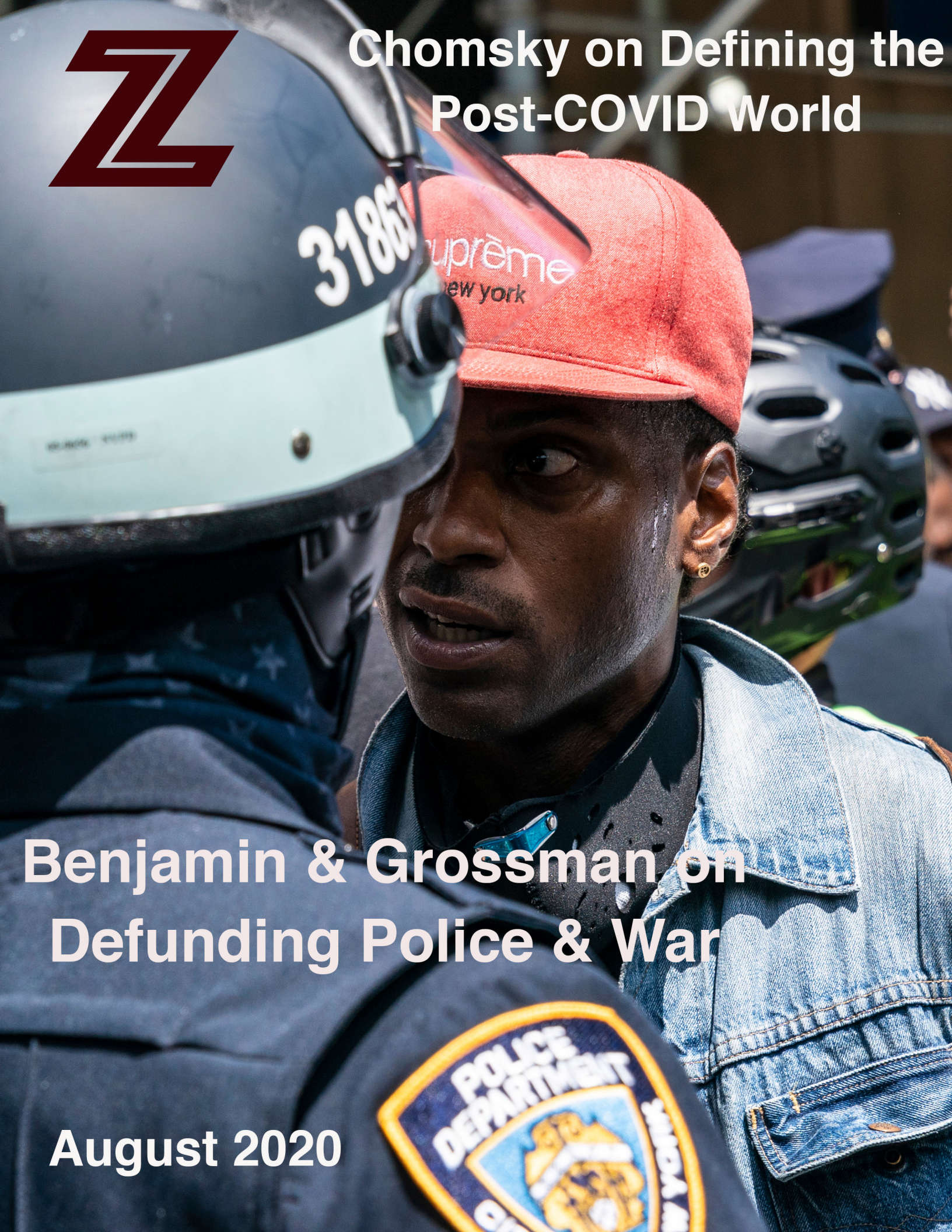




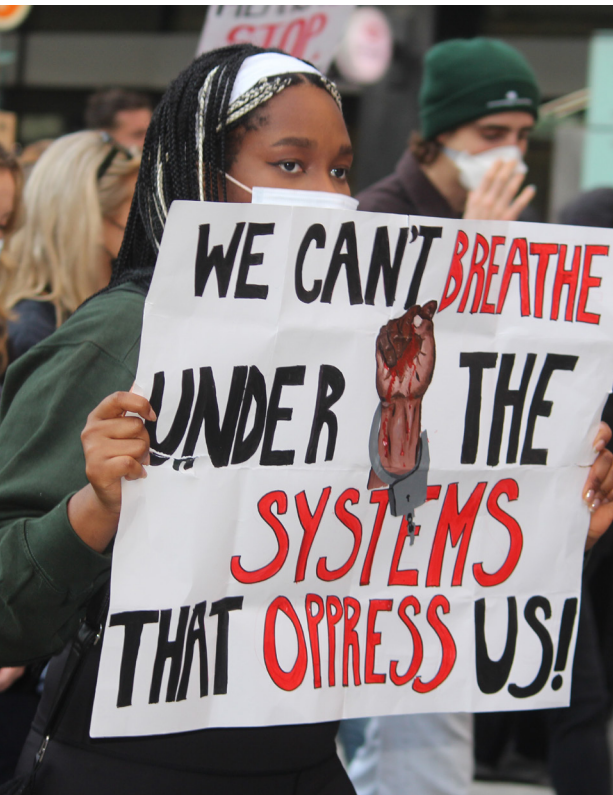
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August 2020



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Trump's "Plan" Is Simply to Make the Virus and Its Casualties Disappear

By Sonali Kolhatkar

When schoolchildren across the United States began their summer break, President Donald

Trump had more than two months to bring the coronavirus crisis under control in time for schools to reopen for the fall. But, instead of tackling the virus's spread head-on, he did what most observers expected of him: he politicized the pandemic and acted as though he were the sole victim of the virus. If Trump's message can be distilled into a single idea, it is that if we simply do not acknowledge that the virus is ravaging the nation, we can go about with business as usual and re-elect Trump in November.

Unfortunately for Trump, that plan is so far not quite

working, and even pollsters biased in his favor are showing a grim election outcome for the president. But Trump's loss is not necessarily our gain. Americans are dying from the coronavirus at a rate not seen in any other part of the world. The *Washington Post* points out that, "If you adjust per capita, then, Florida's outbreak is currently about 70 times worse than that of the worst-hit country in Europe."

The most infuriating aspect of the American response to the coronavirus is that other nations have clearly laid out a common sense strategy that



has worked so much better for them—enabling them to return to as much of a pre-pandemic “normal” as is possible under the circumstances. A prime example is Germany, where schools have been partially open with some online and some in-person instruction and remain responsive to outbreaks that may occur.

Jens Spahn, Germany’s federal minister of health, explained that the country’s robust health care system is a large part of the nation’s success story, saying, “the German health-care system was in good shape going into the crisis; everyone has had full access to medical care. This is a merit not just of the current government but of a system that was built over the course of many governments.” Contrast this with the United States, where there is no actual health care that covers everyone. Instead, there are patchwork systems that are linked to age, disability, income, and employment. It is no wonder then that health outcomes depend on many of the same factors.

Like the United States, Germany had the advantage of time in preparing for the pandemic in February and March as it spread like wildfire through Wuhan, China, and then Italy, offering cautionary lessons. Unlike the United States, Germany’s central

government actually mobilized its laboratories to begin producing tests at a rapid rate. Under Trump’s oversight, the United States’ failure to do the same has been deemed “tragic.” As far back as March of this year, reports point out that the White House’s coronavirus task force, “typically devoted only five or 10 minutes, often at the end of contentious meetings, to talk about testing.”

Germany’s health minister explained, “Extensive testing is like pointing a flashlight in the dark: without it, you can see only shades of grey; but with it, you can see details clearly and immediately. And when it comes to a disease outbreak, you can’t control what you can’t see.” Trump realized this, and because he has no intention of controlling the virus, he railed against seeing it—openly. At his first political rally since the pandemic began, he told his adoring supporters, “I said to my people, ‘Slow the testing down please.’” Later he explained that he wasn’t kidding.

Spahn spoke of the need for public trust, saying, “it is critical that governments inform the public not just about what they know, but also about what they do not know. That is the only way to build the trust needed to fight a lethal virus in a dem-

ocratic society.” But the United States’ right-wing media industry and profit-driven social media platforms have built themselves on selling mistrust through conspiracy-laden clickbait. Trump has built his presidency on lies. It is no wonder that in the moment when the ability to tell fact from fiction was needed the most, the United States has spectacularly failed.

“In Germany, we have succeeded in slowing the spread of the virus because the vast majority of citizens want to cooperate, out of a sense of responsibility for themselves and others,” said Spahn. Contrast that with the United States, where right-wing ideology is based on selfishness, individual “liberties,” white supremacy, and an unfounded fear of “government tyranny.” The internet is full of viral videos of Americans refusing to wear masks in grocery stores or at the dentist’s office—not because they necessarily disagree with the protection it offers to everyone, but because they do not like being told what to do.

Germany’s example illustrates that the infrastructure and approach needed to fight the virus is directly at odds with the rightward march in America. Our failure in managing to fight the virus began not in March, but back in Ronald Reagan’s presidency.

Trump's presidency was just the latest—perhaps mortal—wound in America's self-inflicted death by a thousand cuts.

We ought to be outraged over what Trump and America's right wing have wrought. But three and a half years of relentless outrage has left us weary and numb to the horrors of Trumpism. Only a handful of prominent figures

are calling on Trump to resign, including his own niece. Contrast that with the chorus of demands for resignations from the Republican Party aimed at Barack Obama's administration over various feigned outrages.

If something positive is to emerge from this ghoulish nightmare of deliberately enabling mass deaths, it ought to be a final nail in the coffin

of American conservatism. A public health crisis cannot be fought with rugged individualism. While many Americans now say they regret voting for Trump in 2016, the more important mass regret ought to be over decades of conservative policies that stood in the way of tackling real crises and decimating existing public services. The death of Trump's career needs



to coincide with the death of Trumpism as a whole.

Trump's plan for the coronavirus is to have no plan because to a significant percentage of Americans, having a plan would be akin to tyranny. So, if there is a plan, it is to make the virus go away—not in reality but from our view. Trump has repeatedly told Americans that the virus would simply go away—like magic. Now, he has even taken steps to control hospital data on the virus, just like the sleight of hand that a magician requires in order to perform an illusion. The trick is to manage the illusion until the November election. Perhaps Americans—with all our lives at stake—can instead make Trump and Trumpism vanish in November as the first step in a long-overdue remaking of America. **Z**

This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

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An Ultimate Meaning of the Bernie 2020 Campaign: "Not Him. Us."

By Norman Solomon

“Eugene V. Debs is Bernie Sanders’ political hero,” the *Washington Post* reported with evident distaste while the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination was raging in early 2016. “A picture of the socialist union organizer hung in city hall when he was mayor of Burlington, Vermont. A plaque honoring

Debs is now by the window in Sanders’s Senate office.”

Now, as Bernie’s last presidential campaign fades into history, it’s appropriate to consider this statement from Eugene Debs, whose dedication to the working class was matched by his eloquence and courage: “I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, someone else would lead you out.”

Millions of Americans, inspired and energized by the Bernie 2020 campaign, certainly do not want to stay right where they are, in the midst of the capitalist wilderness surrounding us—menacing and deadly with the climate emergency, the unchecked pandemic, vast income inequality, structural racism and so many other terrible ills. There’s no Moses in sight, nor should there be.

To say that Bernie’s role in progressive movements will

Millions of Americans, inspired and energized by the Bernie 2020 campaign, certainly do not want to stay right where they are, in the midst of the capitalist wilderness surrounding us—menacing and deadly with the climate emergency, the unchecked pandemic, vast income inequality, structural racism and so many other terrible ills



diminish in the months and years ahead is to take nothing away from his profound importance in the past and present. During a PBS “NewsHour” interview a couple of

nights ago, he was as cogent and strategic as ever, emphasizing that to defeat Trump “there has to be energy and excitement among younger people, among working-class

people, among people who very often do not vote.” Overall, Bernie Sanders continues to be the preeminent and most effective progressive voice in the country.



And yet the pathbreaking brilliance of his 2020 campaign has been followed by confusing and somewhat dispiriting choices that he has made since announcing the

“suspension” of his campaign on April 8. The last hundred days have been marred by a backtrack on his pledge that day to “continue working to assemble as many delegates

as possible at the Democratic convention, where we will be able to exert significant influence over the party platform and other functions.” Actually, Bernie and his campaign



did almost nothing to gain further delegates in subsequent primaries.

Those of us who regret some of Bernie's tactical decisions during the last three months would do well to recall Eugene Debs' words about why he was not seeking to "lead you into the promised land." And now, Bernie Sanders' campaign slogan is more to the point than ever: "Not me. Us."

Both of the Sanders presidential campaigns were historic breakthroughs for challenging the moral rot of oligarchy in the United States and for pushing real class analysis into mainstream discourse. The campaigns grew out of—and, crucially, helped grow—grassroots movements fighting to transform institutions that are structurally racist, sexist, militaristic and environmentally destructive while serving corporate power and wealthy elites.

The future is up to us. **Z**

Norman Solomon is co-founder and national director of Roots-Action.org. He is a Bernie Sanders delegate from California to the 2020 Democratic National Convention. Solomon is the author of a dozen books including *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*.

Is the Nation Opening its Soul?

By Robert C. Koehler

Topple a few statues, remove some iconic names from American institutions... and the ghosts of the past start to escape from history, filling the present moment. It's called awareness.

Too much awareness can feel like chaos. Not surprisingly, a lot of people would prefer to stick with the old historical narrative, the one that's so tried and true: This is the land of the free, the home of the brave, the birthplace of democracy. God bless America. (And forget about slavery, Native American genocide, racism, packed prisons, nukes, endless war, etc.)

The question of the moment is whether this narrative is gone for good. Are we merely in the process of making some superficial adjustments or has the national soul truly torn itself open? Will we stop short—once again—of creating a society of compassionate equality? Will we eventually (as soon as possible) retreat to another narrative of American exceptionalism

and...uh, white power? Or are we in the process of real change?

I confess to being an optimist. The ghosts of the past that are returning to the present moment could be the harbingers of unimaginable change. Even the changes that seem trivial—rebranding Aunt Jemima pancake mix, for instance—have roots that go deep into the national identity and its sources of power.

Consider, for instance, the downfall of Woodrow Wilson, former U.S. president who was also president of Princeton University for eight years. Announcing that Wilson's name would be removed from Princeton's public policy school, current president Christopher Eisgruber said, according to BBC News: "Wilson's racism was significant and consequential even by the standards of his own time."

Wow, that's no small deal, considering how low the standards for racial stupidity were in the early 20th century. Nonetheless, he explained, Wilson—whose legacy includes barring black students from attending Princeton, who was a friend of the Ku Klux Klan—was revered by Princeton for over a century "not because of, but without regard to or perhaps even in ignorance of, his racism."



Photo by Pix_Arena/Shutterstock.com

Princeton, he went on, “is part of an America that has too often disregarded, ignored, or excused racism, allowing the persistence of systems that discriminate against black people.”

