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June 2022

Chomsky on Climate Change



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Our Country Is Trading Children's Lives for Guns

By Sonali Kolhatkar

Mass shootings are good for gun sales. In the days following the horrific massacre of 19 children and 2 teachers in Uvalde, Texas, firearm manufacturers' stock prices predictably rose. Gun owners, who have been conditioned to purchase weapons out of fear of not being able to buy more guns, tend to run out and buy more weapons in anticipation of coming restrictions. That in turn boosts gun profits and stock prices. It is a macabre cycle that appears to be fueled by Republican-led fear-based culture wars.

Gun buyers behave in ways that suggest they logically anticipate that lawmakers will respond to a mass shooting by making it harder to buy a gun. After all, when consumer products are found to be a danger to humans, they are often regulated.

The federal government routinely recalls dangerous

products—such as a line of children's bunk beds whose defective ladder resulted in the death of a 2-year-old child from Ohio. In that case, nearly 40,000 units sold to the public were recalled. The U.S. Public Interest Research Group has a lengthy list of toys that the federal government has recalled that have posed choking hazards for kids.

It makes sense to regulate harmful products, especially where children's health and safety are concerned. The government doesn't sidestep the issue by saying that it was the fault of the child or the parents that a product caused harm. Instead, it acts on the assumption that only safe products should be available for purchase, and it punishes the manufacturer.

But, time and again, gun owners' very rational fears remain unfounded as thousands of children are victims of gun violence each year, and yet firearms manufacturers are absolved of blame and weapons of war remain easily available for purchase. The Uvalde shooter reportedly bought two AR-15-style rifles legally from a federally licensed gun store just days before the massacre and used one of them to end 21 lives.

A group of pediatricians published a plea in *Scientific American* in response to the

Uvalde shooting and to the fact that gun violence is now the leading cause of death among young people aged 1 to 19. The doctors wrote, "We must do better for our children," and pointed to "the politicization of guns taking priority over public health."

How else to explain the endless proliferation of deadly killing machines, when we won't even tolerate a faulty ladder on a bunk bed?

It's true that gun sales are big business, with millions of firearm sales each year. Some gun manufacturers with lucrative federal contracts are even using their profits to lobby the government against gun control. But the hold that guns have on the nation goes deeper than plain economics.

It's also true that the National Rifle Association holds great sway in Washington via its political affiliates making large campaign donations to GOP politicians like Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) to ensure inaction on gun control. But the NRA alone is not driving the tightened grasp on guns.

At the heart of the matter is how guns have become central to the right-wing culture wars in the U.S. today. They have become synonymous with "freedom," or rather, with a perverse interpretation of the word. They are also associated with "defense," a word that appears in the

name of the manufacturer, Daniel Defense, whose rifle was used to kill the Uvalde elementary school victims.

The “freedom to defend” oneself has become a powerfully compelling cultural idea for a shrinking white population whose paranoia is being stoked incessantly by Fox News, the Republican Party, and gun manufacturers like Daniel Defense.

The gun-maker engages in aggressive marketing. In one commercial, founder Marty Daniel narrated, “There are two types of people in the world, good people and evil people.” He continued, “And just in case evil people get in charge, good people need to have the ability to fight back.”

While the language of “good versus evil” sounds simple and even benign, in fact, it is often coded language for good white heterosexual guys versus evil Black and Brown people. Or LGBTQ folks. Or undocumented immigrants. Or “woke” white folks.

What is often left unanswered is the question of guns offering the freedom to defend oneself from what, or from whom? It’s certainly not wild animals, in spite of Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy’s recently ludicrous assertion that Americans need AR-15 rifles because of “feral pigs.”

There is a fear that “there are all these criminals out

there; they’re going to break into your house in the middle of the night,” Michael Siegel, a visiting professor in the department of public health and community medicine at the Tufts University School of Medicine, told me in a recent interview. “It’s a racialized fear,” he added.

So convinced are right-wing (mostly white, male) gun owners that they need to defend themselves against imagined evil “others” that in the hours after the Uvalde shooting, some went as far as speculating that since Border Patrol had killed the shooter, he must have been an “illegal alien.” Others were convinced the shooter was a transgender woman.

The facts about gun ownership and self-defense show just how ludicrous the idea of “freedom to defend” is. The polling company Gallup found that in 2000, 65 percent of Americans cited “protection against crime” as a reason for owning firearms. In 2021, that number jumped to 88 percent. At the same time, violent crime and property crime rates nationwide have dramatically fallen since the 1990s. Meanwhile, studies show that guns are extremely rarely used in self-defense and that it is far more common that they are used to commit assaults, homicides, or suicides or are accidentally

discharged.

“This is a charade,” said Siegel of the self-defense trope. “This is not an issue of freedom. The Republicans who are refusing to support these laws, they’re not standing up for freedom.” If parents and children are justifiably afraid of school because of gun violence, “that’s not much of a free society,” he asserted.

Hollywood also bears some blame, using gun violence as a way to raise tension in the plotlines of movies and television shows in what amounts to a massive public relations campaign for gun manufacturers. Researchers Brad Bushman and Dan Romer writing in Quartz found that “acts of gun violence in PG-13 movies nearly tripled over the 30 years between 1985 (the year after the rating was introduced) and 2015.”

Furthermore, they write, “the gun industry pays production companies to place its products in their movies,” and “prominent placement in high-profile films can result in a significant bump in sales for gun models.” While Hollywood may not be feeding the same fantasy (“freedom to defend”) as the right wing does, it certainly makes guns appear “cool,” in the same way that the industry did for cigarette smoking.

A majority of Americans

support various gun restrictions; but the Republican Party, which has spent years laying the groundwork for minority rule in anticipation of the coming demographic shift away from white conservative voters, need not listen to the will of the people. Instead, they have gerrymandered districts, enough seats in the undemocratic Senate, and a conservative majority on the Supreme Court to ensure they remain immune from popular will.

Ultimately, the white male Republican belief that guns are a way to defend oneself from imaginary evil people is a hate-filled fantasy—a direct outcome of cultural conditioning by right-wing media, gun lobbyists, Hollywood, and the GOP. The price we as a nation are paying for this fear-based fantasy is the lives of our children and their sense of safety at school. **Z**

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The Face of Uvalde

By Danica Jorden

A teenage gunman armed with an assault rifle savagely extinguished the lives of 19 schoolchildren and 2 of their teachers for over an hour in the most militarized region of the most powerful country in the world.

Nearby, in the waters and on the banks of the Rio Grande (Río Bravo), equivalent numbers of human beings, including small children, lose their lives every day, often in full view of those same militarized forces.

