of command that were given to me in that ceremony as one of the honors I cherish the most. It was rather Father António Vieira's statue who got it wrong, in leading us to believe that those children have remained children to this day. And there are quite many people around who still believe th

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Whistleblowing, the Pandemic and a “Law and Order” System of Injustice

By Jeffrey Sterling



It is hard to find many positives as the death toll from the novel coronavirus continues to climb, but as we have seen before with situations of crisis, truth does find a way to make itself known. In the sense of whistleblowing, we saw it with the crisis involving the president, which demonstrated the worth and power of whistleblowers to bring accountability to power (though, of course, the end result had more to do with denial than truth). Now we see the revealing nature of whistleblowing once again as so many have been coming forward to reveal how we have had no preparedness nor plan with regard to combatting the coronavirus. Whistleblowers have testified before Congress about how woefully unprepared we have been and how the response from those charged with protecting us and this nation has been, at best, deemed inadequate, and at worse, negligent. Imagine where we would be in this pandemic without the courage of those who have dared to come forward to reveal the realities of our government's response to and our preparedness in a global crisis.

And, like the previous whistleblower episode, we have also seen the negative side of the response to whistleblowers. Far too often, individuals who are out there on the front lines, battling COVID-19 and tending to our nation's health, have been fired for having the audacity to reveal the inadequacies of the preparedness of our government and hospitals during this crisis. Prior to this pandemic, why should any of us have thought that something as simple as masks and other personal

protective equipment would be in short supply and that testing would be a "nice to have" vital commodity? Those sorts of issues happen in other countries, right? And revealing that uncomfortable truth has cost many fine Americans their jobs. The cost of telling the truth should not be hazardous, it should be embraced, especially in times of crisis. Please join me in continuing to commend those who choose to step forward.

COVID-19 has been a kick in the complacency of this nation and especially our leaders. Thanks to the many brave souls on the front lines coming forward to reveal the truth, and through our own fortitude as individuals and as a nation, we will persevere.

Now, there is something else I want to discuss, another kick in the complacency of our nation. I have been agonizing, like so many others over the death of George Floyd, and wondering what I could possibly do or say about that horrible tragedy. Seeing a police officer with his knee on the neck of a subdued African American filled me with a sorrow that I have unfortunately felt before. Once again, I find familiarity in the words of my favorite scribe, "Oh, I have suffered with those that I saw suffer" (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II).

Those, eventual lifelong, nine minutes that the officer had his knee on the neck of a pleading for his life George Floyd brought me and my wife Holly to, unfortunately, familiar tears. Prior to going to trial, I suffered along with Michael Brown, whose bullet-riddled body was allowed to remain in the street under a bloody sheet for four hours, an undeniable and foreboding message to every other African American. While in prison, Alton Sterling (the coincidence in name was not lost on me) was brutally shot by instigating police officers with no more regard for him as a human being than they would have for a target on the shooting range. And since returning home



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African Americans have always been considered a threat to not only national security, but also a threat to the national well-being of the nation and the law has always been the foundation of that disenfranchisement

from prison, Breonna Taylor was murdered in her own home by the racial profiling guns of a “no-knock warrant,” and Ahmaud Albury was needlessly, and callously, killed by so-called upstanding citizens with the same veracity of a lynch mob. I suffer with them all not only as an American citizen who should be outraged by the actions of power against its own citizens, but particularly as an African American who continues to wonder when the official carnage against us will stop.

While wrongfully imprisoned, I wrote about how I found myself pondering whether the racial divide and cruelty in prison were merely reflections of the racial divide and cruelty I was seeing through television and radio windows I had of the outside world. What saddened me about where I was and what I was witnessing was the feeling that my eventual release would find me going from one prison to another. As an African American, it is an unmistakable, and far too often repeated and professed truth that this country regards us as inmates, in or out of prison.

There is nothing rhetorical about my sentiments, I speak from experience. America, my country, deemed an African American fighting for his civil rights as a threat to national security. Then, to fully remind me of my place, my country put me on trial and had to do nothing more than prove that I was black to wrongfully convict me of violating the Espionage Act. What my experiences and those of my fellow, murdered citizens, have in common is that those acts against us were perpetrated in the name of the law and not justice. And that is a history and reality this country refuses to acknowledge; African Americans have always been considered a threat to not only national security, but also a threat to the national well-being of the nation and the law has always been the foundation of that disenfranchisement. We are branded the antithesis of the American Dream. And time immemori-

al, the law has been used as the noose around, and lately epitomized by a knee on the neck of African Americans. True, I still have my life and I feel disgusted even with the possibility of having the thought that “at least I wasn’t killed.” Do I have to feel fortunate that I am still alive, yet trying to pick up the pieces of a shattered life? There is no solace in surviving in a system that continues to suffocate the life out of me, even after the law has had its say. But, I am grateful to be alive. Comparisons made about the destructive nature of official racism in this country on those killed and those who have survived are not generally made as impetus for change, but they should be. It is a sad statement on the sensibilities of this country when the only time there is outcry over racism is when there is a dead body to mourn, of course along with accompanying video.

I therefore find myself echoing Martin Luther King, Jr. in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” when he lamented: “I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action’; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a ‘more convenient season.’ Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.”

The impact of those words on me was pro-





found as I revisited them from prison, but now they are painfully prophetic as a warning that has been ignored. That “shallow understanding” and waiting for a “more convenient season” were championed by the Obama administration’s tactful avoidance of the racial ills of the country. Immersing himself in appeasing terms such as “institutional racism” and “post-racial America” was nothing more than the advancement of the “white moderate” agenda Dr. King warned us about. It was the law and order under the Obama administration that sent me to prison, and that same law felled Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin and many others.

But, whereas Obama empowered it by skirting racial issues, Trump is codifying and encouraging the “white moderate” agenda. Unlike others, Trump is not subtle about the use of law and order. Trump’s callous nature towards African Americans and our fight for freedom and respect has emboldened the white moderate to be comfortable and louder, and far too often deadly in his/her disdain for the non-American-Dream American. His response to the killing of George Floyd and

the continued victimizing of African Americans in this country is to avoid the issues by figuratively and literally, hiding behind the law. There is no “more convenient” season for Trump on racial issues, the matter to him is not up for debate. His threats to invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy active-duty U.S. troops to quell protests in cities across the nation are not motivated by controlling the so-called opportunists, but to restore the “negative peace.” To Trump, the threats to national security are not only the African Americans protesting their treatment at hands of the law, but also anyone who stands with them. And he has full justification in the law as his excuse.

But, where does justice stand in the viewpoint of our law and order nation? We have lived for too long living under and ignoring the insidious peace offered and enforced by the law of “white moderates.” There is no legitimacy for laws and their enforcement if their purpose and use is the disenfranchisement of an entire, meaningful segment of society. If law and order in this country is equated with justice, then Langston Hughes was right when he penned:

*That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise.
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes*

Indeed, George Floyd, Michael Brown and the countless others, including myself, have fallen victim to a system of justice that has been blinded not by the quest for equality, but by the sightlessness of a law and order system and attitude that refuses to see and acknowledge its own injustice.