So America’s racist ignorance is over? Examples keep pouring in. Not only are statues of Confederate generals finally coming down, but Christopher Columbus—colonialist conqueror extraordinaire—apparently has also had his day, with his statues

coming down all over the place. And a particularly racist statue of Theodore Roosevelt, depicting the conquering hero grandly astride his horse as a black man and a Native American walk humbly beside (and behind) him, will be removed from in front of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. And latter-day colonialist John Wayne, king of the Hollywood cowboys and icon of America’s conquest of the Wild West, is in trouble

in Orange County, California, where Democratic political leaders are calling for the renaming of John Wayne Airport, thanks to the “resurfacing” of a 1971 *Playboy* interview, in which he said: “I believe in white supremacy until the blacks are educated to a point of responsibility. I don’t believe in giving authority and positions of leadership and judgment to irresponsible people.”

A fascinating irony about these words is the way they



bounce back to the speaker, whose ignorance of and indifference to his country's horrific history of racism indicates he was not "educated to a point of responsibility."

And then there are the brand names that are suddenly gone, so to speak, with the wind. These include Aunt Jemima, a product that dates back to 1893, whose initial model, a woman named Nancy Green, was a former slave. Other brands with stereotypical symbols that are on their

way out include Uncle Ben's rice, Eskimo pies, Cream of Wheat and Mrs. Butterworth's Syrup. "Retiring these products is not 'political correctness,'" Katha Pollitt writes at *The Nation*, "it is the removal of a profound racial insult from our grocery stores and kitchen tables."

And, oh yeah, speaking of *Gone with the Wind*, that 1939 movie of antebellum nostalgia has been taken off HBO for the time being. Its return will include "a dis-

cussion of its historical context," according to a network spokesperson. And the reality TV show "Cops" is gone after 32 seasons, depriving Americans of the chance to watch the law-and-order game in progress from the comfort of their sofas.

At a deeper level, police accountability is no longer a matter turned over to the police unions. Derek Chauvin, killer of George Floyd, has been charged with second-degree murder, as have

the other officers present at the scene of his death. Police departments in California, Texas, Nevada and Washington, DC have banned the police use of chokeholds. And the movement to defund militarized police forces, diverting the money to other means of establishing social order, is gaining a political foothold, not only in Minneapolis (ground zero) but New York City.

All of which will hardly matter at all if the changes stop here. The undoing of American racism—of its racist infrastructure—isn't a simple matter of making reforms or righting a few wrongs. The above changes only matter if they indicate a national re-beginning.

As social theorist and author Joe Feagin put it in a *Truthout* interview: “. . . in their individual and collective protests and revolts against racial oppression African Americans have long pressed for—indeed, arguably invented—the authentic liberty-and-justice-for-all values that have gradually become more central to this country. The white male ‘founders’ version of ‘liberty and justice’ values were inauthentic, as they actually had in mind freedom for (propertied) white men.”

What matters about the present moment is that change seems to be coming from

multiple directions, both outside and within the corridors of political and economic power, as our ignorance shatters and we wake up. **Z**

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Why “Mutual Aid”?—Social Solidarity, not Charity

By Matthew Whitley

“Mutual aid” has suddenly entered the collective consciousness as we seek ways to support our friends and neighbors amidst a global pandemic. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has tweeted about it, *The New York Times* has discussed “so called mutual-aid” networks in major cities, and mutual aid workshops have spread throughout the United States.

But often the term is used without ever addressing the question—What is mutual aid? “Social solidarity—not

charity,” might be the slogan response, but conceptualizing the difference is not easy. Fundamentally, mutual aid is about building “bottom-up” structures of cooperation, rather than relying on the state or wealthy philanthropists to address our needs. It emphasizes horizontal networks of solidarity rather than “top down” solutions, networks that flow in both directions and sustain the life of a community.

In this way, mutual aid represents a particular kind of politics, rooted in ideas around direct democracy, self-management and decentralization. But where do these ideas and practices come from? To answer this question we must go all the way back to the turn of the century, and to its origin in 19th century naturalist debates and early theories of anarchist socialism.

Mutual-aid is a concept born from a curious hybrid of Russian evolutionary theory and anarchist thought. It is, specifically, an idea associated with Peter Kropotkin—a well-known anarchist-socialist thinker—also a naturalist, geographer, ethnographer and advocate of scientific thought. Kropotkin, along with other Russian scientists, developed mutual aid in response to the profound impact of Darwin's evolutionary theory and the

Photo by S-F/Sh



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focus on competition among his adherents.

Most people have heard the phrase “survival of the fittest” or the more poetic idea of life as “red in tooth in claw”—but they are quotes often misattributed to Darwin himself. These clichés that emphasize war, violence, and destruction in the struggle for life were first used by one of Darwin’s adherents, Herbert Spencer, who was a social scientist as much as a biologist. Spencer

believed in the progressive evolution of not only organisms but also human societies and helped to popularize evolutionary theory as a social, and not only biological, phenomenon. Humans are, after all, an element of nature.

Kropotkin, however, was deeply concerned about an interpretation of evolutionary theory that emphasized hostility and competition, especially when extended, as it still often is, to the social and

political lives of human beings. He saw that “survival of the fittest” would inevitably be used to justify poverty, colonialism, gender inequality, racism and war as “natural” processes—innate and immutable expressions of our very genetic being.

Capitalism—and its stratified wealth and power—could be seen as merely an expression of this natural competition, in which a neutral playing field produced



winners and losers based on merit. Instead of this relentless competition, Kropotkin saw cooperation everywhere he looked: in colonies of ants, in the symbiotic behaviors of plants and animals, and in the practices of peasants in his own travels.

While Kropotkin did not deny elements of competition, he believed that cooperation was at least its equal in the process of evolution: “the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community.” Extended to humanity the implications of his thought was clear, capitalism—and the obsession with competition it brought—was the aberration, and socialism and social solidarity were natural expressions of human life. His most famous work advancing this belief is titled, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*.

Mutual aid has extended past this foundational argument over species evolution and biology to become a fundamental tenant of anarchist (libertarian-socialist) practice. Today its influence has pervaded a vast array of left-leaning social movements worldwide. The examples are numerous and diverse. Think occupied

buildings which provide refugee housing in Europe, self-managed security and medical clinics in Greece, Autonomous Tenants’ Unions as in Chicago, self-organized “Free Schools” across the U.S., worker controlled “mutual aid” funds, or rank-and-file labor organizing.

Today, these activists are faced with a new challenge—organizing in an environment in which demonstrations, assemblies and mass meetings are still limited or forbidden across much of the United States and worldwide. Overcoming these challenges has meant creating a dizzying array of new, innovative structures that connect worldwide movements with the hyper local: conference calls used to organize activists’ singular apartment building for action on rent freezes, “mutual aid self-therapy” conducted in Zoom breakout rooms, food centers organized and collected via Google docs, and the incarcerated are communicating with outside networks to advance diffuse strikes seeking safer conditions and the release of vulnerable prisoners.

The most magical aspect of this type of organizing under “social distancing” is that it reveals, even in a moment of extreme isolation, the depth of our connection to each other. Mutual aid goes be-

yond simple charity and patronage—it mobilizes society itself for society itself. In its most advanced form it can show us a powerful vision of an alternative society—one in which we are no longer imagined as individual brands, consumers, or entrepreneurs in endless competition, but a collective connected by compassion, cooperation, and the spirit of participatory democracy. For this reason covid not only represents a great threat to public health, but also an incredible opportunity to build these networks “from below”—to return, if only bit by bit, to the spirit of cooperation which has always been at the heart of society. **Z**

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I'M PROUD
TO BE EVERYTHING
DONALD TRUMP
HATES!

I will
never
speak in his
name
WOULD YOU?
LOVE thy neighbor
AFTER SEEN DEADLY TRUMP
his commandments

VOTE
OUT

The World Can Show How Pharma Monopolies Aren't the Only Way to Fight COVID-19

By Prabir Purkayastha

The U.S. has bought up almost all of the stock of remdesivir from Gilead, making it nearly impossible for this COVID-19 drug to be available anywhere else in the world. After making America sick again, Trump is trying to compensate for his administration's failure by buying Gilead's production for the next three months for the U.S., leaving nothing for the rest of the world.

This makes it all the more urgent for India and other countries that featured prominently in previous drug license fights against Big Pharma in the U.S. and around the world for more than a decade to break Gilead's patent and issue compulsory licenses to manufacture the drug locally. The patent laws of most countries and the World Trade Organization's 2001 Doha Dec-

laration have clear provisions for compulsory licensing during a health emergency or an epidemic. COVID-19 obviously qualifies on both accounts.

On July 1, the U.S. reached a point of more than 50,000 new COVID-19 cases in a single day, about 23 percent of the 218,000 new cases worldwide that day, making it the global leader on how not to fight the COVID-19 epidemic. As of July 1, Brazil and India were in second and third place, respectively, for new cases.

Remdesivir is the only drug that in drug trials has shown some benefit in fighting the virus infection. Remdesivir works by reducing the replication of the virus in the human body, and this helps in shortening the hospital stay of the patient by about 25 percent. If the patient progresses to a more serious stage, needing oxygen support or ventilation, remdesivir is of little help. Here, anti-inflammatory drugs like dexamethasone become important. Dexamethasone has shown efficacy treating COVID-19 patients in clinical trials, and, unlike remdesivir, it works by reducing lung inflammation arising out of the infection, rather than by fighting the infection itself. Dexamethasone is off-patent and is widely available at low costs.

But if remdesivir cuts down the infectious period, not only is it beneficial to the patients who receive it, but it is also useful for society. By reducing the patient's infectious period, it lowers the rate of virus transmission.

I have argued previously that after the battle for access to cheap AIDS drugs, the next big battle would be fought over COVID-19 medicines and vaccines. In the World Health Assembly, the U.S. was the only country that opposed the resolution that all medicines and vaccines should be put in a common patent pool, and accessible to all countries at reasonable costs.

We now know the reason for the U.S. opposition. It wants control over medicines and vaccines for the fight against the pandemic. One reason is to make U.S. citizens feel that Trump is looking after them by providing medicines, even if his administration has failed miserably in the fight against COVID-19. The second reason is that by controlling the medicine for the rest of the world, Trump can bargain with them and try to regain the global hegemon status that the U.S. has lost.

With this step, the U.S. has also made clear its intention regarding COVID-19 vaccines. The U.S. has backed a set of five companies with a

\$13 billion purse, as a part of its Operation Warp Speed to support vaccine development. One of these five is Moderna, a U.S. biotech company, and one of the frontrunners in the current vaccine trials. The other four backed by the U.S. are AstraZeneca (in consortium with Oxford University); Johnson & Johnson; Merck; and Pfizer with BioNTech. If any of these vaccines succeed and others do not, we can expect the U.S. will guard that vaccine as it is doing with COVID-19 medicine in the case of remdesivir. Fortunately for the world, there are a total of 17 vaccines in the World Health Organization's list of ongoing clinical trials, and another 132 in the pipeline.

Apart from the U.S. buying up almost all of the remdesivir stock, the other issue in making remdesivir accessible to those who need it is the price at which Gilead is selling this drug. For U.S. patients, the cost is about \$3,000 for a typical 5-day course (which consists of 6 vials of the drug—two on the first day, and one per day after that). Gilead has granted a handful of licenses to drug manufacturers in other countries—including three Indian companies, Cipla, Hetero and Jubilant—to sell generic remdesivir. This means a full course of remdesivir to Indian patients will

cost about \$400 (at \$66 per vial, for 6 vials).

What is the actual cost of a course of remdesivir? According to an article in the *Journal of Virus Eradication* by Hill et al. in April, the active pharmaceutical ingredient for one day's treatment should not cost more than \$1. If we add to that the cost of making it into the typical five-day course of six injections, the total cost should not be more than \$6. Calculations by two authors from the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review in the U.S. use Hill's data to estimate that the price of remdesivir for a full course of treatment (they use a longer course of 10 days) in the U.S. should be less than \$10.

Why should a full course of remdesivir, costing less than \$10 to produce, be priced at \$3,000, or 300 times its cost of production, in the U.S.? Even at Gilead's concessional price of \$400 for India, it is still 40 times the cost of its production. Gilead's argument is that because its medicine decreases the duration of hospitalization, it saves COVID-19 patients about \$12,000 each in hospital bills—and by charging only one-fourth of that, even if it is 300 times the cost of production, Gilead is doing the customers a big favor.

As we know from the re-

sults of the clinical trials, remdesivir fights the virus, but if the patient becomes seriously ill, it does not have a statistically significant impact on mortality rates. If it did, Gilead's price probably would have factored in lifetime earnings saved by remdesivir, and its price would probably have been even 10 times higher.

But even if remdesivir becomes significantly cheaper, it is uncertain that it can get to countries outside the U.S. thanks to the U.S.'s plan to buy almost all of Gilead's stock of the drug. So what can the rest of the world do? It may need to prepare to fight a long battle, as India and other countries did during the AIDS epidemic against the U.S. and its drug cartel allies like Switzerland, France, the UK and Germany.

Big Pharma priced AIDS drugs around \$10,000-\$15,000 for a year's worth of treatment in the U.S. and Europe, and a "concessional" price of \$4,000 for poor countries. Indian companies were manufacturing the generic version of these drugs at a fraction of these prices, but countries who wanted to import AIDS drugs from India faced lawsuits and political pressure from the U.S.

This battle was fought for nearly a decade. In the World Trade Organization's Doha

Round in 2001, the Doha Declaration accepted that in the case of a health emergency or an epidemic, any country has the right to issue a compulsory license for producing life-saving drugs. And the license to produce the drug could be issued even to a company outside the country's borders. Indian generic drug manufacturer Cipla could then supply the AIDS drugs at \$350 for a year's course to a number of countries, which would otherwise have been completely bankrupted by patented drugs' higher prices—or else they would see their AIDS patients die in large numbers without medicines.

The victory to secure cheap generic AIDS drugs sets a precedent for the current pandemic. COVID-19 has already killed an estimated half a million and infected more than 10 million. No one can dispute that is both a health emergency and a pandemic. The remedy of using a compulsory license already exists in most countries' patent laws and in the Doha Declaration.

Why, then, are other countries not starting the manufacture of remdesivir? Are they hoping that Gilead and the U.S. will behave better than they did earlier during the AIDS epidemic? Or are they afraid of the threat of retaliatory sanctions from

the U.S.?

Every year, the U.S. Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) issues a Special 301 Report that it has used to threaten trade sanctions against countries that don't comply with its patents. India figures prominently in this report year after year, for daring to issue a compulsory license in 2012 to Natco to sell the cancer drug nexavar for less than 3 percent of Bayer's price of more than \$65,000 a year. After India issued the compulsory license on Nexavar, Marijn Dekkers, the CEO of Bayer, said, "We did not develop this

medicine for Indians... We developed it for Western patients who can afford it."

In April, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi buckled under Trump's threat and exported hydroxychloroquine to the U.S. even though it was under an export ban at that time. Will he—and the leaders of other countries—be willing to stand up to the U.S. on remdesivir? Or will they agree with Trump that remdesivir should be reserved for only U.S. patients, even if they have the capacity to produce it for their people? **Z**



Tearing Down the Idols of Colonialism: Why Tunisia, Africa Must Demand French Apolo-

gy

By Ramzy Baroud

The visit by newly-elected Tunisian President Kais Saied to France on June 22 was intended to discuss bilateral relations, trade, etc. But it was also a missed opportunity, where Tunisia could have formally demanded an

apology from France for the decades of French colonialism, which has shattered the social and political fabric of this North African Arab nation since the late 19th century.