On May 24, 2022, a high school student in the small town of Uvalde, Texas committed a heinous crime. Factoring in a preceding half hour during which the teen shot his grandmother, drove off in a truck and crashed into a tree, crossed elementary school grounds carrying an AR-15 rifle, fired, according to Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steven McCraw, “more than 100 rounds” into the school’s windows before gaining access to the building and then the classroom he decimated, at least 90 minutes of public criminal offenses had elapsed before 80 United States CBP (Customs and Border Patrol) agents from the agency’s heavily armed BORTAC (Border Patrol Tactical Unit) intervened and killed him.

Uvalde sits at 54 miles (87

km) from the Rio Grande (Río Bravo) river that cuts Eagle Pass, Texas from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. With a population of 16,000, Uvalde hosts a Walmart and an immigrant detention facility. Latinx people make up at least 80% of the town’s counted inhabitants, and per capita income is less than \$12,000 a year. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, 10% of residents were born abroad, and 70% of those persons are not citizens.

Uvalde is also a town where “migrants are released.” The border at Piedras Negras-Eagle Pass is currently the major point of congregation for people fleeing abject misery in their home countries. Hondurans, Haitians, and Venezuelans are trekking from the Mexican-Guatemalan border, escaping countries that vie for the highest murder rate in the world, to cross the river separating Mexico from the United States. Honduras was decimated by back-to-back, record-breaking hurricanes, and Haiti was crippled by monstrous earthquakes in 2021 and 2010, the staggering debt imposed by France and the United States for a century preventing its recovery.

In 2019, Border Patrol announced it would start releasing 25 migrants per day in Uvalde because of over-

crowding in immigrant detention centers in Eagle Pass, and as of March 2022, the number is 150. Uvalde's conservative Mayor, Don McLaughlin, who was elected unopposed in 2014 and re-elected by a handful of votes since then, pays for buses to San Antonio out of town and county coffers.

McLaughlin is the contentious politician who shouted "You sick son of a b*tch" at Beto O'Rourke at a press conference led by Texas Governor Greg Abbott following the school massacre. After being evicted from the hall for interrupting the meeting, O'Rourke, the Democratic challenger to Republican Abbott in the upcoming gubernatorial election, decried the lack of funding in Texas for healthcare, as well as the state's permissive gun laws.

But it's not just healthcare that Texas refuses to pay for. Schools throughout the United States are funded by property taxes, which are not high in a town like Uvalde. And those scant funds are also stretched to pay for Uvalde's minimal school police force, which numbers only six officers. The chief of those officers is now being vilified for his halting response to the massacre.

Additionally, Texas is a major proponent of the federal DHS (Department of Home-

land Security) 287(g) program, which obligates local police to cooperate with and support the work of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the part of DHS that pursues and captures immigration offenders. The program costs localities tens of millions of dollars annually. Uvalde is not signatory to the program, but its small police force is dwarfed by the presence of CPB, another arm of DHS.

On May 1, Fox News reporters witnessed the drowning of 53-year-old Calixto Rojas of Nicaragua, another country suffering from the recent hurricanes, which they broadcast on their network. On May 13, the Mexican National Migration Institute says the country has recovered 19 bodies in the river. Kevin Blass Cardoza, who drowned on May 19, was not in that count. On May 21, the body of a man wearing jeans and a green striped shirt was pulled by Piedras Negras authorities from the river. Three days ago, on May 26, a woman and three children, aged 4, 12, and 16, drowned as they were attempting to cross at this juncture with three other adults. All Hondurans. Over the weekend of May 28-29, U.S. Border Patrol found another 11 persons who had died of drowning and dehydration on Saturday, and an addition-

al person who had suffered the same fate on Sunday. **Z**

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Beyond Gun Control, We Need Hatred Control

By Robert C. Koehler

Another terrorist slips into the classroom, into the news.

Does anyone understand this? Even if guns are easily, readily available, why, why, why? I find it impossible even to be angry—it's hard to be angry under incomprehensible circumstances.

Instead, I find myself imagining George W. Bush giving a speech in which he condemns the latest horrific murders at . . . but instead of saying Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, he blurts out "Iraq."

These killers aren't acting alone. No one acts alone. There's a cultural and structural connection here. As I noted

in a recent column, quoting from the book *A Promise to Our Children: A Field Guide to Peace*, by Charles P. Busch, the ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in the wars we wage has changed astonishingly over the last century. During World War I, one civilian was killed for every nine combatants. Today that figure has been flipped on its head. In recent wars—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and no doubt Ukraine—the ratio is nine civilians (including children, of course) killed for every combatant.

And war is what nation-states believe in, all across the planet, but nowhere with such religious commitment as here in the U.S., with our trillion-dollar annual military budget. And I confess: I kind of understand why this is the case. It's not easy to run a country, to cohere a populace, to herd 300 million cats. But rallying the cause with a good, solid enemy—evil itself—works pretty well. In the old days, we had krauts and nips; then of course there were the commies (and their Southeast Asian allies, the gooks); and when they went away, we found the terrorists, along with Saddam Hussein, the iconic face of evil, whose anti-blessing gave us permission to launch a shock-and-awe campaign in his country and turn every school in Iraq

into a potential Robb Elementary School.

When we wage war, we dehumanize whole populations. Killing isn't easy—perhaps it isn't even possible—without doing so. And the dehumanization process is collective. I can't let go of this fact. We cannot embrace militarism as our go-to method of self-defense without giving our tacit blessing to murder, though for some reason we don't call it that. That nine-to-one, civilian-to-combatant death ratio? That's collateral damage.

And beyond the actual waging of war, we clutch the concept as our favorite metaphor. Everything difficult is a war. And thus over the years we have waged wars on pretty much every problem we have: from cancer to drugs to crime to poverty, etc., etc., etc. By calling these (losing) campaigns “wars,” we unite ourselves in the battle against a specific enemy—a specific evil. It's us vs. them. Us vs. drugs, us vs. crime, us vs. cancer . . .

Here's President Biden two months ago, speaking about Ukraine at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland. His words are both bellicose and metaphorical: “But we emerged anew in the great battle for freedom: a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order

and one governed by brute force.

“In this battle, we need to be clear-eyed. This battle will not be won in days or months either. We need to steel ourselves for the long fight ahead.”

And so we embrace the Great Battle for Freedom—with many people embracing it in their own way. Enemies are always knocking on the door, or hiding under our beds. The enemy wants to make our children uncomfortable. It wants to replace us.

And indeed this is a dangerous world, in many ways. The problem is that we're essentially blinding ourselves to the actual dangers by turning analysis and self-reflection into hatred and blame. To a large extent, the dangers we face are without an enemy.

Winslow Myers puts it this way: “In a possible emerging planetary story, we have the chance to see that we have more in common than what divides us, based in the challenges we face together. Tanks, fighter jets and nuclear missiles—and the greed, hatred and paranoia motivating their endless deployment—do nothing to address the death of coral reefs, the breakdown of ocean ecosystems and fisheries, the rise in sea levels, the mass migrations of refugees.”