So, I wonder what is next? That is the same question I had when emerging from prison, it remains the case. With what I've been through, and under the suffering I have felt for those who have been ultimately victimized, I do not find it hard to believe Dr. King that the great stumbling block for African Americans has been and remains the law and order "white moderate." Half-hearted moves of appeasement like banal criminal justice, police, and prison reform have shown their worth to heal for momentary lapses with eye-gouging canned promises of change, but it has never been enough for real, substantive change. There must be meaningful change in the law and its application such that all citizens feel protected and not subject to victimization by it. We must stop empowering and encouraging law enforcement from unilaterally taking on the role of judge, jury, and executioner. I can certainly see the potential good that can come from dismantling or defunding the police, but whatever system that will step in the blighted steps of the police will be no better if its foundation remains the same laws and system that have plagued racial equality in this country. Judges and politicians need to open their eyes to the inequities of a biased system instead of rubber-stamping injustice by hiding behind a broken rule of law. What

is necessary is nothing less than a complete dismantling of an irreparable system of justice. Calls for accountability from our judges, politicians, prosecutors and the police are not enough when that accountability is founded upon a system that is designed to ignore it. If revolution has ever been called for, now is the time. Unlike the white moderate sensibility that sees all protests as violent and detracting from the overall issues (thereby embodying the problem), I know that a bloodless revolution is possible. The peaceful protests demonstrate that the time for change is now.

The American psyche must come out from behind the flag and confront the realities of its quixotic view of the American dream and American justice. Fundamental change such as this cannot be piecemeal, it must be far-reaching and complete. All vestiges of the current system of white moderate law and order must be obliterated. Only then will America live up to its own promise of freedom.

I may be idealistic in what I feel needs to and can happen, but what other choice do I have? What other choice do we have? I want not only mine, but all the suffering I have witnessed to end.

Z

Jeffrey Sterling is a former CIA case officer who was at the Agency, including the Iran Task Force, for nearly a decade. He filed an employment discrimination suit against the CIA, but the case was dismissed as a threat to national security. He served two and a half years in prison after being convicted of violating the Espionage Act. No incriminating evidence was produced at trial and Sterling continues to profess his innocence. His memoir, *Unwanted Spy: The Persecution of an American Whistleblower*, was published in late 2019. Sterling is the coordinator of The Project for Accountability, sponsored by the RootsAction Education Fund. This article is being distributed by ExposeFacts.

Second COVID-19 Wave and the U.S. Economy

By Jack Rasmus



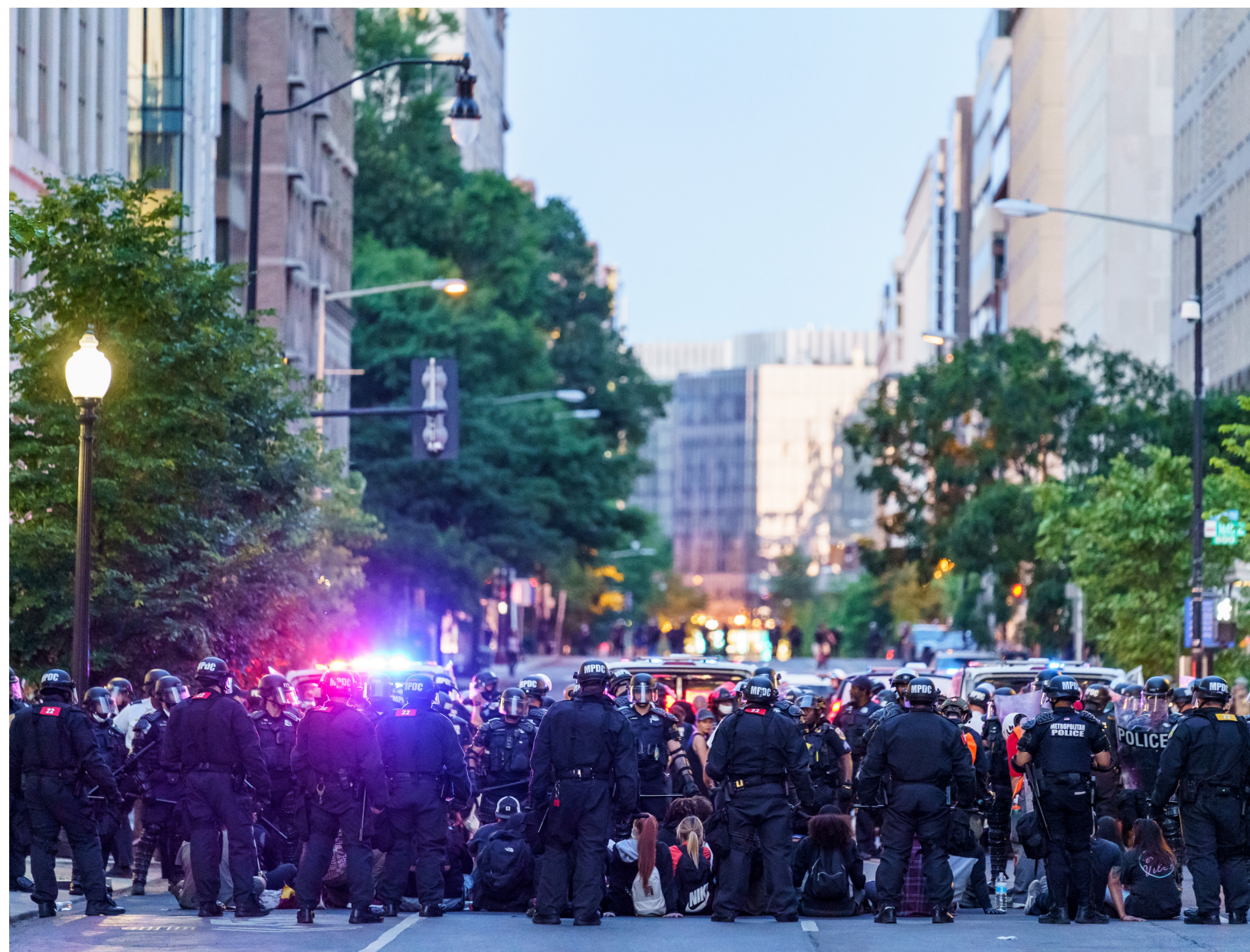
Evidence keeps growing that the U.S. has entered a second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. More than 117,000 Americans thus far have died in just the past 3 months and more than 2.1 million have been infected. That compares to roughly 460,000 and 7.6 million worldwide. With roughly 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. has about 25 percent of the world's virus cases—a testimony to the abject failure of the U.S. to manage the virus.

That failure is perhaps most evident in Trump's virtual withdrawal from the "war"

on the virus and what appears to be his new strategy of letting states deal with it on their own. Trump's government is clearly in retreat, concerned only with one thing: to get Trump re-elected no matter what the cost in lives or economic well-being of American citizens.