A heated debate at the Tunisian parliament, prior to Saied's trip highlighted the significance of the issue to Tunisians, who are still reel-



ing under the process of socio-economic and political transitions following the popular uprising in 2011.

Sadly, the Tunisian parliament rejected a motion forwarded by the centrist Karama coalition calling for a French apology, despite a 15-hour-long debate.

“We are not animated by any bitterness or hatred, but

such apologies will heal the wounds of the past,” Seifeddine Makhoulf, head of Al-Karama, said during the debate. Makhoulf is under no moral obligation to explain his motives. A French apology to Tunisia, and many other African countries that have endured French colonialism for hundreds of years, is long overdue.

Ravaged by a relentless economic crisis, and still largely dependent on France as a foremost trade partner, Tunisia fears the consequences of such a just demand, which, if officially made, will also include a call for compensation as a result of nearly 75 years of exploitation and the subsequent collective trauma suffered by several generations.



**Paris,
France,
June 13
2020
Pro-
testing
against
racism
and po-
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**Photo by
YRVEF/
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stock.
com**



Paris, France,
June 13 2020
Protesting
against racism
and police bru-
talities
Paris, France
Photo by RVE/
Shutterstock.
com

A particular statement made by Osama Khelifi of the Qalb Tounes party delineates the unfortunate reality that continues to govern the thinking of Tunisia's political elites: "We are not going to feed Tunisians with such notions."

Inconsequential to Khelifi, and others among the parties that rejected the motion, is that coming to terms with the past is a prerequisite for any nation that wishes to start anew. What would be the point of revolutions and

revolutionary discourses if Tunisian politicians insist on merely trying to get along with a status quo that is imposed on them by outside forces?

While Saied was paying his diplomatic dues to Paris,

statues were tumbling down across the Western world; some of former slave owners, others of racist ideologues and pioneers of colonialism.

On June 7, the statue of Edward Colston, a 17th century slave trader, was taken down in the English town of Bristol. This was only one of many other monuments that were destroyed or defaced throughout the United States and Europe.

However, across the English Channel, the French government remained obstinate in its refusal to take down any similar statues, as if insisting on its refusal to revisit—let alone take responsibility—for its sinister past, especially the bloody and tragic events that shattered the African continent.

Statues are built to honor individuals for their great contributions in any society. They are also erected as a reminder to future generations that they must emulate these presumably great individuals. France, however, remains the exception.

Unsurprisingly, French government officials are engaging in nonsensical arguments as to why such statues, as that of Jean-Baptiste Colbert—a white aristocrat who, during the 17th century reign of King Louis XIV, established the horrific “Black

Code,” the rules according to which black slaves were to be treated in the colonies—should remain intact.

Macron himself has made it clear that “the Republic... won’t remove any statues.”

The collective rethink underway in various Western societies, which have greatly benefited from the exploitation of Africa, was ignited by the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of American police officers in Minneapolis.

Spontaneous popular movements, led mostly by the youth, connected the dots between racism, slavery, and colonialism, taking to the streets in their millions to demand a complete overhaul of the status quo.

Yet, France’s political elites continue to embrace French exceptionalism, arguing that, unlike the American experience with race and slavery, French law was never, at any point in the past, purposely racist.

In truth, past arrogance—“mission civilisatrice”—continues to define France’s attitudes towards the present. This is why the French colonial experience was particularly keen on composing a clever discourse to account for its exploitation of Africa and other regions in the world.

In this skewed rationale,

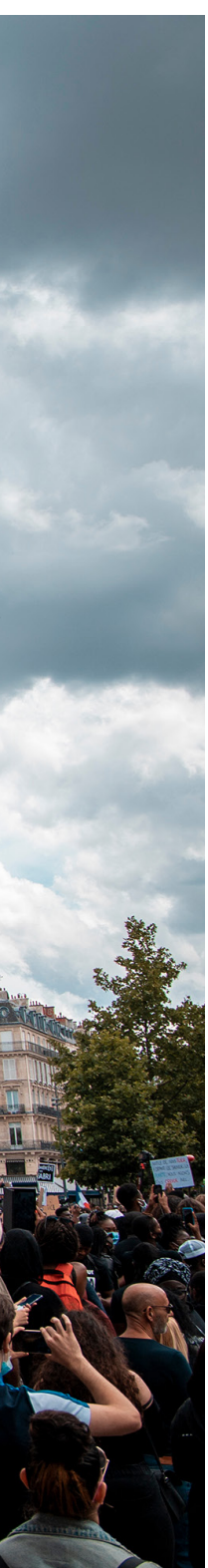
France’s invasion of Algeria in 1830 was dubbed as something else entirely. Algeria was now an integral part of France, they argued. Other countries, like Tunisia and Morocco, were made protectorates, ruled indirectly through corrupt local authorities. The rest of France’s African colonies were ravaged mercilessly by greedy French administrators.

Unlike other European experiences, the French colonial connection to Africa did not disintegrate in recent decades. Instead, it took on different forms, known by the now disparaging term “Françafrique.”

The expression “Françafrique” was introduced in 1955 to describe the “special relations” between France and the newly-independent African countries, now bound with what France called “cooperation agreements.” It was rightly understood that France was entering a new phase of colonialism in Africa: neo-colonialism.

Despite former French president, François Hollande, pledging to eradicate the term “Françafrique” and its practical meaning, little has changed between France and its former African colonies.

Indeed, France can be found in every aspect of life, whether political, military, economic or even cultural,



in many African countries. In the cases of Mali and Libya, the French intervention takes on an even more crude manifestation: domineering and violent.

To appreciate French neo-colonialism in Africa, consider this: 14 African countries are still economically bound to France through the use of special currency, the CFA franc, designed specifically by France to manage the trade and economies of its former colonies. This jarring

example of French neo-colonialism in Africa is consistent with France's colonial and racist past.

Whether France chooses to come to terms with its past is entirely a French affair. It is, however, the responsibility of Tunisia—and the whole of Africa—to confront France and other colonial and neo-colonial regimes, not merely by demanding apologies and compensation, but insisting on a complete change of the present, unequal relations as

well.

“In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values,” wrote Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

The opposite must also be true. Tunisia, and many African countries, must demand a French apology. By doing so, they declare “loudly and intelligibly” that they are finally free from the “white man's

Photo by Luigi
Morris/Shutter-
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WALL STREET GOT BAILED OUT, **WE GOT SOLD OUT!**

Congress sent billions to corporations and bankers—nothing for neighborhoods hit hardest by the crisis.

National Holdings Corporation received over \$6 million in bailout loans that they have not returned.

(selfish and racist) values,” and that they truly see themselves as equal. **Z**

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of *The Palestine Chronicle*. He is the author of five books. His latest is *These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons* (Clarity Press, Atlanta). Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Istanbul Zaim University (IZU). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net.

Why Government Mostly Helps People Who Need It the Least—Even During a Crisis

By Richard D. Wolff

In January 2020, the NASDAQ stock market's index stood just under 10,000. In the March crash, it fell to 7,000. As of July 10, 2020, it hit 10,600. The U.S. government's economic policies

produced a “recovery” for the rich who own the vast bulk of stocks. Their holdings are worth more now than before COVID-19 hit us. The other major benchmarks for securities, the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Standard and Poor 500, show similarly dramatic, slightly smaller recoveries.

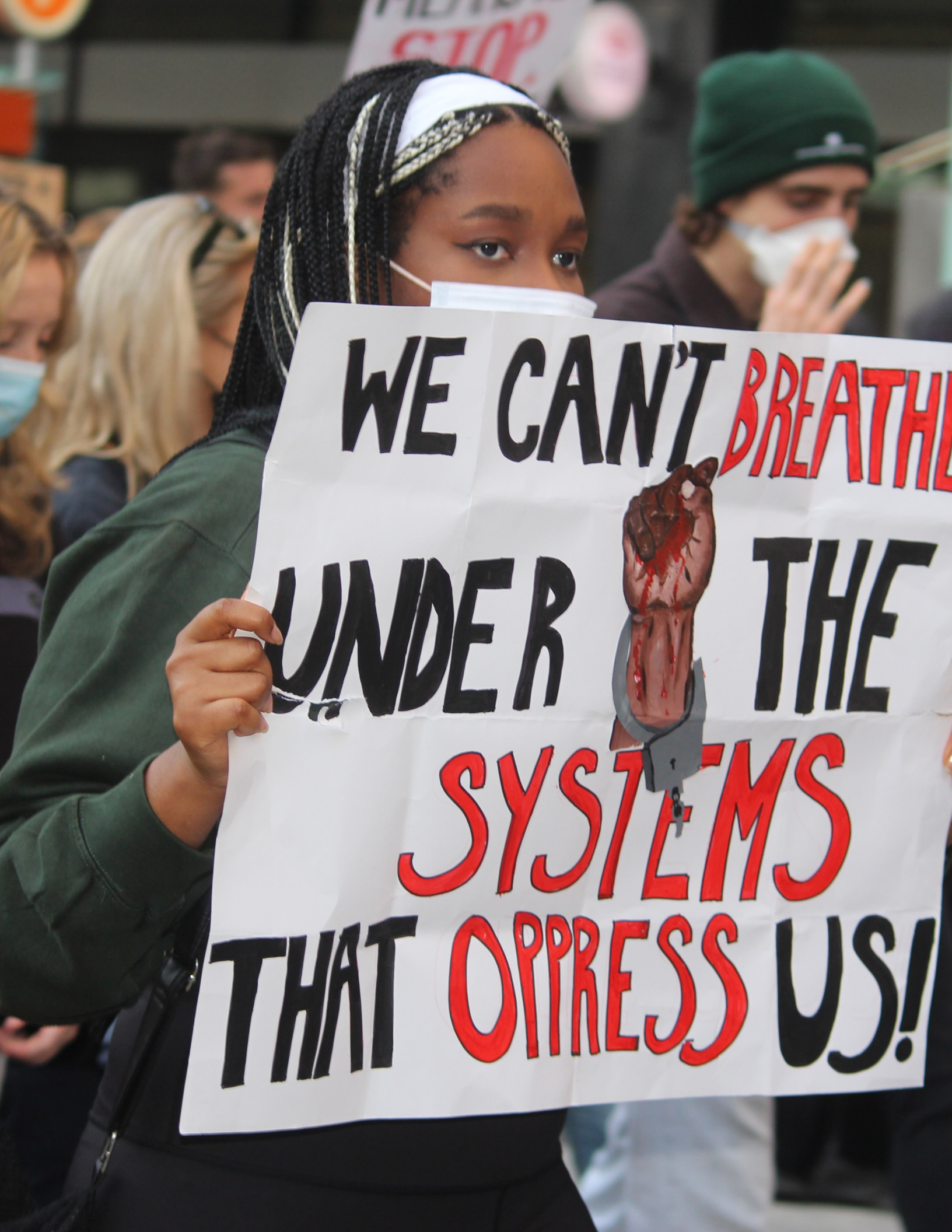
Massive government economic intervention—what most of its current beneficiaries have always denounced—subsidized those recoveries. The Federal Reserve pumped unprecedented amounts of new money into the U.S. economy after mid-March. That money poured into the stock market and fueled its rise. The U.S. Treasury provided unprecedented direct cash supports to much of corporate America.

Over the same time, government economic support for the working class was too little, too late, and totally inadequate to what could and should have been done. In their unequal impacts, government economic policies were cruel and unjust. In this, they resemble government public health policies. With under 5 percent of the world's population, the United States accounts for about 25 percent of COVID-19 cases and about 24 percent of COVID-19 deaths globally. All but the most ideological-

ly blinded (and government supporters) know what such a statistic means.

I focus here on how the government's economic policies affected corporations versus employees, the rich versus the middle class and the poor. Direct government support sustained most corporations. Bigger and richer corporations hire more and better lobbyists, make larger actual or potential donations to politicians and parties, and so on. They thus got big portions of government help. In general, the pandemic and crash hurt medium and small businesses more than big ones, while the latter got disproportionate government help. Government policies likely worsened the relative decline of small and medium businesses. Concentration and monopolization tendencies within U.S. capitalism strengthened.

The U.S. government's monetary policies (executed by the Federal Reserve) undertook to rescue the stock market as priority number 1. The Fed pumped in massive amounts of new money via very low-interest loans to banks and by directly buying corporate debt and U.S. government debt. In a collapsed economy with tens of millions of unemployed, little of that new money flowed into productive investments, rehiring workers, or enterprise



WE CAN'T BREATHE
UNDER THE
SYSTEMS
THAT OPPRESS US!

expansions. Those did not offer attractive profits. Instead, the new money went where profits could still be made: the stock markets. Hence they recovered.

Banks, corporations, and the rich used most of the new money to buy stocks from one another. That drove up stock prices. Each purchase by one Fed beneficiary was later sold to another Fed beneficiary at a higher price. Such capital gains encouraged repetitions or “stock flipping” (rather like real-estate hustlers’ “house flipping” before the 2008 mortgage collapse crisis). As this stock market bubble continues to build, anxiety about eventual bursting rises.

Recoveries for corporations and the rich were not matched by what government policies achieved for most employees. The differences were stark. Employers fired more than 40 million employees who were thus forced to file for unemployment benefits. The government did not rehire those millions (to undertake COVID-19 testing of the U.S. population, a Green New Deal for infrastructure, etc.). The unemployed faced mounting difficulties in meeting their financial obligations. Neither GOP nor Democratic leaders generated anything like the set of government programs that saved the working class from greater

catastrophe during the 1930s Great Depression. Then, FDR’s New Deal included establishing Social Security to provide monthly checks for all over 65, federal unemployment insurance, a minimum wage, and a federal jobs program that employed many millions of those fired by private employers.

It wasn’t just incomes that were lost by the millions who have been unemployed since March (losses usually far above the \$1,200 check given many and the extra \$600 per week for the insured unemployed). No guarantee was provided that their old jobs would be available to them again or that their eventual wages and benefits would be what they were before COVID-19. When would their unemployment insurance fall or end? If they refused to return to unsafe workplaces (given that most Americans have still not been tested for COVID-19), would they lose jobs and eligibility for unemployment insurance? Excruciating anxiety added to the other sufferings of being unemployed in pandemic America. Many millions of unemployed now face near certainty that their former jobs are forever gone. They have thus lost the seniority, work relationships, connections, skills, and links to home, community, children’s

schools, etc., that those jobs entailed.

Those who kept their jobs so far are nevertheless also threatened by today’s mass unemployment. Employers can now confront their employees with wage and/or benefit reductions and other deteriorations of working conditions. If employees refuse, they risk getting fired and replaced by the increasingly desperate unemployed. Since employees know that, most knuckle under. Recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports confirm that wages are declining with further declines widely predicted. Others who kept jobs and incomes but performed them from home encountered all sorts of new difficulties and expenses. For example, full-time air conditioning for stay-at-home workers and/or their children added hundreds of dollars to millions of affected workers’ monthly utility bills. Social movements across the country—Black Lives Matter, activism against eviction and for rent moratoria, strikes and job actions for COVID-19-safe working conditions, calls for debt relief, etc.—all attest to serious suffering and growing pushback. Those movements represent the other side of the recovery celebrations among corporations and the rich and the politicians and media they own.