And so much more. But as Michael Klare writes: “Sadly, geopolitical rivalry, not cooperation, is now the order of the day. Thanks to Russia’s invasion and the harsh reaction it’s provoked in Washington and other Western capitals, ‘great-power competition’ (as the Pentagon calls it) has overtaken all other considerations. Not only has diplomatic engagement between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing essentially ground to a halt, making international cooperation on climate change (or any other global concern) nearly impossible, but an all-too-militarized competition has been launched that’s unlikely to abate for years to come.”

This “all-too-militarized competition” isn’t just between the great powers, as the flow of news informs us. It’s also between deeply lost (and armed) souls and their inner demons. Barely a week ago, a crazed 18-year-old shot and killed 10 people at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York. Eleven days later, another 18-year-old killed, my God, 21 people (19 of them students) at the Texas elementary school. I kneel in grief and try my best to put this into context.

Gun control isn’t enough. We also need hatred control. The lone wolves out there, the lost souls, who have chosen

to play real war in response to their own demons, might seek another course of action if they had fewer political and corporate role models. The human race will not evolve by waging endless war and killing itself. **Z**

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Without a Broad People’s Alliance, It’s Hopeless

By Ted Glick

How will we transform U.S. society in all the ways that are needed? One absolutely essential element, one we do not have right now, is a broadly-based alliance of mass movements and organizations working together, challenging corporate power, taking action, growing

and generating the political energy and will necessary to overcome the tiny minority of dangerous, ultra-rich white men which currently dominates the U.S. and most of the world.

This alliance must function as a welcoming, democratic, movement of movements: for racial and gender justice and equality; for the right to organize and unionize on the job; against militarism and for justice-based peace; for detoxification and protection of our natural environment and a rapid shift from dirty and dangerous fossil fuels and nukes to clean, renewable energy sources; for immigrant rights, reproductive rights and an end to mass incarceration; for a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, a \$15 minimum wage, tuition-free public higher education and student debt cancellation; and more.

There are many issues that make up the overall program of an alliance, some of which are listed above. There is no lack of issues, and no lack of progressive coalitions and campaigns which, over many years, have put together extensive platforms on them. But as of right now, in 2022, there is no unifying, organized, movement of movements, a broad progressive united front.

We need leaders of the

many movements and organizations to recognize that this is an essential, strategic objective, and we need conscious work to take place in 2022 to begin bringing it into being.

Extensive and inclusive platforms are one key to bringing together the movement of movements which can win power. There are many different focuses of organizing and action on a wide range of important issues. Those committed to working for change in their particular area(s) of interest, for whatever personal reasons, are not going to stop doing so because of the potential emergence of a politically powerful alliance, but they will be won to the alliance and increasingly get involved in building it to the extent that they see it helping to win victories on their primary issues.

An overriding, central demand of the alliance movement must be for a redistribution of wealth and power. This is absolutely fundamental. There is no way that all of the various issues of a popular alliance can be adequately addressed absent the serious taxing of the wealth of the greedy rich, as well as a major reduction in militarism and money for war.

It is also absolutely essential that our deepening and serious climate crisis, and re-

lated environmental crises, be a top priority of the alliance. Over the last decade, this has become a major issue for many different movements. The process of making this urgently-needed renewable energy revolution, off fossil fuels and onto a jobs-creating, clean energy path, has great potential to move us towards a very different, much more just, peaceful and egalitarian world. The broad support for a Green New Deal shows that this is widely recognized.

An important aspect of a renewable energy revolution that is not always appreciated is that it will organically lead growing numbers of people toward a more deeply-felt appreciation for and connection to our natural environment. This is something very much needed in our increasingly urbanized society. We must develop an ecological consciousness and a will to act on it on a mass scale if we are to have any hope of developing the kind of future new society which sees itself as one with nature, not its exploitative and destructive master.

Indigenous culture and wisdom has been and will continue to be a key aspect of all of this. Central to that culture, going back millennia in what is now the United States as well as in other parts of the world, is an appreciation for and connection to nature. In-

digenous people for many years have been playing a leading role in the climate movement throughout the Americas.

This alliance will include those who are political independents as well as progressive Democrats, and maybe some grassroots Republicans, but it must be independent of both the Republicans and the Democratic Party.

As I am writing this we are five months away from a very important national election. Many of the groups that must be part of this alliance are/will be deeply involved in election campaigns to try to prevent the regressive Republicans from taking over the House and/or the Senate. This is important work. After November 8, however, and before the new year, would be a good time for work to begin in earnest toward the building of this absolutely essential, currently missing piece in the fight for a just, democratic and peaceful future.

(Most of the above is taken from the final chapter, "A Winning Strategy for Power, Already Underway," of the author's book *21st Century Revolution: Through Higher Love, Racial Justice and Democratic Cooperation*.)

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ident of 350NJ-Rockland and author of the recently published books, *Burglar for Peace* and *21st Century Revolution*. More info can be found at <https://tedglick.com>, and he can be followed on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jtglick>.

Sexual Assault and the American Way

By Robert C. Koehler

And another sex scandal pops into the news. This time it's the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the country's largest Protestant denomination, cringing in shame upon the recent release of a "bombshell" report detailing two decades of sexual abuse by pastors and other church officials, along with ongoing official coverup of the crimes and denigration of any victims who had the courage to speak up.

"Crisis is too small a word. It is an apocalypse," one former church official said.

Yet another American apocalypse, you might say—linking the SBC with institutions as diverse as the military, the Catholic Church, Hollywood, and of course, politicians. Whatever such institutions stand for, whatever their values, what is suddenly on public display is the fact that these values don't apply to the institutions themselves. Hierarchical power rules and officially espoused values morph, essentially, into public-relations clichés.

And I don't even mean these words in a condemnatory way. The issue transcends individual social structures. As the diversity of the above organizations indicates, sexuality—and its taboo nature—permeates American culture as a whole, and although things have loosened up in the last couple generations, the phenomenon of sexuality remains mostly private, hidden behind a wall of shame.

As I wrote some years ago: "This a world in which young people 'come of age'—come into their sexuality—in utter isolation. While violence is lovingly spread across the entertainment and news media, sex remains sealed in cringing aversion.

"We live in a world in which powerful men are trapped in their own adolescence."

And, as the Associated Press informs us, the result

can look like this:

"Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention . . . stonewalled and denigrated survivors of clergy sex abuse over almost two decades while seeking to protect their own reputations, according to a scathing 288-page investigative report issued Sunday.

"These survivors, and other concerned Southern Baptists, repeatedly shared allegations with the SBC's Executive Committee, 'only to be met, time and time again, with resistance, stonewalling, and even outright hostility.'"

The independent firm that conducted the investigation spoke with survivors of varying ages, including children, and reported that the trauma they experienced went beyond the initial abuse and included "the debilitating effects that come from the response of the churches and institutions like the SBC that did not believe them, ignored them, mistreated them, and failed to help them."

Remind you of anything?