Trump's policy boils down to this: totally re-open the economy now, blame the states, World Health Organization and the Chinese for the crisis, declare the rising numbers of infections, hospitalizations, etc. as "fake news," blame a second wave on increased testing, and hold daily mass political rallies from now until November.

Trump's only concern is to hold rallies with his conservative red state base that will exacerbate the contagion effect of the virus. As



President of only the 30 percent (his base), he is little concerned about the country at large or the virus “war” that has already killed more Americans than every U.S. war together since 1945. Trump’s only actual order after he announced the activation of the war production act months ago has been to force meatpacking workers back to work or else forfeit their unemployment benefits. Work or die, will be the legacy of Trump as a “war president.”

Trump’s economic legacy, history will also eventually show, is to have pushed for a premature reopening of the U.S. economy in the middle of the pandemic and a resurgence of virus infections.

Indicators of a second wave in the U.S. are now rising in no fewer than 18 states, most of which are located in the South and Southwest.

Key indicators of a virus re-surge in the U.S.—like hospitalization rates, death rates, and the test positivity rate—are all on the increase throughout those 18 states. In some states, like Arizona, the availability of ICU beds is fast approaching maximum capacity. Texas is now experiencing more than 2,247 new hospitalizations per day, after re-opening its economy on May 1—that’s 7 straight days of rising hospitalizations per day for the state. Florida also experienced a new one day record of more than 1,900 cases. Alabama, Arkansas and South Carolina are all witnessing surging hospitalizations as well, approaching max capacity in ICU beds.

But it’s not just the deep South. West coast states—Nevada, Oregon, Alaska, and others—are recording a new rise in cases, reversing a prior downward trend. That fact suggests what’s going on now is more than just a first wave. What we may now have is a simultaneous extension of the first wave into the red states, as well as an emergence of a second wave congruent with that extension.

Meanwhile, scientists have recently confirmed that the coronavirus has indeed now

mutated, and is potentially five times more contagious.

Congruent Developments Fanning The Second Wave

It is in this general environment that the U.S. is now rushing toward re-opening its economy, especially in the South, Southwest and Mid-west, where a more or less full re-opening is entering its fifth week in some cases. Added to the premature re-opening are public demonstrations against policy brutality that have grown and continue to grow, overlaid on the economic re-opening. Perhaps the biggest factor contributing to the emergence of a second wave, however, has been the lack of public self-discipline in many states, especially the “red” ones where Trump’s political base is concentrated. A rising disregard of social distancing has been the growing norm in many states. It’s not just that many people don’t believe they can catch the virus; it’s also that they just don’t care if they spread it if they do get sick.

Add to all this the example of President Trump, who has announced he now plans to begin holding mass election rallies—thus sending the message to the public it’s okay to engage in mass gatherings. And if they follow Trump’s example, they’ll do so without wearing face masks. As the moronic right wing blogosphere has been saying—and Trump has again picked up—the rising rates of infection are because we’re testing too much. Social distancing may have “flattened the curve” in places like New York City and big urban centers of the Northeast. But the general economic re-opening now underway, the widespread protests and demonstrations against police



Protesting at the White House

Photo by bgrocker/Shutterstock.com

brutality, Trump's personal behavior example to his political base and, probably and most important, the general lack of social discipline by the populace in many regions like the country, have ensured the effects of COVID-19 in the U.S. are now on the rise once again.

And it does not appear any of these sources driving a second wave are about to abate any time soon.

Trump administration key spokespersons, like economic advisor Larry Kudlow and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, have both declared publicly that the U.S. economy will not shut down and shelter in place again a second time. Trump thus has decided to trade tens of thousands of more U.S. lives for the right of business to return to producing revenues and profits.

Nor does it appear Black Lives Matters protestors, mobilizing against decades of intensifying police brutality, will relent in their public demonstrations.

Nor that a majority of residents of the "red" states will finally acknowledge the need for social discipline and social distancing soon by all indicators when the trend is actually opposite.

Nor does it appear Trump is about to reconsider holding mass election rallies, an action that sends a clear message to the rest of the country that it's okay to gather in large groups, to abandon social distancing, and mask wearing.

A second Wave Means W-Shape Economic Stagnation...Or Worse

In short, it is increasingly likely that things are about to get worse in terms of U.S. public health. And as that happens, so too will the U.S. economy experience a further negative impact from the virus. A second wave now emerging means not just a further decline in

public health, but an eventual second wave of problems for the U.S. economy as well.

What a second wave all but ensures is that the U.S. economic recovery will not be V-Shape but a W-Shape; that is, a W-shape recovery characterized by periods of short and shallow GDP growth, followed by brief periodic economic relapses thereafter. These short, shallow recoveries and relapses may repeat and continue for years to come.

Should the economic stress building from weak, short and shallow recoveries—i.e. an extended deep economic stagnation for years to come—result in an inevitable flood of business, local government, and household debt defaults and bankruptcies, it will eventually overwhelm the financial system, and could usher in an economic depression perhaps even worse than the 1930s.

Great Depressions are always the result of mutually amplifying crises in the real and financial sectors of the economy. The current deep contraction of the U.S. economy has yet to experience a subsequent banking-financial system crash. However, the longer the current seriously wounded U.S. economy continues to stagnate, slipping in and out of recessions for years, the more likely it becomes that a wave of business and consumer defaults (i.e. failure to pay interest and principal) on record levels of business-household-local government debt will wash over the economy.

When that happens, banks will have to assume the bad debt of failed companies, households, and local governments on their own bank balance sheets. That freezes up lending to business and households in general. Further mass layoffs then follow. Following the bank lending freeze, the real economy contracts still further as the banking system crashes. A financial crisis converges with the real, deep economic contraction and stagnation already underway. As the two systems—financial and real economy—mutually interact and ampli-

fy each other, the outcome is a descent into a bona fide economic depression.

2008-09 Great Recession & 2020 Briefly Compared

In 2008-09 it was the financial side that crashed first, subsequently dragging down the real economy 5-10 percent for several quarters and producing unemployment rates of 15-20 percent. Thereafter it took six years just to recover the jobs lost in 2008-09 and return to 2007 employment levels. Wages for most working families stagnated or fell for the next decade. Working class family debt ballooned in lieu of real wage gains across all categories—credit cards, autos, mortgage, student debt, installment debt, etc.—to almost \$15 trillion today. In the first three months of the virus, household debt has risen 16 percent more, according to the New York Federal Reserve. Federal Reserve policies of 2008-09 quickly bailed out investors and the banks, but did little for jobs, wage and income levels for workers, and working class living standards in general.

At the same time, corporate profits nearly

tripled from 2009 to 2019. Corporate America, in turn, awarded its shareholders nicely. Stock buybacks and dividend payouts under Obama averaged more than \$800 billion a year from 2009 through 2016. Trump added a further \$3.4 trillion in just 3 years. That's a total of more than \$10 trillion of income and wealth distributed to shareholders in a decade. In contrast to wage stagnation and decline for the bottom 80 percent of U.S. households.