400+ Yrs.

Murder, Carnage, Butchery

Our

Founding Fathers

=

MURDERERS

Rising stock markets and corporate bailouts—their recoveries—enabled the already richest to become richer still. Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, added \$24 billion to his already more than \$100 billion personal wealth. Meanwhile, the U.S. working class remains far, far from any comparable “recovery.” Inequality in the United States deepens yet again.

Lest I be misunderstood or confused with libertarians, I do not attach responsibility for government policies primarily to politicians and bureaucrats. The government mostly does what its constituents with money and power make it do. In U.S. capitalism, most of the money and power are concentrated in a small minority: the corporate rich and their closest subordinates and allies. Occupy Wall Street referred to them as the 1 percent. Their interests prevail in government policies unless and until a genuinely countervailing power emerges from an organized mass of employees. Our big problem is not the government but the concentrated wealth and power that drive and control it. Above all, it is the economic system—the division in production, inside almost all enterprises, between a minority of employers profiting from a majority of employees—that concentrates wealth and pow-

er. The needs and demands of that concentrated wealth and power dominate what “our” governments do and do not do. The system is the problem. **Z**

This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

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A Statue of Hatuey

By Don Fitz

If you look at a U.S. \$20 bill, you might notice Andrew Jackson nervously watching statues of Columbus and Robert E. Lee coming down and wondering if his face is

going to disappear from currency. As Democrats ponder which militarist they wish to glorify in the next round of monuments, it is critical to realize that statues which go up are at least as important as the ones that come down. Perhaps the best nominee for a new statue is Hatuey.

A few years ago, while visiting my daughter and grandson in Havana, I learned that my grandson’s favorite playmate was Hatuey. “I recognize a lot of Spanish names,” I told my daughter. “But I’ve never heard that one.”

“It’s not Hispanic,” she let me know. “It’s the name of the great Taino warrior killed by the Spaniards.”

Long, long ago, before slavery existed in the colonies that would become the U.S.—even before the first Dutch and British slave ships ventured to Africa—Spanish invaders discovered the Taino people in Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Cuba. In 1512, the Taino invited the Spaniards to a great feast in their honor.

After the Spaniards ate the food and drank the beverages prepared for them by 2500 Taino, they drew their swords and hacked their hosts—men, women and children—to pieces. Those who were not slaughtered were dragged by the Spaniards to forced labor.



FIRE
KILLER

PHIL QUINN * CORY KANOSH * PHILLIP HIGH BEAR * JOHN T. WILSON
"I'M NOT FAKING" - SARAH LEE CIRCLE BEAR
MAY-HI-VIST GOODBLANKET * JULIO BALDEAGLE * GABRIEL B...
"WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?" - PAUL CASTAN...
BEA WHITESHIELD * JESSIE LEE ROSE * LOREN...
SITTING BULL - KILLED BY POLICE, DEC. 15TH 1890
JAMIE...
"HELP ME P...
JACQU...
NATI...
JAMIE BRAN...
MA...
ZACHARY BEARH...



They ordered them to carry loads they could not possibly lift and joked among themselves as they killed more.

As the Taino lay dying, priests knelt down to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. If they would let Christ into their hearts, they would enjoy eternal salvation.

About 400 Taino managed to escape from the massacre and took canoes from Hispaniola to eastern Cuba. Unfortunately, most of the Tainos in Cuba would not believe that people existed who were as cruel as those in the story they heard (somewhat like those in the 21st century who do not believe the potential outcomes of climate change for humanity).

Hatuey led the first guerrilla warfare against European invasion of the western hemisphere. His band conducted several hit-and-run attacks against the invaders and were not defeated in battle. But a traitor informed the Spaniards of the mountain where they hid and they were surrounded and captured.

Hatuey was brought before the Spanish general who told him, "If you accept the King of Spain as your sovereign and Jesus Christ as your savior, then we will kill you quickly and you will pass to everlasting paradise. But if you do not accept the King

and Jesus, then we will burn you alive and you will be damned to burn in hell for eternity."

Hatuey asked, "Are there Spaniards in heaven?"

"Oh, yes," the general chuckled. "Heaven is full of Spaniards."

Hatuey's last words were, "I would rather burn in hell forever than spend one day in paradise with Spaniards."

One time I was telling the story of Hatuey, a listener replied, "I heard that, but I thought that Hatuey was from a tribe in Mexico. Another time, a person told me he thought Hatuey was an Inca resisting Pizarro's invasion of Peru.

Wanting to make sure that I had it right, I checked on Google, which Wall Street would have us believe has replaced the bible as the ultimate source of wisdom and truth. Sure enough, Google confirmed Hatuey's existence in Cuba.

But then a thought entered my mind. What if Hatuey, in some way, did exist in Mexico, Peru, and in tribes throughout North America, South America, Central America and the Caribbean? Could it be possible that the flames which consumed Hatuey's body now burn in the hearts and minds of those who resist oppression every-

where?

A monument to Hatuey is in Baracoa, Cuba. The plate at the base reads "To the memory of Chief Hatuey, unforgettable native, precursor of the Cuban liberty, who offered his life, and glorified his rebellion in the martyrdom of the flames on 2/2/1512. Monuments Delegation of Yara, 1999." **Z**

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Don Fitz (fitzdon@aol.com) is on the Editorial Board of *Green Social Thought* which co-published this article with *MRonline*. He was the 2016 candidate of the Missouri Green Party for Governor. His book, *Cuban Health Care: The Ongoing Revolution*, has been available since June 2020.

Humans Are an Endangered Species: Will They Act to Save Themselves?

By Lawrence Wittner

Have you noticed recently that things are collapsing?

Sure, the rightwing, nationalist rulers of many countries never stop telling us that they have made their nations “great” again.

But we would have to be dislocated from reality not to notice that something is wrong—very wrong. After all, the world is currently engulfed in a coronavirus pandemic that has already infected more than 12.5 million people, taken more than 550,000 lives, and created massive economic disruption. And the pandemic is accelerating, while, according to scientists, new and more terrible diseases are in the offing.

Moreover, we are now experiencing a rapidly-growing environmental catastrophe. Not only are industrial pollutants poisoning the air, the water, and the land as never before, but climate change is making the planet uninhabitable. Extreme heat, drought, storms, floods, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels are wreaking havoc on an unprecedented scale. This June, the temperature in the Arctic reached 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit—the hottest on record.

In addition, defying all rea-

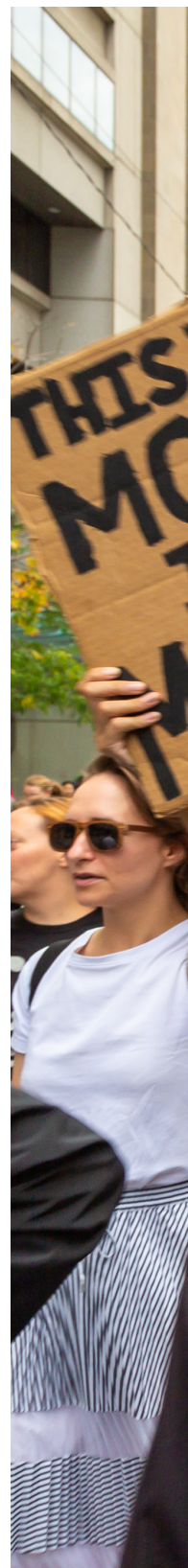
son, nations persist in arming themselves for a nuclear war that will destroy virtually all life on earth. Publicly threatening nuclear war and casting aside or rejecting major nuclear arms control and disarmament treaties, the nuclear powers are currently engaged in an extensive nuclear weapons buildup, with the U.S. government alone planning to spend at least \$1.5 trillion on this project. In response to the looming catastrophe, the editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* recently placed the hands of their famous “Doomsday Clock” at 100 seconds to midnight—the most dangerous setting in its 73-year history.

Even if these disastrous developments fail to snuff out the human race, plenty of mass misery can be expected from the rising economic and social inequality occurring around the globe. According to a UN study, released in January 2020, 70 percent of the world’s people suffer from growing economic inequality. In a foreword to the study, UN Secretary General António Guterres declared that the world is confronting “the harsh realities of a deeply unequal landscape,” characterized by “a vicious cycle of inequality, frustration, and discontent.” Feeding on popular fears and anxieties, racism and xenophobia are on

the rise.

But extinction or, at best, mass misery, need not be humanity’s fate. Thanks to very substantial advances in knowledge over the centuries, plus the efforts of creative thinkers and determined reform movements, human beings have shown a remarkable ability to confront challenges and to improve the human condition. From the abolition of slavery to the creation of public education, the banning of child labor, the guaranteeing of old age security, the legalization of unions, the recognition of women’s rights, and the defense of gay rights, previously unimaginable changes have been promoted and implemented.

Why should we assume that we are incapable of responding to today’s crises? Working together, physicians and other scientists have either eradicated or dramatically reduced the range of numerous diseases, including smallpox, polio, guinea worm, malaria, and measles. Responding to climate change activism, scientists and engineers have developed methods to utilize solar and wind power to replace fossil fuels. Similarly, critics of the nuclear arms race and wise statesmen have fostered nuclear arms control and disarmament treaties and helped prevent nuclear war. Furthermore, numerous movements



have succeeded, on occasion, in securing a more equitable distribution of wealth and a reduction in discrimination.

Of course, the changes necessary to cope with today's

crises will not be obtained easily. To successfully battle pandemics, it will be essential to create a far stronger public health system, accessible to everyone. Combatting cli-

mate change will almost certainly require challenging the vast power of the fossil fuel industry. To avert nuclear war, it will probably be necessary to both ban nuclear weapons



and create a stronger international security system. And when it comes to securing greater economic and social equality, limiting corporate greed, taxing the rich, and reducing deep-seated prejudices remain imperative.

Even if these conditions are met, however, another challenge remains, for implementing these kinds of changes necessitates action on a worldwide basis. After

all, disease pandemics, climate catastrophe, nuclear war, and economic and social inequality are global problems that require global solutions. As the director general of the World Health Organization remarked in late June, the greatest threat to humanity from the coronavirus is not the virus itself, but “the lack of global solidarity” in dealing with it. He added: “We cannot defeat this pandemic

with a divided world.” Much the same could be said about overcoming the other onrushing disasters.

Although there is not much time left before the world succumbs to one or more catastrophes, human beings have been able to alter their behavior and institutions. Let’s hope they will rouse themselves and do so again. **Z**



Dr. Lawrence Wittner, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor of History emeritus at SUNY/Albany and the author of *Confronting the Bomb* (Stanford University Press).

There is no easy way to tell you about the loss to our learning community. [NAME OF DECEASED] [FACTS OF DEATH] [DATE].

I know this is upsetting. I'm devastated, but I will not pretend to know what you are going through. If you have questions about [NAME OF DECEASED'S] death, please let me try to answer them. We can take as much time to talk about this as you need. Your feelings are okay. Anger, disbelief, and sadness are common, and crying is okay. ... —teacher template to report student death to classmates

This summer, American teachers are drafting templates for messages on the inevitable illness and death that Trump-ordered school openings will bring.

Teachers across America are facing special challenges in addition to those of all of their neighbors this summer. COVID-19 must be reckoned with as teachers are responsible for the safety of our chil-

dren.

Despite the fact that the spread of this virus has not been contained and cases are spiking in many areas, reckless politicians and spineless lackeys are forcing the mandate: "School must reopen."

Arizona teacher Kimberly Lopez Chavez Byrd died after teaching a summer school class. Trump's response when asked about it: "Schools should be opened. Schools should be opened. Those kids want to go to school. You're losing a lot of lives by keeping things closed. We saved millions of lives while we did the initial closure."

We are seeing the poorest management of this disease in the world. When the world has lost 605,000 and the US has lost 143,000, something is utterly incompetent from the top down.

I know the sacrifices students, parents, and teachers make to ensure the promise of a better future that an education brings. Trump's demand

Face the facts: Donald Trump does not care about you or your kids

By Wim Laven

Although there is not much time left before the world succumbs to one or more catastrophes, human beings have been able to alter their behavior and institutions. Let's hope they will rouse themselves and do so again

Photo by Ramona Diaconescu/Shutterstock.com



is nothing short of devastating cruel foolishness.

Devastating because we know his orders will increase the duration and spread of a deadly virus that has already infected millions.

Cruel because he refuses to care about the increased and unnecessary suffering of others.

Foolish because he con-

tinues to trust his gut, which is frequently wrong, instead of the advances achieved through the scientific method and evidence-based decision making.

I learned of the drowning death of a student of mine in our community college, and spent hours processing what to do. There is no good way to share the bad news of a class-

mate who will not be returning to class, and I struggled evaluating how to make the least traumatic terrible news delivery. I decided that I could safely share he'd drowned while swimming, that people sometimes do not realize how quickly hypothermia can set in, and that the water was still quite cool despite the hot weather. I identified the re-

Photo by Diego G Diaz/
Shutterstock.com



sources available on campus, and sent emails to confirm my plans for making the resources available to students who wanted to utilize them.

How many times will teachers have to do this in the coming months?

I remembered the gross insensitivity I'd faced as student and the promises I'd made to do better than certain faculty. I was graded down for a presentation I gave the day my brother died, because I seemed distracted; now, as a teacher, I vowed I would do better. I did some reading on common responses and warning signs. I looked over group work and in-class activities to identify which students might have developed relationships. I spent most of the weekend to make sure I did not fail my students.

Now, of course, chances of more sickness, more hospitalization, and more deaths are more likely. When courses at my school, Cuyahoga Community College, went online after the outbreak, students described symptoms and fears. Literally all of them had worried about their exposure. Those who wanted tests could not get them. Some had waited in line, but had been turned away. Many had jobs they still needed to go to, and few felt they could adequately concentrate let alone prepare for class.

I'm grateful it has already been decided that my courses this fall will be fully online. It also gives me the opportunity to fully develop the curriculum and lesson plans. Creating alignment in my classes and delivering on learning outcomes is different in the virtual space of online learning. But there is great expertise on best practices for teaching and understanding how students learn in the remote platform environment.

Trump's forced reopening of schools will cause deaths of students, teachers, and their families. So I should alert everyone to The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, as they have guidance and advice for coping and dealing with the unthinkable. Their templates are for addressing students, parents, and staff in the unfortunate event of suicide or death from various causes.

Thanks, Trump, and your minion DeVos, for shattering the world of education for so many, for setting back the US in so many tragic, absolutely avoidable ways. As we get closer to voting for sanity on November 3rd we won't have to remember far back to recall why it is past time for you to step down and move aside. My duty to my students is to protect the learning environment and ending such derelict non-leadership is part of that

duty that I share with teachers everywhere. **Z**

Wim Laven, Ph.D., syndicated by PeaceVoice, teaches courses in political science and conflict resolution.

Standing Up to the Armed and Inarticulate

By Robert C. Koehler

Here's a quietly unsettling moment from the current cries for change churning across the nation:

A teenage girl is at a grocery store in the small town of Marion, Virginia. Her brother, Travon Brown, age 17, had recently become both beloved and hated—the center of controversy—in the town, because he had organized a protest against racism in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. This was one of thou-



sands of such protests across the country, but the majority-white town was nonetheless riled up over this affront, according to the *Washington Post*, which took a long, deep look at events there.