In 2012, the Pentagon released a report estimating that 26,000 cases of sexual assault had occurred in the U.S. military—up from 19,000 the previous year—of which some 3,000 had actually been reported . . . because, you know, same deal. The victims mostly didn't want to bring even more trouble into their

lives.

Rapes are reported to military commanders, who, as with religious leaders, have an institutional image to protect. A sexual assault allegation quickly becomes an infuriating inconvenience—something way too easy to ignore. While Senator Kirsten Gillibrand has been introducing legislation every year since 2013 that would put investigation of such accusations into the hands of independent prosecutors, it has been continually blocked from coming to a vote.

The consequences of this double crime—sexual assault followed by official indifference—is deeply pernicious to the victims themselves. Last year, the *New York Times* told the detailed story of a female Marine who went through that process, winding up (no surprise) in a state of deep depression.

“Soon, her fear gave way to self-loathing. She woke up every morning angry that she’d woken up at all. She began to believe that she deserved the attack and that the world would be better off without her.

“Over the next four years, (she) tried to kill herself six times. She can still feel the scars on her wrists, but they are now mostly hidden by tattoos. Somehow, she always stopped just short of cutting

deeply enough to die.”

Eventually, she left the Marines and began reclaiming her life. The *Times*, noting that nearly a quarter of U.S. servicewomen have reported being sexually assaulted while in the military, called the phenomenon “a poison in the system.” And it ended the story in a way I’ve never seen before: “If you are having thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at . . .” and it lists the phone number.

Something large is fomenting here. It goes beyond crime and punishment. I think it involves understanding who we are, or maybe more to the point, understanding the nature of the world we have created for ourselves, sometimes referred to as “dominator culture.” Mixed with sexual desire and confusion, it can turn into a mess.

“In the dominator model the pursuit of external power, the ability to manipulate and control others, is what matters most,” writes bell hooks. “When culture is based on a dominator model, not only will it be violent but it will frame all relationships as power struggles.”

Curbing sexual assault—ending it—is not a power struggle. It’s far more complex than that, a process that can only begin with honoring and valuing the victims, set-

ting aside what we think we know, and listening to them.

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Sleepwalking into Climate Nightmares

By Rivera Sun

How can anyone sleep at night? My first nightmare about environmental crisis occurred in 1990. I was eight years old. In it, acid rain poured from the sky, scalding the skin of humans and stripping holes in the leaves of trees. On either side of a long, ashen-gray street, billowing plumes of smog chugged out of smokestacks. I was running, searching for sanctuary from the toxic waste. Nowhere was safe.

It's 2022. I'm turning 40 this summer and my bad dreams are nothing compared to reality. The climate crisis is crashing down in cascades of disasters—forest fires, torrential floods, crop failures, ferocious hurricanes, heat domes ... the stuff of nightmares.

And while I wrestle with existential dread and horrified insomnia, our political leaders are asleep at the wheel. They're dreaming of midterm elections, business-as-usual, yet another war, and hoping to pass the buck on dealing with the non-negotiable need for a swift transition away from fossil fuels.

We're running out of time.

When I was a teenager, the epic movie *Titanic* rolled through the movie theaters. Leonardo DiCaprio starred as a doomed, but handsome lower-class artist named Jack who fell in love with an upper-class woman played by Kate Winslet. The ship hit the iceberg. The band played on. The poor drowned in droves. The rich tossed children out of lifeboats to secure their own safety. It was the epic symbol of our times, a powerful metaphorical augury.

It would take DiCaprio 22 years to find a more apropos image. In *Don't Look Up*, he stars as a freaked-out scientist warning of an inevitable collision with a massive, extinction-causing asteroid. In

this film, he doesn't survive either.

In 2003, Drew Dellinger wrote these haunting lines:

It's 3:23 in the morning
and I'm awake
because my great great
grandchildren
won't let me sleep
my great great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the
planet was plundered?
what did you do when the
earth was unraveling?

The poem goes on to ask: what did you do, once you knew?

Some of us can't sleep. We know it's the eleventh hour. We know we're 100 seconds to midnight on the Doomsday Clock. We know the ecological debts racked up by our parents and grandparents are coming due. We know the future is increasingly uncertain with every minute, every second spent spewing out more fossil fuels into the atmosphere.

We can't sleep ... and we need to use our insomnia to wake up those who are dozing in denial. In the halls of power and corporate boardrooms, on Wall Street and on governing boards, we need them to gasp awake and jerk us out of this devastating collision course with proverbial

icebergs that are melting and collapsing in skyscraper-sized chunks.

All my life, I've had nightmares about the realities we're living now. The poets and storytellers are hard at work, screaming for sanity and a swift transition. The activists are mobilizing and turning up the street heat as the climate crisis intensifies. The schoolchildren are walking out of school, demanding that we act. It's time for the rich and powerful to do their part. We don't have another decade. We don't have another planet. We don't have another life. **Z**

Rivera Sun, syndicated by PeaceVoice, has written numerous books, including *The Dandelion Insurrection*. She is the editor of *Nonviolence News* and a nationwide trainer in strategy for nonviolent campaigns.

Welcome, Children

By Winslow Myers

Welcome, children, to the world we so-called adults are handing over to you—a planetary culture of lies and power. The greater the power, the bigger the lie. The Russian lie that a “special military operation” is not a war, and that the Ukrainians brought this on themselves. The Chinese lie that the Uyghurs are being well cared for in education camps. The American lies that Trump actually won re-election, or that Congress is helpless to do anything about school massacres. And maybe the biggest lie of all, that real security can come from having more world-destroying weapons than the other guy.

American children, welcome to the shame of a country that, outrageously, requires you to endure lock-down drills against a random lottery of death for the sake of Second Amendment “freedom.” Those in power fanatically deny the root cause of massacres, which is, obviously, the sheer number and availability of guns in our country—400 million of them.

Welcome to a culture that

is beyond embarrassing in its hypocrisy, that fusses and fumes and even kills over the rights of fetal life but is apparently indifferent to your safety in the classroom. Where an infantile ex-president panders to the NRA by nattering on about mental illness when he himself is in dire need of intervention for pathological malignant narcissism.

Children, your classmates keep dying because the pretty obvious 18th century meaning of the Second Amendment has been grossly perverted by that NRA, accommodated by empty suits like Cruz and McConnell along with empty robes like judges Scalia, Thomas, and Alito.

21st century gun safety is surely not that difficult. Adults wishing to exercise their privilege to possess a gun need a kind of training similar to what the law requires to license, register, insure and drive a car. Potential gun owners need to be run through an instant national background check, including at gun fairs, and wait 48 hours, and if no red flags come up, they can present documents that confirm that they have had safety training, and then properly register their gun—as long as it’s a civilian and not a military weapon. It is now technically feasible to render a gun unusable without its sensing a par-

ticular fingerprint, just as we each have unique keys to our car. These reasonable hoops are a minor adjustment and not some slippery slope toward the moment they come to take our guns.