This time, in 2020, the causal relationships between the two sectors—real and financial—are reversed. This time it's a crash of the real side of the economy, at least four times worse than that which occurred in 2008-09.

In 2008-09 it was the financial crash that precipitated, accelerated and deepened the real economic contraction. Today in 2020, the causal relation is reversed, and may prove worse. The real economy contraction and extended stagnation may precipitate a financial crisis which, in turn, could feedback further on the real economy and cause an even deeper and longer contraction. Mutual feedback historically always leads to a great depression. It doesn't matter which precipitates which. The mutual negative interaction is the key determinant that drives the depression.

In just the first wave of COVID-19, from



late February through May 2020, working class households lost more than \$1 trillion net in wage income—even after \$500 billion in expanded unemployment benefits and government stimulus checks are factored in. In contrast, corporations were provided since March with \$1.7 trillion in loans and grants plus another \$650 billion in further business tax cuts under the March 2020 CARES Act. And the Federal Reserve has provided another \$3.3 trillion in loans to banks, to corporations, and to investors as well. That's a 10 to 1 ratio: more than \$5.5 trillion to business and only \$500 billion to the rest. Most of the subsidy to business is being hoarded, moreover; whereas, most of the \$500 billion has been already spent. Neither provide any further real stimulus to the economy in the second half of 2020.

In the second wave on the horizon, moreover, more of the same is yet to come, as it appears likely Congress, in its forthcoming HEROES Act, will discontinue the March 2020 unemployment benefits extension that expires the end of July; will refuse to provide further income supplement checks; and will instead use the “savings” from such programs to provide direct wage subsidies to business. By some estimates, the government (and thus the taxpayer) plans to subsidize business further by providing a wage subsidy of up to 85 percent of wages that were previously paid by businesses to their employees. In short, instead of unemployment benefits to workers, it will be wage payment subsidies to businesses.

The Great Capitalist Experiment: Pre-Bail Out the System

So far the Fed has staved off a banking crash by pumping \$3.3 trillion into bankers and investors, in effect preemptively bailing them out before a crash actually occurs. Congress

has provided another \$1.7 trillion so far to pre-bailout the non-banking side of the business economy with loans and free grants, plus another \$650 billion business-investor tax cuts. The Fed has promised even more “free money” to banks and businesses. And Congress has signaled it is prepared to provide still more to business—if not to workers, consumers, and state and local governments.

Capitalism in the U.S. today is engaged in a massive subsidization of capitalism itself on a grand scale never experienced or even envisioned before. It is flooding the system with free money and liquidity (loans, grants, tax cuts, QE, corporate bond purchases, etc.) in an attempt to prevent another “great recession” of 2008-09 that would prove to be an even “greater recession of 2020-21”—or perhaps morph into the first Great Depression of the 21st century.

The COVID-19 effect, whether first or second wave, is not the sole factor driving the economy and the current economic crisis. Forces have now set in motion a continuing economic crisis, virus or no virus. It's just a matter of time and place before the economic crisis enters a new and even more unstable phase.

It's not a COVID-19 economy. It's a capitalist economy, the instability of which has been rendered even more unstable by the current COVID-19 health crisis. And that instability is not going away should the virus disappear which, of course, is not about to happen either. **Z**

Dr. Jack Rasmus is author of the recently published book, *The Scourge of Neoliberalism: US Economic Policy from Reagan to Trump*, Clarity Press, January 2020. He blogs at jackrasmus.com and hosts the weekly radio show, *Alternative Visions*. His twitter handle is @drjackrasmus.

As US protests show, the challenge is how to rise above the violence inherent in state power

By Jonathan Cook



Here is one thing I can write with an unusual degree of certainty and confidence: Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin would not have been charged with the murder of George Floyd had the United States not been teetering on a knife edge of open revolt.

Had demonstrators not turned out in massive numbers on the streets and refused to be corralled back home by the threat of police violence, the U.S. legal system would have simply turned a blind eye to Chauvin's act of extreme brutality, as it has done before over countless similar acts.

Without the mass protests, it would have made no difference that Floyd's murder was caught on camera, that it was predicted by Floyd himself in his cries of "I can't breathe" as Chauvin spent nearly nine minutes pressing his knee to Floyd's neck, or that the outcome was obvious to spectators who expressed their growing alarm as Floyd lost consciousness. At most, Chauvin would have had to face, as he had many times before, an ineffectual disciplinary investigation over "misconduct."

Without the current ferocious mood of anger directed at the police and sweeping much of the nation, Chauvin would have found himself as immune from accountability and prosecution as so many police officers before him who gunned down or lynched black citizens.

Instead he is the first white police officer in the state of Minnesota ever to be criminally charged over the death of a black man. After initially arguing that there were mitigating factors to be considered, prosecutors hurriedly changed course to declare Chauvin's indictment the fastest they had ever initiated. Then Minneapolis's police chief was forced to call the other three officers who stood by as Floyd was murdered in front of them "complicit."



Photo by bgrocker/Shutterstock.com

The violent attacks by police suggest that it is Chauvin's murder of their number—that has incited their violence



on protesters, including the use of vehicles for rammings, murder charge—not the slow, barbaric murder of Floyd by one licensed fellow officers. They expect continuing impunity for

Confrontation, not contrition

If the authorities' placatory indictment of Chauvin—on the least serious charge they could impose, based on incontrovertible evidence they could not afford to deny—amounts to success, then it is only a little less depressing than failure.

Worse still, though most protesters are trying to keep their demonstrations nonviolent, many of the police officers dealing with the protests look far readier for confrontation than contrition. The violent attacks by police on protesters, including the use of vehicles for rammings, suggest that it is Chauvin's murder charge—not the slow, barbaric murder of Floyd by one of their number—that has incensed fellow officers. They expect continuing impunity for their violence.

Similarly, the flagrant mistreatment by police of corporate media outlets simply for reporting developments, from the arrest of a CNN crew to physical assaults on BBC staff, underlines the sense of grievance harbored by many police officers when their culture of violence is exposed for all the world to see. They are not reeling it in, they are widening the circle of "enemies."

Nonetheless, it is entirely wrong to suggest, as a *New York Times* editorial did, that police impunity can be largely ascribed to "powerful unions" shielding officers from investigation and punishment. The editorial board needs to go back to school. The issues currently being exposed to the harsh glare of daylight get to the heart of what modern states are there to do—matters rarely discussed outside of political theory classes.

Right to bear arms

The success of the modern state, like the monarchies of old, rests on the public's consent, explicit or otherwise, to its monopoly of violence. As citizens, we give up what was once deemed an inherent or "natural" right to commit violence ourselves and replace it with a social contract in which our representatives legislate supposedly neutral, just laws on our behalf. The state invests the power to enforce those laws in a supposedly disciplined, benevolent police force—there to "protect and serve"—while a dispassionate court system judges suspected violators of those laws.

That is the theory, anyway.