Indeed, a neighbor had burned a cross on the family's lawn after the protest and wound up getting arrested. That was by no means the end of the unrest. At the store, the *Post* informed us, Ray'Kia "was confronted by a stranger . . . who asked the 16-year-old if she was Travon's sister and then pulled up his shirt to reveal a handgun."

Get it?

This is the USA, land of the Second Amendment. The stranger wasn't threatening to murder a young, African-American woman (I don't think), just tossing a warning into her awareness that armed, white America will never change. Guns are the speech of the inarticulate. I begin with this fleeting moment—nothing further came of it—simply because it captures both the worst and best of who we are. This was not the end of the protest movement in Marion, nor has Donald Trump's infusion of secret, federal "police" into Portland, Oregon—with more of the same coming to other cities, including Chicago, where I live—put an end to the nation's protest

movements: the demands for change and consciousness shift. But I see a surreal symmetry here. The inarticulate but oh-so-powerful President Trump is sending the same sort of message...to a city, to a country.

The message can probably be summed up thus: This is a divided nation. Always has been, always will be. White people run things here and that isn't going to change. We live in an us-vs.-them world. Get used to it. Stay in your place, whoever you are.

Trump is tapping into the same consciousness as the guy in the grocery store. American fascism is always a force waiting to be born.

As Juan Cole writes: "It now appears clear that part of that strategy is to send Federal agents dressed like Iraq War troops to Democratic-run cities, on the pretext of protecting Federal property, and then for them to attack and provoke Black Lives Matter and Defund the Police protesters, causing violence to escalate and using it...to scare the suburbs. The exercise also has the advantage for Trump of entrenching a new form of secret police and of turning Federal agents into instruments of his authoritarianism."

As some writers have pointed out, it could also be Trump's re-election strategy:

"In this regard, Trump appears to be following Richard Nixon's 1968 'Southern Strategy,' perhaps even on the advice of former Nixon advisor Roger Stone," Thom Hartmann writes. "Provoke violence, make cities burn, and then promise to keep white people safe with 'law and order.'"

What's crucial here is not to give them what they want, i.e., a pseudo-civil war, which will be crushed by the heavily armed "good guys"—the ones firing teargas and rubber bullets, arresting protesters for no apparent reason and throwing them into unmarked cars.

In this context, meet "Naked Athena." Actually, she is an unidentified woman, but she was thus dubbed when photos of her appearance—wearing nothing but a face mask and a stocking cap—at a Portland protest rally, taken by a photographer for the Portland-based *Oregonian*, went public.

The photographer had been covering a protest into the wee hours when, according to the *Oregonian*, at nearly 2:00 AM, as police officers stood in a confrontational faceoff with a crowd of protesters, suddenly "a naked woman appeared. She walked out to the intersection in front of where police were standing... She paced the area near the cross-

walk. She laid down, kicking up her feet. She did ballet poses.” At one point, police officers shot pepper balls at her feet. She stayed put.

Basically, everyone was stunned. After about ten minutes, the police simply walked away.

The photographer, Dave Killen, said: “She was incredibly vulnerable. It would have been incredibly painful to be shot with any of those munitions with no clothes on.”

Perhaps what’s most stunning here is the power of vulnerability. And so I return to Travon Brown, and the second protest he organized in Marion. Yes, the protesters were met by a crowd of counter-protesters, who, as the *Post* reports, started shouting things at them like “Antifa sucks” and “Go home!” An-

ger bubbled.

“When protesters began to talk back, Travon turned and shushed them,” according to the *Post*. “He knelt near the front, his right fist raised to the air.” As he did so, the caustic sarcasm from the counter-protesters continued. But then . . .

“Travon began shouting ‘I love you’ across the divide, and soon all the protesters were shouting it and the faces opposite them were momentarily quiet and confused.”

And later the chief of the county sheriff’s department shook his hand, happily reporting that not a single person had been arrested.

As Jeffrey Isaac wrote, when Brown cried out “love!” . . . “he seems to have meant it in the way that Martin Luther King, Jr. meant it—not as

mere sentiment of affection, but as ‘agape,’ an active performance of human solidarity, a way of engaging with one’s oppressors, and communicating with bystanders . . .”

Love—so much deeper, so much more vulnerable, so much more powerful than hate. In the long run, this is the force that will create the change so many of us are calling for. **Z**

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We Must Not Let Masters of Capital Define the Post-COVID World

C.J. Polychroniou interviews Noam Chomsky



C.J. Polychroniou: It's been argued by many, from various quarters, that COVID-19 has been a game changer. Do you concur with this view, or are we talking of a temporary situation, with a return to the "business as usual" approach being the most likely scenario once this health crisis is over?

Noam Chomsky: There is no way to predict. Those who have primary responsibility for the multiple crises that imperil us today are hard at work, relentlessly, to ensure that the system they created, and from which they have greatly benefited, will endure—and in an even harsher form, with more intense surveillance and other means of coercion and control. Popular forces are mobilizing to counter these malign developments. They seek to dismantle the destructive policies that have led us to this uniquely perilous moment of human history, and to move toward a world system that gives priority to human rights and needs, not the prerogatives of concentrated capital.

We should take a few moments to clarify to ourselves the stakes in the bitter class war that is taking shape as the post-pandemic world is being forged. The stakes are immense. All are rooted in the suicidal logic of unregulated capitalism, and at a deeper level in its very nature, all becoming more apparent during the neoliberal plague of the past 40 years. The crises have been exacerbated by malignancies that have surfaced as these destructive tendencies took their course. The most ominous are appearing in the most powerful state in human history—not a good omen for a world in crisis.

The stakes were spelled out in the setting of the Doomsday Clock last January. Each year of Trump's presidency, the minute hand has been moved closer to midnight. Two years ago, it reached the closest it has been

since the Clock was first set after the atomic bombings. This past January, the analysts abandoned minutes altogether and moved to seconds: 100 seconds to midnight. They reiterated the prime concerns: nuclear war, environmental destruction and deterioration of democracy, the last of these because the only hope of dealing with the two existential crises is vibrant democracy in which an informed population is directly engaged in determining the fate of the world.

Since January, Trump has escalated each of these threats to survival. He has continued his project of dismantling the arms control regime that has provided some protection against nuclear disaster. So far this year, he has terminated the Open Skies Treaty, proposed by Eisenhower, and imposed frivolous conditions to block the re-negotiation of New Start, the last pillar of the system. He is now considering ending the moratorium on nuclear tests, "an invitation for other nuclear-armed countries to follow suit," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

The military industry can scarcely control its euphoria over the flood of gifts from the public to develop new weapons to destroy us all, encouraging adversaries to do likewise so that down the road, new grants will flow to try to counter the new threats to survival. A hopeless task, as virtually every specialist knows, but that is not pertinent; what matters is that public largesse should flow into the right pockets.

Trump also has continued his dedicated campaign to destroy the environment that sustains human life. His FY 2020 budget proposal, issued while the pandemic was raging, called for further defunding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health-related components for government, compensated by increased support for the fos-



It is quite an achievement in a mere six months to have significantly escalated all three of the threats to survival that have moved the Doomsday Clock toward midnight, while at the same time, administering a spectacular failure to deal with the pandemic

oil fuel industries that are destroying the prospects for survival. And, as usual, more funding for the military and for the [border] wall that is a central part of his electoral strategy. The corporate leaders Trump has installed to supervise environmental destruction are quietly eliminating regulations that somewhat constrain the damage and that protect the population from poisoning water supplies and the air they breathe. The latter reveals sharply the malevolence of the Trump phenomenon. In the midst of an unprecedented respiratory pandemic, Trump's minions are seeking to increase air pollution, which makes COVID-19 more deadly, endangering tens of thousands of Americans. But it doesn't much matter. Most have no choice but to live near the polluting plants—[those] who are poor and Black, and who vote the “wrong” way.

Again, there are beneficiaries: his prime constituency of private wealth and corporate power.

Turning to the third concern of the Doomsday Clock analysts, Trump has accelerated his program to dismantle American democracy. The executive branch has been virtually dismantled, converted to a collection of cowardly sycophants who do not dare to offend the master. His latest step was to fire the State of New York prosecutor who was investigating the swamp that Trump has created in Washington. He was carrying forward the investigation of the inspectors general who Trump purged when they were getting too close. The next projected step, we have just learned, is to be a purge of the military command, to ensure faithful obedience to the aspiring tin-pot dictator in the event of an international or domestic crisis of his making.

Trump is mimicked closely by Jair Bolsonaro; farce imitating tragedy. But in Brazil, there is still a slim barrier to executive criminality: the Supreme Court, which blocked Bolsonaro's moves to purge the authorities

investigating his own swamp. The U.S. trails well behind.

It is quite an achievement in a mere six months to have significantly escalated all three of the threats to survival that have moved the Doomsday Clock toward midnight, while at the same time, administering a spectacular failure to deal with the pandemic. Under Trump's leadership, the U.S., with 4 percent of the world's population, has by now registered 20 percent of [COVID-19] cases. According to a study in a leading medical journal, almost all are attributable to the refusal by Trump and associates to respect the advice of scientists.

In late March, the U.S. and EU had about the same number of coronavirus cases. Europe adopted the results of U.S. scientific studies, and cases have very sharply declined. Under Trump, cases have increased to over five times the EU level. European researchers are wondering whether U.S. has just given up. Europe is now considering a ban on travelers from the pariah state that Trump and associates are constructing.

The idea that the U.S. government has given up is mistaken. A more accurate conclusion is that the rulers simply don't care. Their concern is to maintain power and to shape the future society in their image. The fate of the general population is someone else's business.

The task of forging the future world is not left to executive orders. It is by now virtually the sole concern of the Senate, with a Republican majority that is perhaps even more subservient to the master than the executive. Mitch McConnell's Senate has virtually abandoned any pretense of being a deliberative or legislative body. Its task is to serve wealth and corporate power while packing the judiciary, top to bottom, with young ultra-right Federalist Society products who will be able to protect the reactionary Trump-McConnell agenda for many years, whatever the public might want.

The latest Republican effort to punish the population is to call upon the Supreme Court to terminate the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”)—as always, offering nothing in its place but empty promises.

Trumpian malevolence is merely bringing to light far deeper malignancies of the socioeconomic order that cannot be ignored if we are to avoid the next and probably worse pandemic, or to deal with the truly existential threats to survival that Trump is working hard to make much more severe.

These are the questions we face as we ask ourselves what we can do to shape the emergence from the current health crisis.

Since the eruption of nationwide demonstrations in defense of Black lives and in support of defunding the police, we have witnessed massive shifts in public attitudes on racism and growing defiance against Trump by leading establishment figures and even within his own party. Can you analyze racism in the Trump era, and speculate as to whether the country is ready for a new era in race relations?

Some insight into “racism in the Trump era” is provided by the record of racially motivated violence. According to the Anti-Defamation League, in 2016, before Trump took office, this curse accounted for 20 percent of



terrorism-related deaths in the U.S. By 2018, the figure rose to 98 percent. And it has continued since. FBI Director Christopher Wray reported that racially and ethnically motivated extremists had been the primary source of ideologically motivated lethal incidents and violence since 2018, and that 2019 marked the deadliest year of white supremacist violence since the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, Foreign Affairs reports.

That is one face of racism in the Trump era, regularly fanned from the White House. The current demonstrations reflect critical tendencies in the opposite direction. The demonstrations are unprecedented: in scale, in commitment, in solidarity and in popular support,

reaching well beyond what Martin Luther King Jr. achieved when he was still a popular figure.

These remarkable demonstrations testify to significant changes in popular consciousness. Trump, of course, has been trying hard to stir up his white supremacist voting bloc while tweeting wild charges about how the country is under siege by the violent radicals who run the Democratic Party. But his familiar techniques do not seem to be working as before. So far, the [short-term] goals of the demonstrators seem to be mostly focused on policing. This focus on police practices leads directly to inquiry into much more fundamental features of American society. There is ample evidence



The demonstrations are unprecedented: in scale, in commitment, in solidarity and in popular support, reaching well beyond what Martin Luther King Jr. achieved when he was still a popular figure

Photo by Johnny Silvercloud/Shutterstock.com

that police violence in the U.S. is well beyond comparable societies, but it doesn't take place in a social vacuum. The U.S. is a far more violent society.

Violence, of course, isn't in the genes. It arises from social maladies that are reflected in many aspects of the society, not least its very low ranking among OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] countries in social justice measures. It's clear why these maladies have a radically disproportionate impact on the Black community. Police violence is a symptom, which cannot

be cured while ignoring its roots.

The spread of protests, especially to small-town America, has also brought to light the utterly weird phenomenon of the militia movement in the United States. To what extent is the political ideology of the Republican Party under Trump linked to the extreme anti-government ideology of the militia movement?

Apart from the assault on the Michigan State Legislature by the armed Michigan Liberty Militia ("very good people," Donald Trump

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assured us), the most dramatic recent case was at the village of Bethel, Ohio. A peaceful demonstration of a few dozen people in support of Black Lives Matter was attacked by 700 counter-protesters from motorcycle gangs, “back the blue” groups, and proponents of the Second Amendment, many armed or with baseball bats and clubs. The Second Amendment has nothing to do with the demonstration, but has become a rallying cry among right-wing groups, constantly evoked by Trump, always irrelevantly, to inflame the “tough guys” he is counting on.

As for political ideology, modern Republicans like to intone Reagan’s slogan that government is the problem, not the solution. But always tongue-in-cheek. Their idol expanded the federal government (while almost tripling the national debt). It’s true that the ideology of the modern Republican party is in part anti-government. For them, government has a serious flaw; it is somewhat responsive to the general public. The flaw can be remedied by transferring policy-making to private tyrannies that are completely unaccountable to the public. But government is sometimes the





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solution for Republicans. One instance is when state power is needed to crush popular interference with the doctrines of the faith, the hallmark of neoliberalism from its origins

in interwar Vienna, as we discussed earlier. Government is also the solution for the huge public subsidies for the corporate sector, and more visibly, when the corporate crime wave

that has been unleashed by neoliberal principles crashes the economy, as has been happening regularly since Reagan. The masters then run hat in hand to the nanny state to be bailed out. That is happening again today, though this time the corporate greed mandated by neoliberal doctrine is only partially responsible; when the pandemic struck, corporations that had been enriching wealthy shareholders and management with stock buybacks have been demanding, and receiving, public largesse as usual.

On top of that, it always makes sense not to let an opportunity go to waste. Thanks to friends in high places, “Nearly 82 percent of the benefits from the tax law change [in the coronavirus stimulus] will go to people making \$1m or more annually in 2020.”

The guiding neoliberal principle is simply a sharper version of the traditional understanding that the proper function of government is to “protect the minority of the opulent against the majority,” as James Madison instructed at the Constitutional Convention. Government’s prime concern is the welfare of “the men of best quality,” as they called themselves a century earlier during the first modern democratic revolution in 17th-century England. The “rabble” will somehow fend for themselves.

How? In the neoliberal world, the solution for them is to join the precariat, deprived of support systems (“there is no society”), health programs, child care, vacations, secure pensions, in fact any way to escape the ravages of the market, whatever it brings.