Children, sorry to let you in on a disconcerting aspect of adulthood: violent power, unaccountable power, leads to lies on every level, such as: a good guy with a gun is the best antidote to a bad guy with a gun—or a good guy with a nuclear weapon is the best antidote to a bad guy with a nuclear weapon. Back in the 1950s when I was a child, we practiced “duck and cover,” a futile insult to our budding intelligence, supposedly protective against a nuclear explosion, but just as disheartening as your lock-down drills. If we do not change direction on this planet, what is coming will make Uvalde look like a garden party. Those experts who say that safety lies in having more weapons than our adversaries forget that there are already more than enough weapons to destroy life on earth.

We can do better on every level. But only when power becomes accountable, and that is up to all of us, those who have the privilege of voting and those who act courageously and resourcefully even without the vote, like the Russians who risk jail to

protest a dirty war.

You yourselves have demonstrated that resourcefulness, such as when Miah Cerrillo, an 11-year-old survivor of the Uvalde massacre, smeared blood on herself, played dead, and dialed 911 for help. Her fear did not paralyze her the way it paralyzes too many hapless politicians.

Or Zander Moricz, the gay president of his high school class, who gracefully sidestepped his principle's ham-handed efforts to censor his use of the word "gay" by talking instead in his graduation speech about learning to feel pride in his curly hair.

Children, we are part of a great contest, but it is not the war that so many politicians and nuclear strategy experts and arms manufacturers tell you we are fighting. We are in a world war against violence and monetized hate and unaccountable power, power that rationalizes any lie to justify itself.

A big part of winning this war for truth and accountability is our willingness to see in ourselves what we criticize in others. We are all human and imperfect. When we admit this, our hearts expand enough to feel pity not only for all the dead children, whether in Uvalde or Mariupol, but even for the powerful who may never know the joys of servant leadership, of mak-

ing a positive difference in the lives of their constituents.

Too many of us hate our enemies more than we love our children. That fear helps create a planetary culture of bullies who are obsessed with obtaining the kind of total control that puts them above accountability, even if it means indifference to the massacre of the innocent, by assault rifle or artillery or nuclear bomb.

It is not a sign of weakness to sit down with others, even others with very different views, to look searchingly together at what is our true and shared self-interest. When we do, we can move beyond empty posturing and begin to see how we might make the world a safer place for children—a world that permits children to live to be adults. **Z**

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To Tackle Climate, Our Morality Must Catch Up With Our Intelligence

Noam Chomsky
interviewed by C.J.
Polychroniou

CJ. Polychroniou: Noam, the war in Ukraine is causing unimaginable human suffering, but it is also having global economic consequences and is terrible news for the fight against global warming. Indeed, as a result of rising energy costs and concerns about energy security, decarbonization efforts have taken a back seat. In the U.S., the Biden administration has embraced the Republican slogan "drill, baby, drill," Europe is set on building new gas pipelines and import facilities, and China plans to boost coal production capacity. Can you comment on the implications of these unfortunate developments and explain why short-

term thinking continues to prevail among world leaders even at a time when humanity could be on the brink of an existential threat?

Noam Chomsky: The last question is not new. In one or another form, it has arisen throughout history.

Take one case that has been extensively studied: Why did political leaders go to war in 1914, supremely confident of their own righteousness? And why did the most prominent intellectuals in every warring country line up with passionate enthusiasm in support of their own state—apart from a handful of dissidents, the most prominent of whom were jailed (Bertrand Russell, Eugene Debs, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht)? It wasn't a terminal crisis, but it was serious enough.

The pattern goes far back in history. And it continues with little change after August 6, 1945, when we learned that human intelligence had risen to the level where it soon would be able to exterminate everything.

Observing the pattern closely, over the years, a basic conclusion seems to me to emerge clearly: Whatever is driving policy, it is not security—at least, security of the population. That is at best a marginal concern. That holds for existential threats as well.

We have to look elsewhere.

A good starting point, I think, is what seems to me to be the best-established principle of international relations theory: Adam Smith's observation that the "Masters of Mankind"—in his day the merchants and manufacturers of England—are the "principal architects of [state] policy." They use their power to ensure that their own interests "are most peculiarly attended to" no matter how "grievous" the effects on others, including the people of England, but most brutally the victims of the "savage injustice of the Europeans." His particular target was British savagery in India, then in its early stages, already horrifying enough.

Nothing much changes when the crises become existential. Short-term interests prevail. The logic is clear in competitive systems, like unregulated markets. Those who do not play the game are soon out of it. Competition among the "principal architects of policy" in the state system has somewhat similar properties, but we should bear in mind that security of the population is far from a guiding principle, as the record shows all too clearly.

You are quite right about the horrific impact of the criminal Russian invasion of Ukraine. Discussion in the U.S. and Europe focuses on

the suffering in Ukraine itself, quite reasonably, while also applauding our policy of accelerating the misery, not so reasonably. I'll return to that.

The policy of escalating the war in Ukraine, instead of trying to take steps to end it, has a horrific impact far beyond Ukraine. As widely reported, Ukraine and Russia are major food exporters. The war has cut off food supplies to populations in desperate need, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Take just one example, the world's worst humanitarian crisis according to the UN: Yemen. Over 2 million children face imminent starvation, the World Food Program reports. Almost 100 percent of cereal is imported "with Russia and Ukraine accounting for the largest share of wheat and wheat products (42%)," in addition to re-exported flour and processed wheat from the same region.

The crisis extends far beyond. Let's try to be honest about it: Perpetuation of the war is, simply, a program of mass murder throughout much of the Global South.

That's the least of it. There are discussions in purportedly serious journals about how the U.S. can win a nuclear war with Russia. Such discussions verge on criminal insanity. And, unfortunately, U.S.-NATO policies provide

many possible scenarios for quick termination of human society. To take just one, Putin has so far refrained from attacking the supply lines sending heavy weapons to Ukraine. It won't be a great surprise if that restraint ends, bringing Russia and NATO close to direct conflict, with an easy path to tit-for-tat escalation that could well lead to a quick goodbye.

More likely, in fact highly probable, is slower death through poisoning of the planet. The most recent IPCC report made it crystal clear that if there is to be any hope for a livable world, we must stop using fossil fuels right now, proceeding steadily until they are soon eliminated. As you point out, the effect of the ongoing war is to end the far-too-limited initiatives underway, indeed to reverse them and to accelerate the race to suicide.

There is, naturally, great joy in the executive offices of the corporations dedicated to destroying human life on Earth. Now they are not only freed from constraints and from the carping of annoying environmentalists, but they are lauded for saving the civilization that they are now encouraged to destroy even more expeditiously. Arms producers share their euphoria about the opportunities offered by the continuing conflict. They

are now encouraged to waste scarce resources that are desperately needed for humane and constructive purposes. And like their partners in mass destruction, the fossil fuel corporations, they are raking in taxpayer dollars.