In the case of the United States, the state's monopoly on violence has been muddled by a constitutional "right to bear arms," although, of course, the historic purpose of that right was to ensure that the owners of land and slaves could protect their "property." Only white men were supposed to have the right to bear arms.

Today, little has changed substantively, as should be obvious the moment we consider what would have happened had it been black militia that recently protested the COVID-19 lockdown by storming the Michigan state capitol, venting their indignation in the faces of white police officers.

(In fact, the U.S. authorities' reaction to the Black Panthers movement through the late 1960s and 1970s is salutary enough for anyone who wishes to understand how dangerous it is for a black man to bear arms in his own defense against the violence of white men.)

Brutish violence

The monopoly of violence by the state is justified because most of us have supposedly consented to it in an attempt to avoid a Hobbesian world of brutish violence where individuals, families and tribes enforce their



WE WON'T
BE
SILENT

own, less disinterested versions of justice.

But of course the state system is not as neutral or dispassionate as it professes, or as most of us assume. Until the struggle for universal suffrage succeeded—a practice that in all western states can be measured in decades, not centuries—the state was explicitly there to uphold the interests of a wealthy elite, a class of landed gentry and newly emerging

industrialists, as well as a professional class that made society run smoothly for the benefit of that elite.

What was conceded to the working class was the bare minimum to prevent them from rising up against the privileges enjoyed by the rest of society.

That was why, for example, Britain did not have universal health care—the National



Health Service—until after the Second World War, 30 years after men received the vote and 20 years after women won the same right. Only after the war did the British establishment start to fear that a newly empowered working class—of returning soldiers who knew how to bear arms, backed by women who had been released from the home to work on the land or in munitions factories to replace the departed

men—might no longer be willing to accept a lack of basic health care for themselves and their loved ones.

It was in this atmosphere of an increasingly organized and empowered labor movement—reinforced by the need to engineer more consumerist societies to benefit newly emerging corporations—that European social democracy was born. (Paradoxically, the post-war U.S.





Marshall Plan helped subsidize the emergence of Europe's major social democracies, including their public health care systems, even as similar benefits were denied domestically to Americans.)

Creative legal interpretations

To maintain legitimacy for the state's monopoly on violence, the legal establishment has had to follow the same minimalist balancing act as the political establishment.

The courts cannot simply rationalize and justify the implicit and sometimes explicit use

of violence in law enforcement without regard to public sentiment. Laws are amended, but equally significantly they are creatively interpreted by judges so that they fit the ideological and moral fashions and prejudices of the day, to ensure the public feels justice is being done.

In the main, however, we the public have a very conservative understanding of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, which has been shaped for us by a corporate media that both creates and responds to those fashions and trends to ensure that the current system continues undisturbed, allowing for the ever-greater accumulation of wealth by an elite.

That is why so many of us are viscerally appalled by looting on the streets by poor people, but reluctantly accept as a fact of life the much larger intermittent looting of our taxes, of our banks, of our homes by the state to bail out a corporate elite that cannot manage the economy it created.

Again, the public's deference to the system is nurtured to ensure it does not rise up.

Muscle on the street

But the legal system doesn't just have a mind; it has muscle too. Its front-line enforcers, out on the street, get to decide who is a criminal suspect, who is dangerous or subversive, who needs to be deprived of their liberty, and who is going to have violence inflicted upon them. It is the police that initially determine who spends time in a jail cell and who comes before a court. And in some cases, as in George Floyd's, it is the police that decide who is going to be summarily executed without a trial or a jury.

The state would prefer, of course, that police officers don't kill unarmed citizens in the street—and even more so that they don't carry out such acts in full view of witnesses and on camera, as Chauvin did. The state's objections are not primarily ethical. State bureaucracies are not overly invested in matters beyond the need to maintain external and internal security: defending the borders from outside threats, and ensuring internal legitimacy through the cultivation of citizens' consent.

But the issue of for whom and for what the state keeps its territory safe has become harder to conceal over time. Nowadays, the state's political processes and its structures have been almost completely captured by corporations. As a result, the maintenance of internal and external security is less about ensuring an orderly and safe existence for citizens than

about creating a stable territorial platform for globalized businesses to plunder local resources, exploit local labor forces and generate greater profits by transforming workers into consumers.

Increasingly, the state has become a hollowed-out vessel through which corporations order their business agendas. States function primarily now to compete with each other in a battle to minimize the obstacles facing global corporations as they seek to maximize their wealth and profits in each state's territory. The state's role is to avoid getting in the way of corporations as they extract resources (deregulation), or, when this capitalist model regularly collapses, come to the aid of the corporations with more generous bailouts than rival states.

Murder could prove a spark

This is the political context for understanding why Chauvin is that very rare example of a white police officer facing a murder charge for killing a black man.

Chauvin's gratuitous and incendiary murder of Floyd—watched by any American with a screen, and with echoes of so many other recent cases of unjustifiable police brutality against black men, women and children—is the latest spark that risks lighting a conflagration.

In the heartless, amoral calculations of the state, the timing of Chauvin's very public act of barbarity could not have been worse. There were already rumblings of discontent over federal and state authorities' handling of the new virus; fears over the catastrophic consequences for the U.S. economy; outrage at the inequity—yet again—of massive bailouts for the biggest corporations but paltry help for ordinary workers; and the social and personal frustrations caused by lockdown.

There is also a growing sense that the political class, Republican and Democrat alike, has grown sclerotic and unresponsive to the plight of ordinary Americans—an impression only underscored by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For all these reasons, and many others, people were ready to take to the streets. Floyd's murder gave them the push.

The need for loyal police

In these circumstances, Chauvin had to be charged, even if only in the hope of assuaging that anger, of providing a safety valve releasing some of the discontent.

But charging Chauvin is no simple matter either. To ensure its survival, the state needs to monopolize violence and internal security, to maintain its exclusive definition of what constitutes order, and to keep the state as a safe territorial platform for business. The alternative is the erosion of the nation state's authority, and the possibility of its demise.

This was the rationale behind Donald Trump's notorious tweet—censored by Twitter for “glorifying violence”—that warned: “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” Not surprisingly, he invoked the words of a racist Miami police chief, Walter Headley, who threatened violence against the African-American community in the late 1960s. At the time Headley additionally stated: “There's no communication with them except force.”

Trump may be harking back to an ugly era of what was once called “race relations,” but the sentiment lies at the heart of the state's mission.

The state needs its police forces loyal and ready to use violence. It cannot afford discontent in the ranks, or that sections of the police corps no longer identify their own interests

with the state's. The state dares not alienate police officers for fear that, when they are needed most, during times of extreme dissent like now, they will not be there—or worse still, that they will have joined the dissenters.

As noted, elements in the police are already demonstrating their disenchantment over Chauvin's indictment as well as their sense of grievance against the media—bolstered by Donald Trump's regular verbal assaults on journalists. That sentiment helps to explain the unprecedented attacks by the police on reliably compliant major media outlets covering the protests.