Pensions illustrate neoliberal logic well. The first step has been to dissolve them into private 401(k)s. That might lead to higher returns for those who are lucky, and to disaster for those who are not, but either way, withdrawal of security turns people’s minds away from “dangerous illusions” like solidarity and mutual support to isolation in an uncertain market. The next step has just been taken by

Eugene Scalia, who was chosen to be labor secretary on the basis of his credentials as a corporate lawyer strongly opposed to labor rights. Under the cover of the pandemic, he quietly opened the 401(k) market to the destructive private equity firms, offering them a huge source of profit and inflated management fees.

Proceeding further, after firing the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, who stepped out of line by exploring his swamp in Washington, Trump nominated as his replacement Jay Clayton, a private equity lawyer who is a long-time advocate of changing federal law “to let asset managers funnel more money from retirees to those high-risk, high-fee firms,” David Sirota reports in another of his invaluable exposés of state-corporate crimes. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which monitors these shady organizations, issued another scathing report on their malpractice, which Sirota interprets, plausibly, as a “desperate cry for help” to prevent the stagecoach robbery underway. But to head off that threat, Sirota notes further, the Supreme Court quietly “restricted the SEC’s power to punish private equity firms.”

The circle tightens. Hold on to your hats as the new age is forged by the masters, step by step—if we let them have their way.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, Joe Biden seems to have recognized that many of the problems facing the contemporary United States are structural, not cyclical. Indeed, Biden seems to have moved further to the left since Bernie Sanders suspended his presidential campaign on April. This raises the interesting question on whether Biden himself has changed or whether it is the politics and culture of the Democratic Party itself that have changed. Can you comment on the policy agenda of Biden and on the possibly changing face of the Democratic Party?

What Biden recognizes I don't know. We can however read his program, which has been pressed well to the left. Not by the Democratic National Committee or the donor class. Rather by direct engagement of Sanders and his associates, and most important, by the constant activism of the groups that the Sanders campaign brought together and inspired. Whether the face will continue to change depends on whether these forces will continue to mobilize and to act.

It's well to remember the traditional left perspective on the quadrennial extravaganzas, including the current one.

There is an official doctrine that politics reduces to voting in an election, and then going home to leave matters to others. That's a wonderful way to suppress the population and maintain authoritarian control. The terminology that is used to implement this technique of control is "vote for X," and you've fulfilled your responsibility as a citizen.

The establishment doctrine is available both for those who favor government policy and those who oppose it. In the latter form, it has recently been called "lesser evil voting," given the acronym LEV.

The traditional left doctrine is very different. It holds that politics consists of constant activism to resist oppression, not only from government, but from even harsher private power, and to develop people's movements to promote justice and popular control of institutions. Every few years an event comes around called an "election." One takes a few minutes to see if there is a significant difference between the candidates, and if there is, to take another few minutes to vote against the worst one and then get back to work. To illustrate the choice, consider global warming, plainly a critical matter (for some, like me, the most critical in human history, along with nuclear war). Democrats and Republicans differ

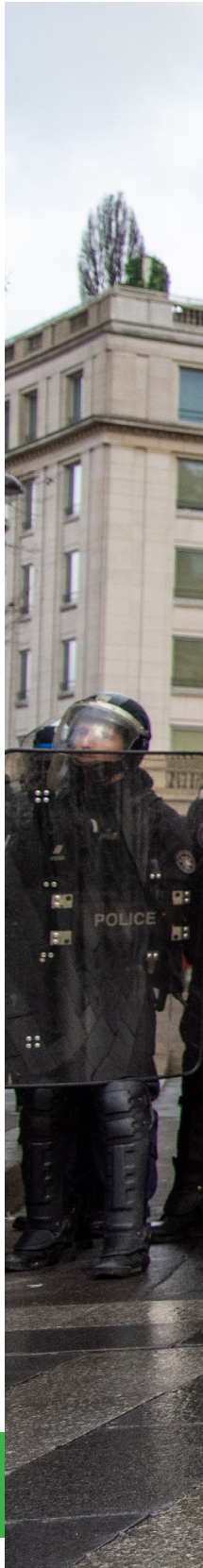
sharply on the issue. The latest study by the Pew Research Center finds that,

Americans continue to be deeply politically divided over how much human activity contributes to climate change. About seven-in-ten Democrats (72%) say human activity contributes a great deal to climate change, compared with roughly two-in-ten Republicans (22%), a difference of 50 percentage points. The difference is even wider among those at the ends of the ideological spectrum. A large majority of liberal Democrats (85%) say human activity contributes a great deal to climate change. Only 14% of conservative Republicans say the same.

This coming November, the difference between the candidates is a chasm. **Z**

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10 Reasons Why Defunding Police Should Lead to Defunding War

By Medea Benjamin and Zoltán Grossman



A woman with dark, curly hair is wearing a yellow, crinkled face mask. She is holding a large, white, corrugated cardboard sign in front of her chest. The sign has blue, hand-painted text that reads: "DEAR WHITE PEOPLE RETWEETS AREN'T ENOUGH". The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a street.

DEAR WHITE
PEOPLE
RETWEETS
AREN'T
ENOUGH

Since George Floyd was murdered, we have seen an increasing convergence of the “war at home” against Black and brown people with the “wars abroad” that the U.S. has waged against people in other countries. Army and National Guard troops have been deployed in U.S. cities, as militarized police treat our cities as occupied war zones. In response to this “endless war” at home, the growing and thunderous cries for defunding the police have been echoed by calls for defunding the Pentagon’s wars. Instead of seeing these as two separate but related demands, we should see them as intimately linked, since the racialized police violence on our streets and the racialized violence the U.S. has long inflicted on people around the world are mirror reflections of each other.

We can learn more about the war at home by studying the wars abroad, and learn more about the wars abroad by studying the war at home. Here are some of those connections:

1. The U.S. kills people of color at home and abroad. The United States was founded on the ideology of white supremacy, from the genocide against Native Americans to upholding the system of slavery. U.S. police kill about 1,000 people per year, disproportionately in the Black community and other communities of color. U.S. foreign policy is similarly based on the white superiority-derived concept of “American exceptionalism,” in tandem with European partners. The endless series of wars the U.S. military has fought abroad would not be possible without a view of the world that dehumanizes foreign peoples. “If you want to bomb or invade a foreign country filled with black- or brown-skinned people, as the United States military so often does, you have to first demonize those people, dehumanize them, suggest they’re backward people in need of saving or savage people in

need of killing,” said journalist Mehdi Hasan. The U.S. military has been responsible for the deaths of many hundreds of thousands of Black and brown people around the world, and the denial of their rights to national self-determination. The double standard that sanctifies the lives of U.S. troops and citizens, but disregards the people whose countries the Pentagon and its allies destroy is as hypocritical as the one that values white lives over Black and brown lives at home.

2. Just as the U.S. was created by taking over the lands of Indigenous peoples by force, so America as an empire uses war to expand access to markets and resources. Settler colonialism has been an “endless war” at home against Indigenous nations, who were colonized when their lands were still defined as foreign territories, to be annexed for their fertile land and natural resources. The Army forts stationed in Native nations back then were the equivalent of foreign military bases today, and the Native resisters were the original “insurgents” who were in the way of American conquest. The “Manifest Destiny” colonization of Native lands morphed into overseas imperial expansion, including the seizure of Hawai’i, Puerto Rico, and other colonies, and the counterinsurgency wars in the Philippines and Vietnam. In the 21st century, U.S.-led wars have destabilized the Middle East and Central Asia, while increasing control over the region’s fossil fuel resources. The Pentagon has used the template of the Indian Wars to frighten the American public with the specter of “lawless tribal regions” that need to be “tamed,” within countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Meanwhile, Wounded Knee in 1973 and Standing Rock in 2016 show how settler colonialism can become remilitarized back in



Photo by bgrocker/Shutterstock.com

The police and military are both internally plagued by racism



the U.S. “homeland.” Stopping oil pipelines and toppling Columbus statues shows how Indigenous resistance can also be renewed in the heart of the empire.

3. The police and military are both internally plagued by racism. With the Black Lives Matter protests, many people have now learned about the origins of U.S. police in all-white slave patrols. It is no accident that hiring and promotion within police departments have historically favored whites, and officers of color around the country continue to sue their departments for discriminatory practices. The same is true in the military, where segregation was official policy until 1948. Today, people of color are pursued to fill the bottom ranks, but not the top positions. Military recruiters set up recruiting stations in communities of color, where government disinvestment in social services and education makes the military one of the few ways to not only get a job, but access to health care and a free college education. That’s why about 43 percent of the 1.3 million men and women on active duty are people of color, and Native Americans serve in the Armed Forces at 5 times the national average. But the upper echelons of the military remain almost exclusively a white-boys’ club (of the 41 senior commanders, only 2 are Black and only one is a woman). Under Trump, racism in the military is on the rise. A 2019 survey found that 53 percent of servicemembers of color said they had seen examples of white nationalism or ideologically driven racism among their fellow troops, a number up significantly from the same poll in 2018. Far-right militias have attempted to both infiltrate the military and collude with police.

4. The Pentagon’s troops and “surplus” weapons are being used on our streets. Just as the Pentagon often uses the language of “police actions” to describe its foreign interventions, police are being militarized within the U.S. When the Pentagon ended up in the 1990s with weapons of war it no longer needed, it created the “1033 Program” to distribute armored personnel carriers, submachine guns, and even grenade launchers to police departments. More than \$7.4 billion in military equipment and goods have been transferred to more than 8,000 law enforcement agencies—turning the police into occupation forces and our cities into war zones. We saw this vividly in 2014 in the aftermath of the killing of Michael Brown, when police flush with military gear made the streets of Ferguson, Missouri look like Iraq. More recently, we saw these militarized police forces deployed against the George Floyd Rebellion, with military helicopters overhead, and the Minnesota Governor comparing the deployment to an “overseas war.” Trump has deployed federal troops and wanted to send in more, much as active-duty troops were previously used against several workers’ strikes in the 1890s-1920s, the Bonus Army veterans’ protests of 1932, and Black uprisings in Detroit in 1943 and 1967, in multiple cities in 1968 (after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.), and in Los Angeles in 1992 (after the acquittal of the police who had beaten Rodney King). Sending in soldiers trained for combat only makes a bad situation worse, and this can open the eyes of Americans to the shocking violence with which the U.S. military tries, but often fails, to quell dissent in occupied countries. Congress may now object to the transfer of military equipment to police, and Pentagon officials may object to using troops against U.S. citizens at home, but they rarely object when the targets are foreigners or even U.S. citizens who live abroad.

5. U.S. interventions abroad, especially the “War on Terror,” erode our civil liberties at home. Techniques of surveillance that are tested on foreigners have long been imported to suppress dissent at home, ever since occu-

pations in Latin America and the Philippines. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, while the U.S. military was purchasing super drones to kill U.S. enemies (and often innocent civilians) and collect intelligence on entire cities, U.S. police departments began buying smaller, but powerful, spy drones. Black Lives Matter protesters have recently seen these “eyes in



the sky” spying on them. This is just one example of the surveillance society that the U.S. has become since 9/11. The so-called “War on Terror” has been a justification for the tremendous expansion of government powers at home—broad “data mining,” increased the secrecy of federal agencies, No-Fly lists to prohibit people tens of thousands of people from

traveling, and vast government spying on social, religious and political groups, from the Quakers to Greenpeace to the ACLU, including military spying on antiwar groups. The use of unaccountable mercenaries abroad also makes their use more likely at home, as when Blackwater private security contractors were flown from Baghdad to New Orleans in the





I AM A MOTHER

PLEASE DON'T KILL

MY KIDS

wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, to be used against the devastated Black community. And in turn, if police and armed far-right militias and mercenaries can commit violence with impunity in the homeland, it normalizes and enables even great violence elsewhere.

6. The xenophobia and Islamophobia at the heart of the “War on Terror” has fed hatred of immigrants and Muslims at home. Just as wars abroad are justified by racism and religious bias, they also feed white and Christian supremacy at home, as could be seen in Japanese-American incarceration in the 1940s, and anti-Muslim sentiment that rose in the 1980s. The 9/11 attacks precipitated hate crimes against Muslims and Sikhs, as well as a federally imposed travel ban that denies entrance to the U.S. for people from entire countries, separating families, depriving students of access to universities, and detaining immigrants in private prisons. Senator Bernie Sanders, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, said, “When our elected leaders, pundits, and cable news personalities promote relentless fearmongering about Muslim terrorists, they inevitably create a climate of fear and suspicion around Muslim American citizens—a climate in which demagogues like Trump can thrive.” He also decried the xenophobia resulting from turning our immigration debate into a debate about Americans’ personal security, pitting millions of U.S. citizens against undocumented and even documented immigrants. The militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, using hyperbolic claims of infiltrating criminals and terrorists, has normalized the use of drones and checkpoints that bring the techniques of authoritarian control into the “homeland.” (Meanwhile, U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel were also deployed to the borders of occupied Iraq.)

7. Both the military and the police suck up enormous amounts of taxpayer dollars that should be used for building a just, sustainable, and equitable society. Americans are already participating in supporting state violence, whether we realize it or not, by paying taxes to the police and military that carry it out in our names. Police budgets account for an astronomical percentage of cities’ discretionary funds compared to other crucial community programs, ranging from 20 to 45 percent of discretionary funding in major metropolitan areas. Per capita police spending in the city of Baltimore for 2020 is an astounding \$904 (imagine what every resident could do with \$904). Nationwide, the U.S. spends more than twice as much on “law and order” as it does on cash welfare programs. This trend has been widening since the 1980s, as we have taken funds out of poverty programs to put into fighting crime, the inevitable consequence of that neglect. The same pattern is true with the Pentagon budget. The 2020 military budget of \$738 billion is larger than the next ten countries combined. The *Washington Post* reported that if the U.S. spent the same proportion of its GDP on its military as most European countries do, it “could fund a universal child-care policy, extend health insurance to the approximately 30 million Americans who lack it, or provide substantial investments in repairing the nation’s infrastructure.” Closing the 800+ overseas military bases alone would save \$100 billion dollars a year. Prioritizing the police and military means deprioritizing resources for community needs. Even President Eisenhower described military spending in 1953 as “a theft from those who hunger and are not fed.”

8. Repressive techniques used abroad

inevitably come home. Soldiers are trained to see most of the civilians they encounter abroad as a potential threat. When they return from Iraq or Afghanistan, they discover that one of the few employers that give priority to vets are police departments and security companies. They also offer relatively high salaries, good benefits, and union protections, which is why one in five police officers is a veteran. So, even soldiers who come home with PTSD or drug and alcohol abuse, instead of being adequately cared for, are given weapons and put out on the streets. No wonder studies show that police with military experience, especially those who have deployed overseas, are significantly more likely to be involved in shooting incidents than those with no military service. The same relationship of repression at home and abroad is true of torture techniques, which were taught to militaries and police throughout Latin America during the Cold War. They were also used on Afghans at the U.S.-run Bagram Air Base prison, and on Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison, where one of the torturers had practiced similar techniques as a prison guard in Pennsylvania. The purpose of waterboarding, a torture technique stretching back to counterinsurgency wars in Native America and the Philippines, is to prevent a person from breathing, much like the police chokehold that killed Eric Garner or the knee to the neck that killed George Floyd. #ICantBreathe is not only a statement for change at home, but also a statement with global implications.