What could be better, or from a different perspective, more insane? We would do well to recall President Dwight D. Eisenhower's words in his "Cross of Iron" speech in 1953: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some fifty miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter with a half-million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a

cross of iron."

These words could hardly be more appropriate today.

Let's return to why "world leaders" pursue this mad course. First, let's see if we can find any who deserve the appellation, except in irony.

If there were any, they would be devoting themselves to bringing the conflict to an end in the only way possible: by diplomacy and statecraft. The general outlines of a political settlement have long been understood. We have discussed them before and have also documented the dedication of the U.S. (with NATO in tow) to undermine the possibility of a diplomatic settlement, quite openly, and with pride. There should be no need to review the dismal record again.

A common refrain is that "Mad Vlad" is so insane, and so immersed in wild dreams of reconstructing an empire and maybe conquering the world, that there's no point even listening to what Russians are saying that is, if you can evade U.S. censorship and find some snippets on Indian state TV or Middle East media. And there is surely no need to contemplate diplomatic engagement with such a creature. Therefore, let's not even explore the only possibility for ending the horror and just continue to escalate it, no matter what the conse-

quences for Ukrainians and the world.

Western leaders, and much of the political class, are now consumed with two major ideas: The first is that Russian military force is so overwhelming that it may soon seek to conquer Western Europe, or even beyond. Thus, we have to “fight Russia over there” (with Ukrainian bodies) so that “we don’t have to fight Russia here” in Washington, D.C., or so we are warned by House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chair Adam Schiff, a Democrat.

The second is that Russian military force has been shown to be a paper tiger, so incompetent and frail, and so poorly led, that it can’t conquer cities a few kilometers from its border defended largely by a citizens’ army.

The latter thought is the object of much gloating. The former inspires terror in our hearts.

Orwell defined “doublethink” as the capacity to hold two contradictory ideas in mind and to believe them both, a malady only imaginable in ultra-totalitarian states.

Adopting the first idea, we must arm ourselves to the teeth to protect ourselves from the demonic plans of the paper tiger, even though Russian military spending is

a fraction of NATO’s, even excluding the U.S. Those suffering memory loss will be delighted that Germany has finally gotten the word, and may soon surpass Russia in military spending. Now Putin will have to think twice before conquering western Europe.

To repeat the obvious, the war in Ukraine can end with a diplomatic settlement, or with the defeat of one side, either quickly or in prolonged agony. Diplomacy, by definition, is a give-and-take affair. Each side must accept it. It follows that in a diplomatic settlement, Putin must be offered some escape hatch.

We either accept the first option, or we reject it. That at least is not controversial. If we reject it, we are choosing the second option. Since that is the near-universal preference in Western discourse, and continues to be U.S. policy, let’s consider what it entails.

The answer is straightforward: The decision to reject diplomacy means that we will engage in an experiment to see whether the irrational mad dog will slink away quietly in total defeat, or whether he will use the means that he certainly has to destroy Ukraine and set the stage for terminal war.

And while conducting this grotesque experiment with

the lives of Ukrainians, we will ensure that millions starve from the food crisis, we will toy with the possibility of nuclear war, and we will race on enthusiastically to destroying the environment that sustains life.

It is of course conceivable that Putin will just surrender, and that he’ll refrain from using the forces at his command. And perhaps we can simply laugh off the prospects of resort to nuclear weapons. Conceivable, but what kind of person would be willing to take that gamble?

The answer is: Western leaders, quite explicitly, along with the political class. That has been obvious for years, even stated officially. And to make sure that all understand, the position was forcefully reiterated in April at the first monthly meeting of the “Contact Group,” which includes NATO and partner countries. The meeting was not held at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Rather, all pretenses were dropped, and it was held at the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Germany; technically German territory, but in the real world belonging to the U.S.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin opened the meeting by declaring that “Ukraine clearly believes it can win and so does everyone here.” Therefore, the assembled dignitar-

ies should have no hesitation in pouring advanced weapons into Ukraine and persisting in the other programs, proudly announced, to bring Ukraine effectively within the NATO system. In their wisdom, the attending dignitaries and their leader guarantee that Putin will not react in ways they all know he can.

The record of military planning for many years, in fact centuries, indicates that “everyone here” may indeed hold these remarkable beliefs. Whether they do or not, they are, clearly, willing to carry out the experiment with the lives of Ukrainians and the future of life on Earth.

Since we are assured on this high authority that Russia will passively observe all of this with no reaction, we can take further steps to “integrate Ukraine into NATO de facto,” in accord with the goals of the Ukrainian defense ministry, establishing “full compatibility of the Ukrainian army with the armies of NATO countries”—thereby also guaranteeing that no diplomatic settlement can be reached with any Russian government, unless Russia is somehow turned into a U.S. satellite.

Current U.S. policy calls for a long war to “weaken Russia” and ensure its total defeat. The policy is very similar to the Afghan model

of the 1980s, which is, in fact, now explicitly advocated in high places; by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for example.

Since that is close to current U.S. policy, even a working model, it is worthwhile to look at what actually happened in Afghanistan in the 1980s when Russia invaded. Fortunately, we now have a detailed and authoritative account by Diego Cordovez, who directed the successful UN programs that ended the war, and the distinguished journalist and scholar Selig Harrison, who has extensive experience in the region.

The Cordovez-Harrison analysis completely overthrows the received version. They demonstrate that the war was ended by careful UN-run diplomacy, not by military force. Soviet military forces were fully capable of continuing the war. The U.S. policy of mobilizing and funding the most extremist radical Islamists to fight the Russians amounted to “fighting to the last Afghan,” they conclude, in a proxy war to weaken the Soviet Union. “The United States did its best to prevent the emergence of a U.N. role,” that is, the careful diplomatic efforts that ended the war.

U.S. policy apparently delayed the Russian withdrawal that had been contemplated

from shortly after the invasion—which, they show, had limited objectives, with no resemblance to the awesome goals of world conquest that were conjured up in U.S. propaganda. “The Soviet invasion was clearly not the first step in an expansionist master plan of a united leadership,” Harrison writes, confirming the conclusions of historian David Gibbs based on released Soviet archives.

The chief CIA officer in Islamabad, who ran the operations directly, put the main point simply: The goal was to kill Russian soldiers—to give Russia their Vietnam, as proclaimed by high U.S. officials, revealing the colossal inability to understand anything about Indochina that was the hallmark of U.S. policy for decades of slaughter and destruction.

Cordovez-Harrison wrote that the U.S. government “was divided from the start between ‘bleeders,’ who wanted to keep Soviet forces pinned down in Afghanistan and thus to avenge Vietnam, and ‘dealers,’ who wanted to compel their withdrawal through a combination of diplomacy and military pressure.” It’s a distinction that shows up very often. The bleeders usually win, causing immense damage. For “the decider,” to borrow W. Bush’s self-description, it is

safer to look tough than to appear to be too soft.