Ideological twins

The need to keep the security forces loyal is why the state fosters a sense of separateness between the police and those sections of the populace that it defines as potentially threatening order, thereby uniting more privileged segments of society in fear and hostility.

The state cultivates in the police and sections of the public a sense that police violence is legitimate by definition when it targets individuals or groups it portrays as threatening or subversive. It also encourages the view that the police enjoy impunity a priori in such cases because they alone can decide what constitutes a menace to society (shaped, of course, by popular discourses promoted by the state and the corporate media).

“Threat” is defined as any dissent against the existing order, whether it is a black man answering back and demonstrating “attitude,” or mass protests against the system, including against police violence. In this way, the police and the state are ideological twins. The state approves whatever the police do; while the police repress whatever the state defines as a threat. If it is working effec-



tively, state-police violence becomes a circular, self-rationalizing system.

Throwing the protests a bone

Charging Chauvin risks disrupting that system, creating a fault line between the state and the police, one of the state's most essential agencies. Which is why the charging of a police officer in these circumstances is such an exceptional event, and has been dictated by the current exceptional outpouring of anger.

Prosecutors are trying to find a delicate compromise between two conflicting demands: between the need to reassure the police that their violence is always legitimate (carried out "in the line of duty") and the need to stop the popular wave of anger escalating to a point

where the existing order might break down. In these circumstances, Chauvin needs to be charged but with the least serious indictment possible—given the irrefutable evidence presented in the video—in the hope that, once the current wave of anger has subsided, he can be found not guilty; or if found guilty, given a lenient sentence; or if sentenced more harshly, pardoned.

Chauvin's indictment is like throwing a chewed-dry bone to a hungry dog, from the point of view of the state authorities. It is an act of parsimonious appeasement, designed to curb non-state violence or the threat of such violence.

The indictment is not meant to change a police culture—or an establishment one—that presents black men as an inherent threat to order. It will not disrupt regulatory and legal systems that are wedded to the view that



(white, conservative) police officers are on the front line defending civilizational values from (black or leftwing) “lawbreakers.” And it will not curtail the state’s commitment to ensuring that the police enjoy impunity over their use of violence.

Change is inevitable

A healthy state—committed to the social contract—would be capable of finding ways to accommodate discontent before it reaches the level of popular revolt. The scenes playing out across the U.S. are evidence that state institutions, captured by corporate money, are increasingly incapable of responding to demands for change. The hollowed-out state represents not its citizens, who are capable of compromise, but the interests of global forces of capital that care little what takes place on the streets of Minneapolis or New York so long as the corporations can continue to accumulate wealth and power.

Why would we expect these global forces to be sensitive to popular unrest in the U.S. when they have proven entirely insensitive to the growing signals of distress from the planet, as its life-support systems recalibrate for our pillage and plunder in ways we will struggle to survive as a species?

Why would the state not block the path to peaceful change, knowing it excels in the use of violence, when it blocks the path to reform that might curb the corporate assault on the environment?

These captured politicians and officials—on the “left” and right—will continue fanning the flames, stoking the fires, as Barack Obama’s former national security adviser Susan Rice did when she denied the evidence of police violence shown on Youtube and the very real distress of an underclass abandoned by the political class when she suggested that the pro-

tests were being directed from the Kremlin.

This kind of bipartisan denial of reality only underscores how quickly we are entering a period of crisis and revolt. From the G8 protests, to the Occupy movement, to Extinction Rebellion, to the schools protests, to the Yellow Vests, to the current fury on U.S. streets, there is evidence all around that the center is struggling to maintain its hold. The U.S. imperial project is overstretched, the global corporate elite is over-extended, living on credit, resources are depleting, the planet is recalibrating. Something will have to give.

The challenge to the protesters—either those on the streets now or those who follow in their wake—is how to surmount the state’s violence and how to offer a vision of a different, more hopeful future that restores the social contract.

Lessons will be learned through protest, defiance and disobedience, not in a courtroom where a police officer stands trial as an entire political and economic system is allowed to carry on with its crimes. **Z**

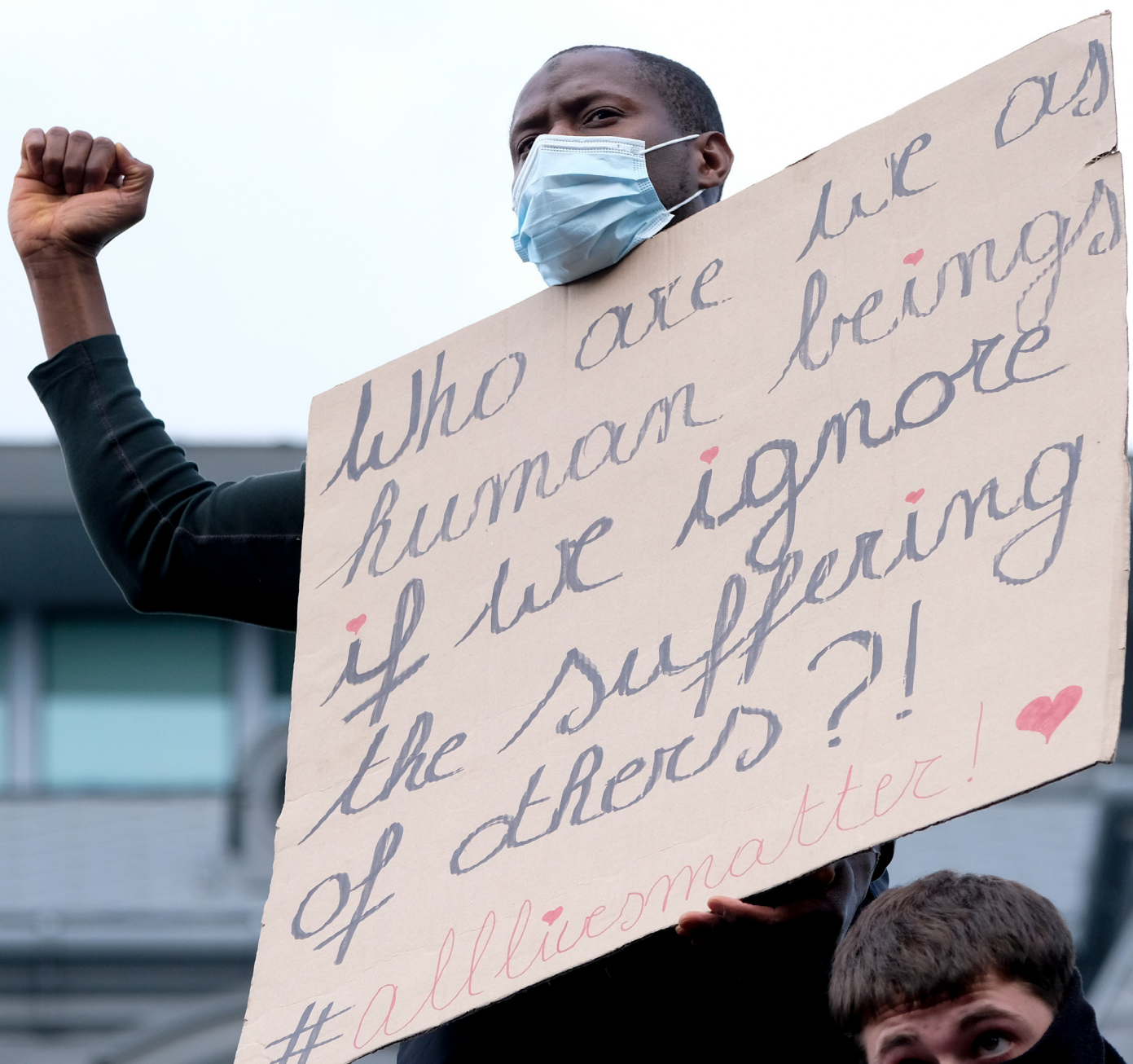
This essay first appeared on Jonathan Cook’s blog: <https://www.jonathan-cook.net/blog/>

Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His books include *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net.