9. The War on Drugs has put more money into the police and military but has been devastating to people of color, at home and abroad. The so-called “War on Drugs” has devastated communities of color, particularly the Black community, leading to catastroph-

ic levels of gun violence and mass incarceration. People of color are more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, convicted, and harshly sentenced for drug-related offenses. Nearly 80 percent of people in federal prison and almost 60 percent of people in state prison for drug offenses are Black or Latinx. The War on Drugs has also devastated communities overseas. Throughout South America, the Caribbean, and Afghanistan in both drug production and trafficking areas, U.S.-supported wars have only empowered organized crime and drug cartels, leading to an upsurge of violence, corruption, impunity, erosion of rule of law, and massive human rights violations. Central America is now home to some of the world’s most dangerous cities, leading to the mass migration to the U.S. that Donald Trump has weaponized for political purposes. Just as police responses at home do not solve social problems that stem from poverty and despair (and often create more harm than good), military deployments abroad do not resolve historical conflicts that usually have their roots in social and economic inequalities, and instead create a cycle of violence that worsens the crisis.

10. Lobbying machines solidify support for police and war industry funding. Law enforcement lobbies have long built support for police and prisons among state and federal politicians, using a fear of crime, and a desire for the profits and jobs that are funneled to its backers. Among the strongest backers are police and prison guard unions, which instead of using the labor movement to defend the powerless against the powerful, defend their members against community complaints of brutality. The military-industrial complex similarly uses its lobbying muscle to keep politicians compliant with its wishes. Every year billions of dollars are





Black Lives Matter



funneled from U.S. taxpayers to hundreds of arms corporations, who then wage lobbying campaigns pushing for even more foreign military aid and weapons sales. They spend \$125 million a year on lobbying, and another \$25 million a year on donating to political campaigns. Manufacturing weapons has provided millions of workers with some of the nation's highest industrial wages, and many of their unions (such as the Machinists) are part of the Pentagon lobby. These lobbies for the military

contractors have become more powerful and influential not only over the budget but also over the creation of U.S. foreign policy. The power of the military-industrial complex has become far more dangerous than even President Eisenhower himself feared when he warned the nation, in 1961, against its undue influence.



Both “defunding the police” and “defunding war,” while opposed by most elected Republicans and mainstream Democrats, are gaining public support. Mainstream politicians have long been afraid of being painted as “soft on crime” or as “soft on defense.” This self-perpetuating ideology reproduces the idea that the U.S. needs more police on the streets and more troops policing the world, or else chaos will reign. The mainstream media has kept politicians afraid to offer any kind of alternate, less militaristic vision. But the recent uprisings have turned “Defund the Police” from a fringe chant to a national conversation, and some cities are already reallocating millions of dollars from the police to community programs.

Likewise, until recently, calling for cuts to U.S. military expenditure was a great taboo in Washington DC. Year after year, all but a few Democrats lined up with Republicans to vote for massive increases in military spending. But that is now beginning to change. Congressperson Barbara Lee introduced an historic, aspirational resolution proposing massive \$350 billion in cuts, which is over 40 percent of the Pentagon budget. And Sen. Bernie Sanders, along with other progressives, introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to cut the Pentagon budget by 10 percent.

Just as we want to radically redefine the role of police in our local communities, so we must radically redefine the role of military personnel in the global community. As we chant “Black Lives Matter,” we should also remember the lives of people dying every day from U.S. bombs in Yemen and Afghanistan, U.S. sanctions in Venezuela and Iran, and U.S. weapons in Palestine and the Philippines. The killing of Black Americans rightly elicits masses of protesters, which can help open a window of awareness about the hundreds of thousands of non-American lives

taken in U.S. military campaigns. As the platform of the Movement for Black Lives platform says: “Our movement must be tied to liberation movements around the world.”

Those who are now questioning an increasingly militarized approach to law enforcement should also question a militarized approach to foreign relations. Much as unaccountable police in riot gear are a danger to our communities, so, too, an unaccountable military, armed to the teeth and functioning largely in secret, is a danger to the world. During his iconic anti-imperialist speech, “Beyond Vietnam,” Dr. King famously said: “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.”

The protests to “Defund the Police” have compelled Americans to see beyond police reform to a radical reconceiving of public safety. So, too, we need a radical reconceiving of our national security in the slogan “Defund War.” If we find indiscriminate state violence in our streets appalling, we should feel similarly about state violence abroad, and call for divesting from both police and the Pentagon, and reinvesting those taxpayer dollars to rebuild communities at home and abroad. **Z**

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Zoltán Grossman is a Professor of Geography and Native Studies at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He is author of *Unlikely Alliances: Native Nations and White Communities Join to Defend Rural Lands*, and co-editor of *Asserting Native Resilience: Pacific Rim Indigenous Nations Face the Climate Crisis*.



Fighting the Great Depression From Below

By Jeremy Brecher



At the pit of the Great Depression in 1930, an American country music group called the Carter Family recorded a song called The Worried Man Blues. It began:

I went down to the river and I lay down to sleep
When I woke up there were shackles on my feet.

Though many subsequent verses describe the devastating cascade of events that followed for the singer, there is no explanation of what had happened or why—just an awakening to a seemingly endless litany of tribulations. The song immediately became an unprecedented national hit. It's hard to believe that its success didn't have something to do with capturing the sense of being the helpless victim of incomprehensible disaster that so many felt in the face of the Great Depression.

While the 1930s are sometimes portrayed as a time of revolt, the early years of the Great Depression were marked more by bewilderment and despair at what appeared to be an inexplicable catastrophe. But like today, there were also flickers of resistance, which not only helped people survive, but also built the momentum for greater changes to come. Both the similarities to and the differences from today's Coronavirus Depression are revealing.

The Great Depression brought enormous misery—loss of jobs, homes, farms, savings, even the means to eat. Within three years, some 15 million workers were unemployed. Yet the philosophy of most governments, articulated by President Herbert Hoover, was that the unemployed should take care of themselves, or, if absolutely necessary, receive assistance from private charities, not from government, and certainly not from the federal government.

Misery and hunger unabated generated new forms of revolt. By early 1932, according to a New York journalist, groups of 30 or 40 men would enter grocery stores and ask for credit: "When the clerk tells them business is for cash only, they bid him stand aside; they don't want to harm him, but they must have things to eat. They load up and depart."

Labor writer Charles R. Walker observed and wrote about the movements of the early Great Depression. He prophesized "increasing outbursts of employed and unemployed alike—a kind of spontaneous democracy expressing itself in organized demonstrations" by large masses of people. "They will not be mobs—though the police will often break them up—but will march and meet in order, elect their own spokesmen and committees, and work out in detail their demands for work or relief." They will "present their formulated needs to factory superintendents, relief commissions, and city councils, and to the government at Washington." That's pretty much what happened.

Don't Starve—Fight!

A prime example of the process Walker described were the Unemployed Councils and other movements of the unemployed. Walker wrote, "the Unemployed Council is a democratic organ of the unemployed to secure by very practical means a control over their means of subsistence." Communists organized Unemployed Councils in most cities and usually led them, but as Frances Fox Piven explains, "it wasn't only communists; local religious leaders often became leaders of the unemployed, or leaders of the rural people who gathered to resist foreclosures of farms." According to Walker, "the councils are organized democratically and the majority rules." In Lincoln Park, Michigan, the chair of the



10,000 unemployed Hunger Marchers

Photo by Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com



Protesters in Washington DC. Their placards read: 'We Demand Unemployment Insurance for the unemployed'; 'Tax the Rich for Unemployment Relief '.

Council was also the local commander of the American Legion.

In Chicago there were 45 branches of the Unemployed Council, with a total membership of 22,000.

The Councils' weapon is democratic force of numbers and their functions are: to prevent evictions of the destitute, or if evicted, to bring pressure to bear on the Relief Commission to find a new home for the evicted family; if an unemployed worker has his gas or his water turned off because he can't pay for it, to investigate the case and demand their return from the proper authorities; to see that the unemployed who are shoeless and clothesless get both; to eliminate through publicity and pressure discriminations between Negroes and white persons, or against the foreign born, in matters of relief; for individuals or families and children of the unemployed who have no relief as a penalty for political views or have been denied it through neglect, lack of funds, or any other reasons whatever, to march them down to relief headquarters and demand they be fed and clothed. Finally, to provide legal defense for all unemployed arrested for joining parades, hunger marches, or attending union meetings.

Many unemployed councils were interracial and many Blacks participated in unemployed demonstrations. Black Communist leader Cyril Briggs described one demonstration as "the successful breaking down of the wall of prejudice between white and Negro workers fostered by the employers and the substitution of working-class solidarity and fraternization." According to Black sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, Jr., "Here was something new"—"Negroes and whites together rioting against the forces of law and order."

The unemployed also took part in local and national marches and demonstrations, frequently demanding relief payments, public

works jobs, and unemployment insurance and usually led by Communists; a national demonstration in 1930 claimed over a million participants. Many actions of the unemployed were met by police violence, arrests, and sometimes deadly shooting. An American Civil Liberties Union pamphlet reported, "Bans against assembly, refusal of permits to speak, the stationing of squads of police at relief stations, attacks by the police on peaceful meetings, clubbings, arrests, abuse of prisoners, infliction of maximum sentences, prosecution for criminal syndicalism or conspiracy" were "monotonously familiar."

The unemployed movement often supported the strikes of employed workers. The actions of the unemployed forced state and municipal governments to expand relief programs and, when they went broke, led the federal government to start paying for them. With the coming of the New Deal, the Councils transformed themselves into the Workers Alliance, a quasi-union for workers in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other federal public works programs. The Workers Alliance developed its own proposals for social security legislation and in 1936-7 held extensive protests that helped preserve Social Security from gutting by Congressional conservatives. When jobs opened up in the factories, many of its members became rank-and-file activists in the union organizing campaigns of the mid-1930s.

Self-help and mutual aid

In many places the unemployed also made attempts to organize economic life on their own outside the cash economy. In Seattle, for example, members of the Unemployed Citizens' League were loaned fishing boats by the fishermen's union, allowed to pick unmarketable fruits and vegetables by nearby farmers, and permitted to cut wood on scrub timber-

land. Members throughout the city organized twenty-two locals, each with its own commissary at which the food and firewood thus acquired was exchanged with barbers who cut hair, seamstresses who mended clothes, carpenters who repaired houses, and doctors who treated the sick. According to a massive study by Clark Kerr, by the end of 1932 there were 330 such self-help mutual aid organizations in thirty-seven states with membership over 300,000. But by early 1933, most of them, including the Seattle Unemployed Citizens' League, were in disarray, as they began to discover the limitations of a self-help movement living off the scraps of an already collapsed economy.

"We ain't going to stand for no more bad treatment"

Although trade union strikes were rare and usually ineffectual during the early years of the Great Depression, employed workers nonetheless organized themselves, protested, and struck. For example, in High Point, North Carolina a few hundred stocking boarders walked out at six hosiery mills one July morning in 1932 when the second wage cut of the year was posted at their mills. Other hosiery workers joined and by the end of the day 1,600 had walked out. The next day bands of strikers and unemployed workers marched through High Point and nearby towns, closing 100 factories of all kinds employing 15,000 workers. The next day 25 unemployed workers forced their way into a High Point movie house and demanded admission, saying that they were out of work and entitled to entertainment. When the police drove them out, they wrecked a motor and turned off the town's electricity, "to teach the big fellows that we ain't going to stand for no more bad treatment." The hosiery strike was finally set-

tled through the intervention of the governor, with a revocation of the wage cut. Out of the conflict developed the Industrial Association of High Point, a union open to all industrial workers in the city, with 4,000 members and committees in each of the mills.

We Are All Leaders: The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s, edited by historian Staughton Lynd, has shown that such self-organized, community-based, "horizontal" forms of worker organization were widespread in the early years of the Great Depression. According to Lynd, they were "democratic, deeply rooted in mutual aid among workers of different crafts and work sites, and politically independent." Their organizational form included "federal" labor unions directly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, ad hoc factory committees, and "improvised central labor bodies" based on "horizontal networks."

What the "fight from below" accomplished

The unemployed, self-help, and strike movements of the early 1930s did not by any means halt or even significantly ameliorate the Great Depression. In fact, notwithstanding ups and downs of the business cycle, depression conditions continued until 1940 and the beginning of World War II. That doesn't mean that these actions were point-less failures.

First, these movements often won immediate benefits for participants and other working people that ameliorated their misery and helped them to survive under depression conditions. Anti-eviction actions often restored families to their homes, and in Chicago and other cities they eventually forced governments to end evictions entirely. According to one estimate, "rent riots" restored 77,000



International Unemployment Day at the White House, Washington, D.C. Police used tear gas bombs, night sticks and police reserves to subdue the Communist demonstration at the White House, March 6, 1930
Photo by Everett Collection/Shutterstock.com



families in New York to their homes. Charles R. Walker reported that in cities he visited the amount of relief was directly proportional to the strength and struggle of the local unemployed council. Hundreds of thousands of people made it through the worst years of the Great Depression through the barter and labor exchange activities of the mutual aid movement. The strikes of the early 1930s established a floor below which wages could not be cut without threat of resistance.

Second, these movements had significant impact on governments and other institutions. Direct action like hunger marches and occupations of government buildings put pressure on local, state, and at times even federal officials to establish relief and public works programs to replace private charity. With the coming of the New Deal in 1933 pressure from those states as well as from the unemployed themselves led federal government officials to take over and enormously expand provision for the unemployed. In 1933 Congress created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Civil Works Administration to provide relief payments and construction jobs; in 1935 it established the Works Progress Administration to create mass employment across occupations. As Frances Fox Piven says, “it was direct action that forced them to do it.” It was important to get that money out “to preserve order in the cities.” There are “archival records of local officials writing to Congressional committees” saying, “Send money now or troops later.” The unemployed movement and the fiscal pressure it put on local and state governments led “mayors, governors, social workers, and labor officials” to become “the lobbying arm of the unemployed workers movement” in the early 1930s.

Third, the militant unemployed actions created what one federal official later called “A period of social danger.” These “increasing outbursts of employed and unemployed alike”

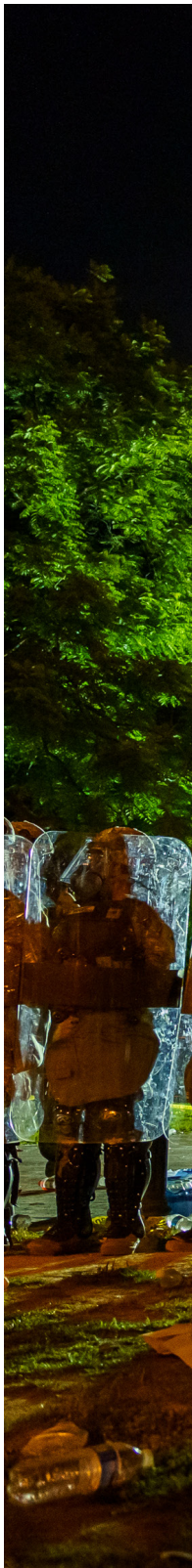
created a fear—or hope—of greater upheavals that might make fundamental social and economic changes irrepressible. They put both the legitimacy and the viability of the status quo into question. Such an atmosphere was essential in making possible the reforms of the New Deal.