Afghanistan is a case in point. In the Carter administration, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was a dealer, who suggested far-reaching compromises that would have almost certainly prevented, or at least sharply curtailed, what was intended to be a limited intervention. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was the bleeder, intent on avenging Vietnam, whatever that meant in his confused world view, and killing Russians, something he understood very well, and relished.

Brzezinski prevailed. He convinced Carter to send arms to the opposition that was seeking to overthrow the pro-Russian government, anticipating that the Russians would be drawn into a Vietnam-style quagmire. When it happened, he could barely contain his delight. When asked later whether he had any regrets, he dismissed the question as ridiculous. His success in drawing Russia into the Afghan trap, he claimed, was responsible for the collapse of the Soviet empire and ending the Cold War—mostly nonsense. And who cares if it harmed “some agitated Muslims,” like the million cadavers, putting aside such incidentals as the devastation of Afghanistan,

and the rise of radical Islam.

The Afghan analogy is being publicly advocated today, and more importantly, is being implemented in policy.

The dealer-bleeder distinction is nothing new in foreign policy circles. A famous example from the early days of the Cold War is the conflict between George Kennan (a dealer) and Paul Nitze (a bleeder), won by Nitze, laying the basis for many years of brutality and near destruction. Cordovez-Harrison explicitly endorse Kennan’s approach, with ample evidence.

An example close to Vance-Brzezinski is the conflict between Secretary of State William Rogers (a dealer) and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger (a bleeder) over Middle East Policy in the Richard Nixon years. Rogers proposed reasonable diplomatic solutions to the Israel-Arab conflict. Kissinger, whose ignorance of the region was monumental, insisted on confrontation, leading to the 1973 war, a close call for Israel with a serious threat of nuclear war.

These conflicts are perennial, almost. Today there are only bleeders in high places. They have gone as far as to enact a huge Lend Lease Act for Ukraine, passed almost unanimously. The terminology is designed to evoke the memory of the enormous

Lend-Lease program that brought the U.S. into the European war (as intended) and linked the European and Asian conflicts into a World War (unintended). “Lend Lease tied together the separate struggles in Europe and Asia to create by the end of 1941 what we properly call World War II,” writes Adam Tooze. Is that what we want in today’s quite different circumstances?

If that is what we want, as seems to be the case, let us at least reflect on what it entails. That is important enough to repeat.

It entails that we reject out of hand the kind of diplomatic initiatives that in reality ended the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, despite U.S. efforts to impede them. We therefore undertake an experiment to see whether integration of Ukraine into NATO, total defeat of Russia in Ukraine, and further moves to “weaken Russia,” will be observed passively by the Russian leadership, or whether they will resort to the means of violence they unquestionably possess to devastate Ukraine and set the stage for possible general war.

Meanwhile, by extending the conflict instead of seeking to end it, we impose severe costs on Ukrainians, drive millions of people to death by starvation, hurtle the burn-

ing planet even more rapidly to the sixth mass extinction, and—if we are lucky—escape terminal war.

No problem, the government and political class tell us. The experiment carries no risk because the Russian leadership is sure to accept all of this with equanimity, passing quietly into the ash heap of history. As for the “collateral damage,” they can join the ranks of Brzezinski’s “agitated Muslims.” To borrow the phrase made famous by Madeleine Albright: “This is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it.”

Let’s at least have the honesty to recognize what we are doing, eyes open.

Global emissions rose to record high in 2021, so the world went back to a “business-as-usual” approach once the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic subsided—for now. How hardwired is human behavior? Are we capable of having moral duties toward future people?

It is a deep question, the most important question we can contemplate. The answer is unknown. It may be helpful to think about it in a broader context.

Consider Enrico Fermi’s famous paradox: In simple words, where are they? A

distinguished astrophysicist, Fermi knew that there are a huge number of planets within the reach of potential contact that have the conditions to sustain life and higher intelligence. But with the most assiduous search, we can find no trace of their existence. So where are they?

One response that has been seriously proposed, and cannot be dismissed, is that higher intelligence has developed innumerable times, but has proven to be lethal: It discovered the means for self-annihilation but did not develop the moral capacity to prevent it. Perhaps that is even an inherent feature of what we call “higher intelligence.”

We are now engaged in an experiment to determine whether this grim principle holds of modern humans, a very recent arrival on Earth, some 200,000-300,000 years ago, a flick of an eye in evolutionary time. There is not much time to find the answer—or more precisely, to determine the answer, as we will do, one way or the other. That is unavoidable. We will either act to show that our moral capacity reaches as far as to control our technical capacity to destroy, or that it does not.

An extraterrestrial observer, if there were one, would unfortunately conclude that the gap is too immense to

prevent species suicide, and with it the sixth mass extinction. But it could be mistaken. That decision is in our hands.

There is a rough measure of the gap between capacity to destroy and capacity to contain that death wish: the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. The distance of the hands from midnight can be regarded as an indication of the gap. In 1953, when the U.S. and Soviet Union exploded thermonuclear weapons, the minute-hand was set to two minutes to midnight. It did not reach that point again until Donald Trump’s term in office. In his last year, the analysts abandoned minutes and switched to seconds: 100 seconds to midnight, where the clock now stands. Next January it will be set again. It’s not hard to make a case that the second-hand should move closer to midnight.

The grim question arose with brilliant clarity on August 6, 1945. That day provided two lessons: 1.) human intelligence, in its glory, was approaching the capacity to destroy everything, an achievement reached in 1953; and 2.) human moral capacity lagged far behind. Few even cared, as people of my age will remember very well. Viewing the hideous experiment to which we are enthusiastically committed today,

and what it entails, it is hard to see improvement, to put it mildly.

That doesn't answer the question. We know far too little to answer it. We can only observe closely the one case of "higher intelligence" that we know of, and ask what it suggests about the answer.

Far more importantly, we can act to determine the answer. It is within our power to bring about the answer that we all hope for, but there is no time to waste. **Z**

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Unions Making a Green New Deal from Below, Part 1

By Jeremy Brecher

While unions have been divided on the Green New Deal as a national policy platform, many national and local unions have initiated projects that embody the principles and goals of the Green New Deal in their own industries and locations. Indeed, some unions have been implementing the principles of the Green New Deal since long before the Green New Deal hit the headlines, developing projects that help protect the

climate while creating good jobs and reducing racial, economic, and social injustice.

Even some of the unions that have been most dubious about climate protection policies are getting on the clean energy jobs bandwagon. The United Mine Workers announced in March that it will partner with energy startup SPARKZ to build an electric battery factory in West Virginia in 2022 that will employ 350 workers. The UMWA will recruit and train dislocated miners to be the factory's first production workers. According to UMWA International Secretary-Treasurer Brian Sanson, "We need good, union jobs in the coalfields no matter what industry they are in. This is a start toward putting the tens of thousands of already-dislocated coal miners to work in decent jobs in the communities where they live." [1]

Electrical Workers Fight for Climate, Jobs, and Justice

What does it look like when a local union engages with the Green New Deal goals of jobs and justice through climate protection? International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 569 in California's San Diego and Imperial Counties

provides one answer.