Black Lives and the Green New Deal

By Jeremy Brecher





We are in the midst of the largest mass uprising in half a century. It is a response to the killing of an unarmed Black man named George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. But it challenges a pattern of Black oppression that goes far beyond one cop killing one Black person, indeed, far beyond the issues of police abuse of the Black community.

Racial inequality reaches every dimension of American life. Median household income is 70 percent higher for whites than for Blacks. White families have five times the liquid as-

sets of Blacks. Inequality in health, housing, education, and longevity is comparably extreme. This deadly inequality has been compounded in the COVID-19 era. Black people are dying at nearly twice the American average. As of April more than half of the adult Black population was unemployed. ("Analysis: George Floyd, coronavirus and inequality stealing Black lives," Center for Public Integrity, June 5, 2020. <https://publicintegrity.org/inequality-poverty-opportunity/george-floyd-coronavirus-and-the-inequality-steal->

ing-black-lives/)

Systematic discrimination against African Americans goes back to slavery. The abolition of slavery did not free African Americans, or other Black Americans, from systemic domination and exploitation—it continued as subjugation to racial terrorism, lynch law, poverty, and discrimination in jobs, education, housing, and every other sphere of life. And it was not ended by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s—indeed, even those gains have been rolled back in the Trump era.

Racial inequality is part of the broader picture of inequality in America. The richest 400 Americans own more of the country's wealth than the bottom 60 percent of the population, and their share has tripled over the past 40 years. (Christopher Ingraham, "'Wealth Concentration Returning to Levels Last Seen during the Roaring Twenties,' According to New Research," *Washington Post*, February 8, 2019." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2019/02/08/wealth-concentration-returning-levels-last-seen-during-roaring-twenties-according-new-research/>). Fighting racial inequality benefits everyone in the 99%. The uprising against racial domination provides an opportunity to challenge the broader domination of all working people by the tiny minority we are all forced directly to work for.

How can a movement that starts with street protests against a police killing become the means to dismantle systematic racial inequality and injustice? That is a question that will have to be answered by the evolving action of millions of people. To probe that question, let's look at an example of a pathway that might lead from today's uprising to the replacement of today's system of racial domination with a society of equals.

People's Budget—LA

On May 24, 2020 more than 3,000 Los Angeles residents took part in an online "participatory budgeting process" organized by the People's Budget Coalition convened by Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles. ("The People's Budget: Los Angeles 2020-2021" https://peoplesbudgetla.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/peoplesbudgetreport_may26.pdf) Based on previous research and surveys, they developed an alternative budget that radically reversed the city's priorities. It allocated 44 percent of the city's budget to Universal Aid and Crisis Management; 26 percent to the Built Environment; and 24 percent to Reimagined Community Safety. It allocated 6 percent to Law Enforcement and Police—about one-tenth of the 54 percent in the city's proposed budget. It happened to be the day before George Floyd was murdered.

The uprising in the days that followed Floyd's killing was massive. An estimated 3,000 people were arrested in Los Angeles County. (James Queally, Ben Welsh, "Arrests during George Floyd protests swell to near 3,000 in L.A. County; many are locals," *LA Times*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-02/george-floyd-protests-los-angeles-arrests-locals>) The People's Budget proposal to reallocate funds from the police to community needs was a widespread demand. Actions included rallies outside the mayor's home calling for such a change. Although he had previously added \$600 million to the police budget, the Mayor unexpectedly announced he would now cut the department by more than \$100 million. (Jack Brewster, "LA Mayor Slashes LAPD Budget As Calls To 'Defund Police' Slowly Pick Up Steam" *Forbes*, June 4, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackbrewster/2020/06/04/la-mayor-slashes-lapd-budget-as-calls-to-defund-police-slowly-pick-up-steam/#3e75c86b1ba3>)

There is more to the People's Budget LA than just "defunding" the police. It lays out detailed plans to transform life in the city. Its top priority is "Universal Aid and Crisis Management." In the short term that means meeting basic needs like housing, food, healthcare, economic assistance and emergency relief. Longer term it involves "long-term housing, renter support and emergency housing, food assistance, support for those seeking work, support for small businesses, providing public health care, offering youth development programs and supporting youth centers, fighting the impacts of climate change and ensuring our city's environment is protected." It also invests in physical infrastructure like "public transportation, libraries, parks, public works and the fire department."

The People's Budget LA aims for "reimagining community safety" without law enforcement intervention. Communities would determine what they need to be safe, such as family counseling, restorative justice programs, reparations to victims and their families, community-led crisis response programs, gang prevention/intervention/recovery without police involvement, and domestic violence prevention/intervention/recovery without police involvement.

A Platform for Black Lives

Defunding the police and using the money to fund community needs has rapidly emerged as a core demand of the Black Lives Matter uprising that has spread over the last two weeks to hundreds of cities in every state in America. A petition circulated by the Movement for Black Lives and more than 100 other black rights organizations asks local officials to:

1. Vote no on all increases to police budgets
2. Vote yes to decrease police spending and budgets
3. Vote yes to increase spending on health care, education and community programs that keep us safe. ("SIGN: Celebrities & Community Are Calling to Defund the Police and Invest in Black Communities." <https://www.defendingblacklives.org/defund-police-sign-on/>)

In New York City, 48 city council candidates are calling for a \$1 billion cut to the NYPD's \$6 billion budget over 4 years to help fund programs like summer employment for youth. Minneapolis, Dallas, Philadelphia, Nashville, and are witnessing similar campaigns—and the number is growing every day. (Jack Brewster. <http://19thwardchicago.blogspot.com/2020/06/defund-policewhat-great-way-to-cut-taxes.html>) Most dramatically, following calls from activists to "defund the police," the Minneapolis City Council voted to disband its police department and invest in community-based public safety.