Fourth, these movements played a critical role in developing the ideas, capacities, and networks that would help make subsequent movements possible. Staughton Lynd portrays the early “horizontal” unionism of the early years of the Great Depression as the predecessor to the 1934 wave of strikes and general strikes. The organizations of the unemployed radicalized and trained many of those who became rank-and-file activists in the great industrial union organizing campaigns of the later 1930s. As historian Roy Rosenzweig wrote, “to the extent that the unemployed movement fostered trade-union consciousness and helped break down barriers between black and white workers, it contributed importantly to the strength of the American working class.”

While the self-help mutual aid movement petered out, the idea of economic reconstruction through government support to worker cooperatives was experimented with by the WPA and became the basis for Upton Sinclair’s wildly popular 1934 End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign.

The early years of the Great Depression were marked by governmental indifference to colossal misery and the rise of corporatist and proto-fascist responses to it. The grassroots movements of workers and the unemployed formed a crucial part of the process that led instead to the emergence of the New Deal and the development of new and expanded forms of working-class organization.

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A line of riot police in full gear, including helmets and shields, standing in a row at night. The shields are reflective and some have "MILITARY POLICE" written on them. The scene is illuminated by bright, high-contrast lights, possibly from a fire or explosion, creating a dramatic and tense atmosphere. The ground is dark and appears to be a mix of dirt and grass.

A line of riot police in full gear, including helmets and shields, standing in a row at night. The shields are reflective and some have "MILITARY POLICE" written on them. The scene is illuminated by bright, possibly police, lights, creating a high-contrast, somewhat blurry image. The ground appears to be grass or dirt, and there are some debris or objects scattered in the foreground.

Protesters demonstrating against white supremacy and police brutality in the wake of George Floyd's public lynching have been met with illegal repression by law enforcement. Police have utilized toxic chemical and sonic weapons, dangerous projectiles, intrusive surveillance, physical violence and "kettling" to trap demonstrators after dispersal orders are given.

In a study conducted by the University of Chicago Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, researchers found not one police department in the 20 largest U.S. cities in compliance with minimum human rights standards governing use of lethal force. They called the use of force by police "state-sanctioned violence."

Victims of police abuse are filing litigation, and at least one judge has put a halt to some of the most egregious misconduct.

Widespread, Egregious Police Abuse of Protesters

On May 30, Tina Crnko was marching at the Black Lives Matter Los Angeles rally when police shot her in the ribcage and bicep with kinetic impact projectiles (KIPs), also known as "rubber bullets." KIPs can result in serious organ damage and even death, particularly when shot at the head, neck or torso.

Crnko is a plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court, Central District of California by the National Lawyers Guild, Black Lives Matter Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

Crnko was hit on her forehead above the eye. She bled profusely and experienced temporary hearing loss and extreme pain. Three weeks later, she still suffered nerve damage.

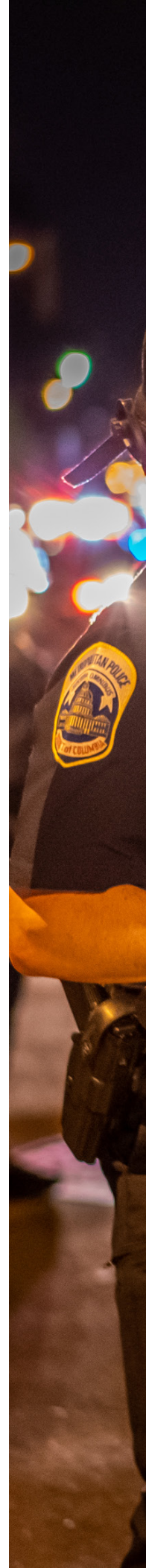
Another plaintiff in the Los Angeles lawsuit, Alicia Barrera-Trujillo, participated in a peaceful protest on June 1. When she tried to leave a little before 5:00 PM, she and other protesters were "kettled"—surrounded by police to prevent anyone from leaving. Police then fired rubber bullets into the group. Barrera-Trujillo alleges that an officer sprayed an aerosol agent at a woman with a small child who was crying. Both the woman and child exhibited pain from the spray.

Katharine Miller was on the ground kneeling at a June 1 protest when a Philadelphia police officer pepper sprayed her in the face and then pulled down the goggles on the woman next to her and sprayed her too.

"Less-lethal weapons—such as tear gas and pepper spray grenades, and impact projectiles such as sponge rounds, baton rounds, and rubber bullets—should never be shot at close range or aimed at the head, as serious injury or death is possible," according to Amnesty International.

On May 31, Minneapolis police and Minnesota National Guards shot projectiles at people standing peacefully on their front porches, a report by Amnesty International concluded. Before they started firing, the forces yelled, "Light them up." They were apparently retaliating against people outside after curfew using their smartphones to videotape the forces.

The report documented 125 incidents of police violence against protesters in 40 states and Washington, DC, from May 26 to June 5, committed by state and local police departments, National Guard troops and security personnel from federal agencies. The abuses, recorded in 500 videos, include beatings, misuse of pepper spray and tear gas, and inappropriate, even indiscriminate, firing of rubber





bullets and sponge grenades or sponge-tipped bullets.

“These human rights violations by US police against peaceful protesters—which were neither proportionate nor necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement objective—are particularly egregious as they have occurred at demonstrations denouncing just such police behavior,” the Amnesty report noted.

Even when a minority of protesters committed unlawful acts, “security forces have

routinely used disproportionate and indiscriminate force against entire demonstrations—without distinguishing, as legally required, between peaceful protesters and individuals committing unlawful acts,” the report found.

The most striking thing about the documented incidents, aside from the severity of the abuses, is “the national scale of the problem of police violence,” with violations occurring in both large cities and small towns all over



the country.

Violations of Protesters' First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment Rights

On June 5, U.S. District Court Judge R. Brooke Jackson issued a temporary restraining order enjoining the Denver Police Department from using “chemical weapons or projectiles of any kind against persons engag-

ing in peaceful protests or demonstrations.” Police cannot use KIPs to target the head, back or pelvis, or shoot KIPs indiscriminately into a crowd. Chemical agents or irritants, including tear gas and pepper spray, can only be used after a dispersal order is given with adequate time for compliance and officers must allow safe egress (no kettling).

Judge Jackson found a strong likelihood that Denver police violated the Fourth Amendment by using excessive force and the First Amendment right to free speech. Plaintiffs claimed that police aimed at their heads and groins, which caused broken facial bones and ruptured testicles. The complaint also alleges that police used “pepper spray, pepper balls, rubber bullets, flashbang grenades, and tear gas to punish plaintiffs for demonstrating against police brutality.”

The judge found that “irreparable harm” would result if the plaintiffs were not granted immediate relief because the protests are ongoing, and the use of excessive force would have a chilling effect on the plaintiffs’ exercise of their freedom of speech. “I recognize the importance of shielding and uplifting this ongoing, nationwide movement. As such, I find that irreparable harm would occur were I to deny this relief,” Judge Jackson wrote.

Property damage, according to the judge, “is a small price to pay for constitutional rights—especially the constitutional right of the public to speak against widespread injustice.” He added,

If a store’s windows must be broken to prevent a protestor’s facial bones from being broken or eye being permanently damaged, that is more than a fair trade. If a building must be graffiti-ed to prevent the suppression of free speech, that is a fair trade. The threat to physical safety and free speech outweighs the threat to property.

The first amended complaint in the Black Lives Matter Los Angeles lawsuit says that





from May 29 to June 3, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) arrested approximately 3,000 people. The police chief admitted that well over 92 percent of the individuals arrested were engaged in peaceful protest.

Plaintiffs allege that police misconduct resulted in the violation of their First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment rights. They charge that the LAPD used “indiscriminate and unreasonable force against thousands of protesters” and used unreasonable and excessive force by hitting “at least close to a thousand protesters with batons and/or ‘rubbers bullets.’” Plaintiffs attest to being restrained with tight handcuffs, denied bathroom access and access to food or water, and provided insufficient ventilation during transport, making them vulnerable to COVID-19.

On June 1, President Trump and Attorney General William Barr ordered the use of chemical weapons against peaceful protesters in Lafayette Square in Washington, DC, to facilitate Trump’s photo-op holding a Bible in front of St. John’s Episcopal Church. Police used tear gas, flash-bang shells, smoke canisters, pepper balls and/or rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.

The ACLU of District of Columbia, Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, and Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law sued Trump and Barr on behalf of Black Lives Matter DC and other protesters. They allege violation of the protesters’ First and Fourth Amendment rights, including the rights of peaceful assembly, petition for redress of grievances, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom from unreasonable seizures.

Qualified Immunity Excuses Police Abuse

When the plaintiffs litigate these lawsuits, they will be met with the qualified immunity defense. It shields officers from liability unless: 1.) They violated the Fourth Amendment

by using excessive force; and 2.) they should have known they were violating “clearly established” law. Even in the most egregious cases, it is often difficult to prove the second prong if there is no prior case finding similar police conduct illegal.

On June 15, the Supreme Court declined to review eight cases that would have given them the opportunity to reconsider the qualified immunity defense.

Emma Andersson and the ACLU are handling one of those cases. “Requiring government actors to be careful before treading on someone’s constitutional rights is the only reasonable approach if you truly value those rights and want to ensure that they thrive rather than wither over time,” Andersson, a senior staff attorney at the ACLU, told CBS News. “As qualified immunity has become an increasingly high bar, it has become tougher for victims of government misconduct to vindicate their rights in court.”

Indeed, as the Supreme Court noted in 1986, “qualified immunity provides ample protection to all but the plainly incompetent or those who knowingly violate the law.”

Since the Black Lives Matter uprisings began, qualified immunity has become a hot-button issue. Colorado made history on June 19 by banning the qualified immunity defense. Congress is considering proposals that could abolish or water down the defense.

Representatives Justin Amash (D-MI) and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) introduced the Ending Qualified Immunity Act in the House of Representatives on June 4. It provides there will be no qualified immunity defense if an officer claimed he or she was acting in good faith, or reasonably believed that his or her conduct was lawful at the time it was committed. It also specifies there is no defense even if the law was not clearly established at the time of the officer’s conduct.

Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced the Senate's companion bill to the House's Ending Qualified Immunity Act on July 1.

"If we want to change the culture of police violence against Black and Brown Americans," Markey said, "then we need to start holding accountable the officers who abuse their positions of trust and responsibility in our communities. That means once-and-for-all abolishing the dangerous judicial doctrine known as qualified immunity."

"At a time when unprecedented numbers of people are demanding an end to police murder, brutality, and impunity, we have got to finally abolish 'qualified immunity,'" Sanders declared. "This is not a radical idea: Police officers must be held fully accountable for abuses they commit—no one is above the law. If we are serious about real police reform, the Senate has got to pass our Ending Qualified Immunity Act."

"For too long," Warren stated, "qualified immunity has shielded police officers who have engaged in unconstitutional and appalling conduct from being held accountable in court—it's past time to end this doctrine. I'm proud to join my colleagues in cosponsoring this bill and putting forward reforms to help end the systemic racism that plagues policing in America."

On June 24, Republican Sen. Mike Braun of Indiana introduced the Reforming Qualified Immunity Act, which would allow the qualified immunity defense only when the officer's conduct had previously been "specifically authorized or required by" a federal or state statute or regulation, or if a court had found it to be consistent "with the Constitution or Federal laws."

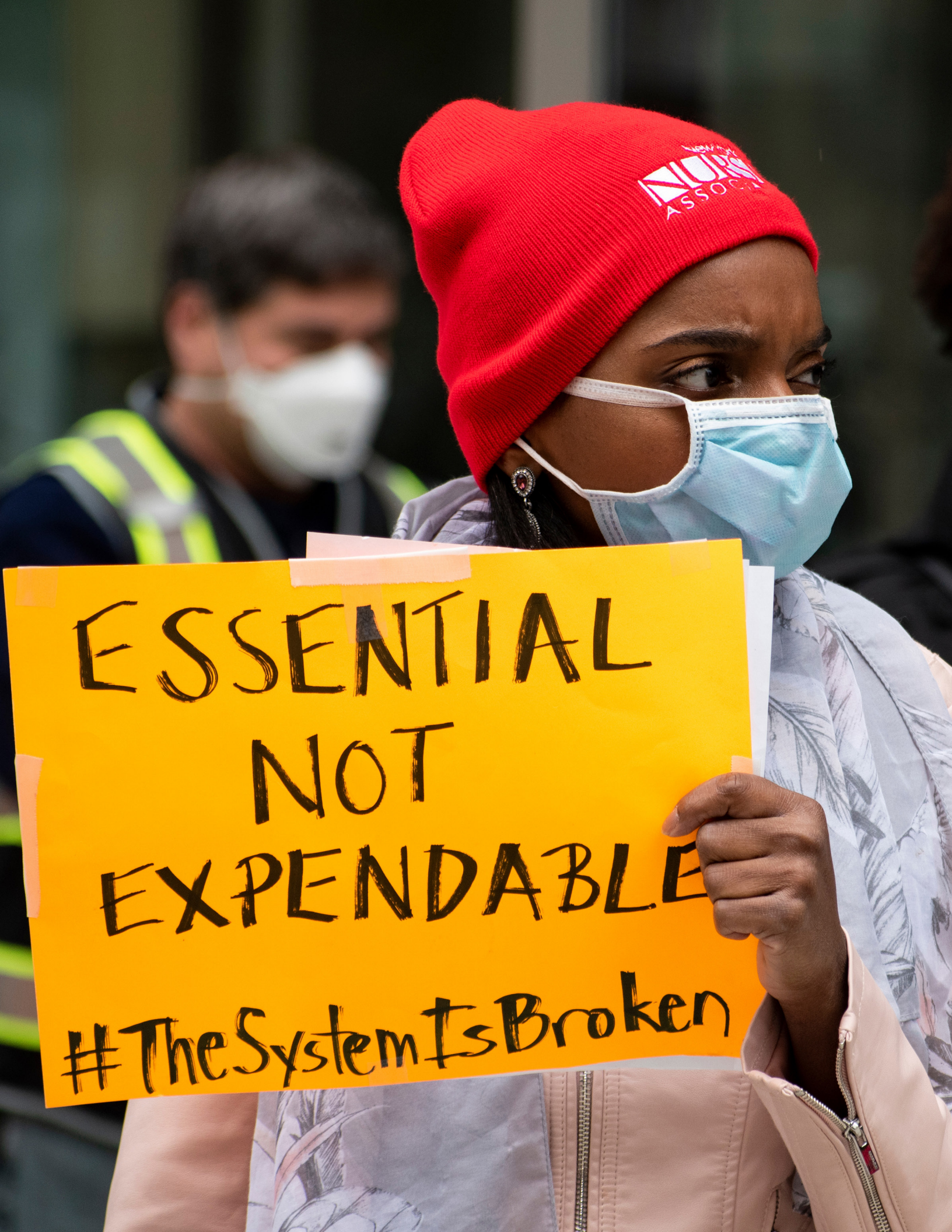
It is unlikely that Republicans will agree to reform, no less abolish, the qualified immunity defense. It falls to the people to demand

its abolition.

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The Publication of Origin for this article is Truth-out.

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ESSENTIAL
NOT
EXPENDABLE

#TheSystemIsBroken