The call to "defund the police" is only one piece of a far wider comprehensive program advocated by the Movement for Black Lives. ("Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform." <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/>) The Movement for Black Lives had its origin in 2016, when 50 organizations that had been involved with the Black Lives Matter uprising issued a Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform that included scores of concrete proposals to reverse structural inequality. (Jeremy Brecher, "The Living Legacy of Black Lives Matter," *Labor Network for Sustainability*, June 3, 2020. <https://www.labor4sustainability.org/strike/the-living-legacy-of-blacklives-matter/>) Its "Economic Justice" program, for



example, calls for:

- A progressive restructuring of tax codes at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth.
- Federal and state job programs that specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people. Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community.
- A right to restored land, clean air, clean water and housing and an end to the exploitative privatization of natural resources—including land and water. We seek democratic control over how resources are preserved, used and distributed and do so while honoring and respecting the rights of our Indigenous family.
- The right for workers to organize in public and private sectors.
- Financial support of Black alternative institutions including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, residential, etc.), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of our communities.
- A progressive restructuring of tax codes at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth.
- A constitutional right at the state and federal level to a fully-funded education which includes a clear articulation of the right to: a free education for all, special protections for queer and trans students, wrap around services, social workers, free health services (including reproductive body autonomy), a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses students' material and cultural needs, physical activity and recreation, high quality food, free daycare, and freedom from unwarranted search, seizure or arrest.
- A divestment from industrial multinational use of fossil fuels and investment in community-based sustainable energy solutions.
- A cut in military expenditures and a reallocation of those funds to invest in domestic infrastructure and community well-being.

And its “Invest-Divest” program calls for:

- A reallocation of funds at the federal, state and local level from policing and incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to long-term safety strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs.
- Real, meaningful, and equitable universal health care that guarantees: proximity to nearby comprehensive health centers,

culturally competent services for all people, specific services for queer, gender nonconforming, and trans people, full bodily autonomy, full reproductive services, mental health services, paid parental leave, and comprehensive quality child and elder care.

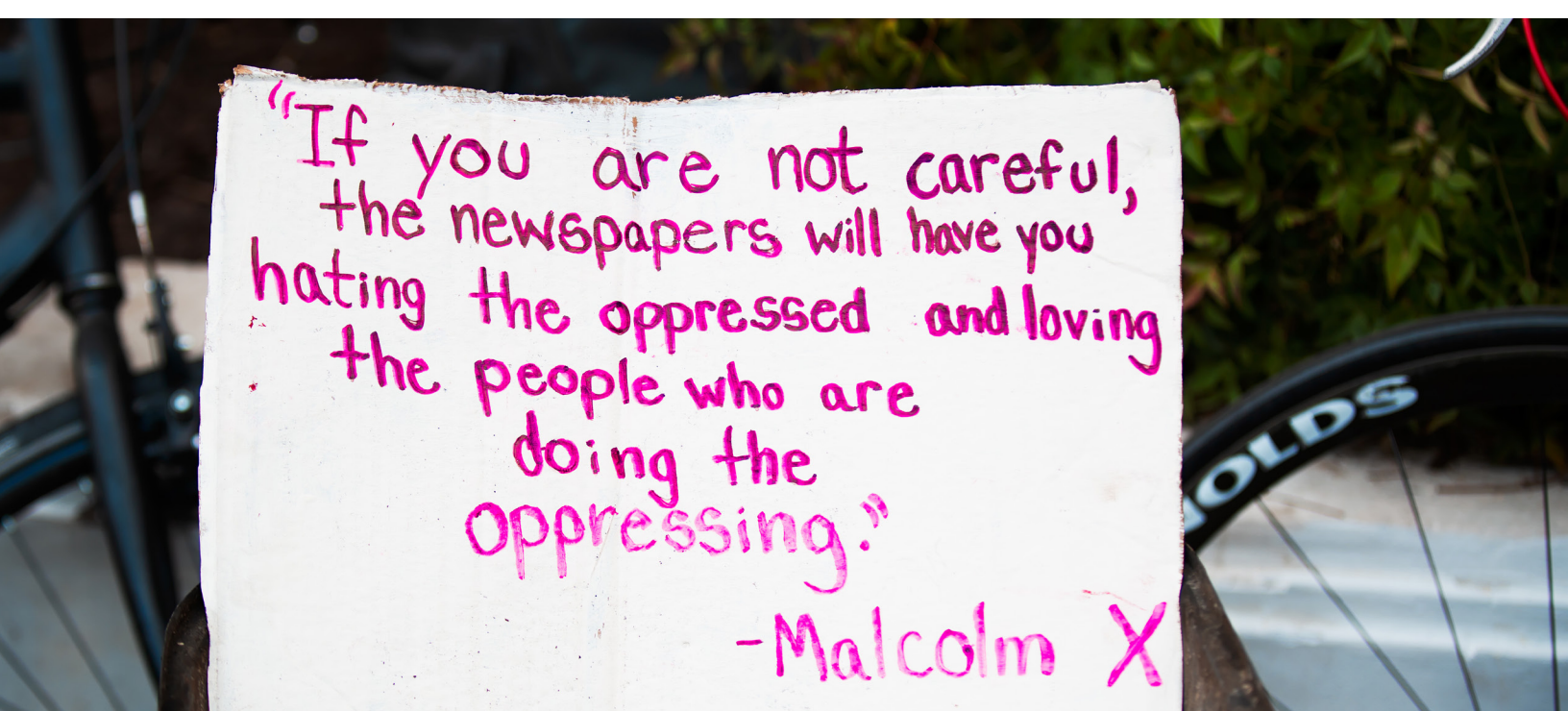
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Transforming the position of Black Americans in American society requires systemic changes in the American economy. These programs spell out the kinds of changes that must happen if we are to truly ensure that Black lives matter.

Black Lives and the Green New Deal

The Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform is strikingly similar to the goals laid out in the Green New Deal resolution submitted last year by Representative Ocasio-Cor-

Photo by Jo
cloud/Shutt



"If you are not careful,
the newspapers will have you
hating the oppressed and loving
the people who are
doing the
oppressing."

-Malcolm X

Johnny Silver-
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tez and Senator Ed Markey. That relationship is made explicit in a recent statement by the Movement for Black Lives which demanded

A Green New Deal that advances comprehensive structural reform toward national climate resiliency and preparedness; ensures public control of key industries, utilities, and natural resources; and catalyzes people-oriented public spending that transforms the national economy to one that is just, equitable, and sustainable. (Movement for Black Lives, "National Demands for CPVOD-19," p. 14. <https://m4bl.org/covid-19-platform/>)

The Green New Deal Resolution lists 5 goals to be accomplished through a 10-year national mobilization:

- Achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers;
- Create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all;
- invest in the infrastructure and industry to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century;
- secure clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment for all for generations to come; and

- promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous communities, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth." ("House Resolution Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal" <https://cleantechnica.com/2019/02/08/heres-the-full-text-of-congress-green-new-deal-resolution-introduced-by-rep-alexandra-ocasio-cortez/>)

The People's Budget transfer of funds from policing to community needs might be a starting point for realizing the broader goals of the Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform and the Green New Deal. And the Green New Deal may be a vehicle for building the broad movement for structural change necessary to truly make Black lives matter.