The Salton Sea area at the southern end of California is a hotspot for geothermal energy. It also covers one of the world's largest deposits of lithium—a critical component for lithium batteries and solar energy. With the necessity to replace fossil fuels in order to protect the climate, mining the “Lithium Valley” for lithium and geothermal heat is projected to produce thousands of jobs in Imperial County, one of California's most impoverished regions. A prototype has already begun. But whether those jobs will be good jobs and who will get them remain open questions.

One of the groups trying to answer those questions is IBEW Local 569. It represents over 3,600 union electricians, power professionals, and other workers in San Diego and Imperial County. [2] In 1999 it was one of the first IBEW locals in the nation to start training on solar technologies.[3] From there, its training programs grew to include energy efficiency, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and energy storage. The union office was a test site for a utility program that installs electric vehicle charging stations at workplaces around San Diego County. IBEW members installed the charging units and can power up their plug-in electric vehi-

cles at the union hall. These green technologies are helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and creating jobs for Local 569's membership. [4] The Local even hired an Environmental Organizer to be a member of its staff—as far as I know the first to do so in the country.

With industry partners, IBEW 569 owns and operates the San Diego and Imperial Electrical Training Centers, which provide state-approved electrical apprenticeships with good wages, family healthcare, retirement benefits, and college credits. The union's apprenticeship program recruits from the local community, including high schools and veteran programs, and is currently training more than 550 apprentices.[5] Trained workers are critical to the Green New Deal goals of climate protection combined with good jobs and justice on the job.

The electricians in Local 569 play a key role in reaching the city of San Diego's goal of 100% clean energy by 2035.[6] These programs at the same time provide good jobs for local electrical workers. IBEW 569 workers in San Diego and Imperial Counties have:

- Constructed over 1,500 MW of solar and wind;
- Completed more than

10,000 rooftop solar installations on homes and businesses;

- Built over 550 MW of energy storage, including two of North America's largest projects;
- Installed hundreds of electric vehicle charging stations;
- Achieved 65–90% local hire for community residents on Imperial County renewable energy projects, thanks to Local Hire Agreements; and
- Operated the largest certified electrical apprenticeship program in San Diego & Imperial Counties.[7]

IBEW 569 members have logged millions of work hours building more than a gigawatt of solar and wind projects, installing rooftop solar and electric vehicle charging stations at homes and businesses, and constructing some of the largest energy storage projects in the western U.S.

In addition to creating jobs for the existing IBEW workforce, renewable energy projects have also created new pathways into union careers for residents in Imperial County, one of the most disadvantaged areas in California. After investing in an electrical apprenticeship training facility, Local 569

brought hundreds of local residents into the IBEW who were able to build renewable energy projects in their local community while receiving training, good wages and benefits, and a voice on the job through union representation.

Local 569 is also playing a role in shaping the San Diego's policies to protect the climate, provide good union jobs, and address the needs of disadvantaged communities—the basic goals of the Green New Deal. They have advocated local hire agreements, joint labor-management apprenticeship partnering, workforce safety standards and certifications, and responsible contractor criteria to create family-sustaining green jobs that provide upward mobility and career opportunities.[8] And they have fought to include the following requirements for every energy provider in San Diego's 100% Renewable Energy Program Implementation Plan:[9]

Energy Identification: Inform customers of the percentage of renewable, greenhouse-gas-free electricity offered. Power may be labeled as “clean” or “green” if it comes from renewable energy generated from solar, wind, [or] geothermal.

Exclude Renewable Energy Certificates: Provide re-

newable energy from actual renewable sources customers can trust while creating union jobs in the community for local workers. Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) must not be marketed as “clean” or “green” so as not to mislead the public.[10]

Communication to Consumers: Send at least three written notices to potential customers, and each notice will include a description of the percentage of the power mix that comes from California solar, wind, geothermal, small hydro-electric or other state certified green power sources.

Creating Union Jobs: Procure power from union-generated sources; employ unionized customer service representatives; sign Project Labor Agreements on each Power Generation Project; sign Project Labor Agreements on Energy Efficiency Projects/Programs; agree in writing to neutrality in the event employees or subcontractor employees wish to unionize.

Community Benefits: Sign Community Benefits Agreements to include local projects and local hiring and prioritizing projects, programs and actions to reduce emissions in disadvantaged communities.

Local Project Build-Out: Emphasize development

of new renewable resources from proven developers in San Diego and adjacent counties and strictly limit the use of non-renewable energy sources.

Energy Efficiency: Develop a resource plan that integrates supply-side resources with programs that will help customers reduce their energy costs through improved energy efficiency and other demand-side measures.

Workforce Impacts: Determine 1) if the program will result in negative impacts for employees of the incumbent utility (including layoffs, work hour reductions, etc.) and 2) if the wages, fringe benefits and job protections are similar to those offered by the utility to employees in comparable job classifications.

Local 569 is trying to incorporate these principles into city and county climate action plans and into the Regional Decarbonization Framework. And they are working with several coalitions to shape the new Regional Transportation Plan to include more investment in building mass transit hubs, electrifying transit with zero emission EV buses, and developing multi-unit affordable housing along transit corridors, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Will these Green New Deal

principles be applied in the new Lithium Valley mining-and-geothermal industry? Local 569's Environmental Organizer Cristin Marquez says the union wants to make sure there are high road, high wage jobs and that those jobs are available to the people of Imperial County. IBEW 569 has more than 250 electricians and many more apprentices ready to work in Imperial Valley. The union has been presenting its program to the Lithium Valley Commission and other governmental bodies that will determine the shape of the industry. If it can incorporate its principles and policies into the lithium industry, that will mean a new building block for a climate-safe economy and a transformation for one of the most impoverished areas in California.

Green Laborers

The Laborers International Union of North America (known as LIUNA or simply the Laborers') has a reputation as one of the unions most hostile to the movement against fossil fuel infrastructure. LIUNA said the Green New Deal "threatens to destroy workers' livelihoods" and "increase divisions and inequality." [11] During the fight over the KXL Pipeline

its president Terry O'Sullivan was widely known for his attacks on "delusional environmentalists" and their supporters within labor. The LIUNA website is proudly plastered with pictures and descriptions of fossil fuel projects ranging from the Dakota Access Pipeline to the Maine Natural Gas Pipeline that the union's members have helped to construct. [12] But right alongside them it is also proudly plastered with pictures of climate-protecting renewable energy, energy-efficiency, and energy-use-reduction projects that LIUNA members have constructed. For example:

LIUNA local 271 members helped build Deep Water Wind, the nation's first offshore 30 megawatt wind farm off the waters of Rhode Island. The \$451 million dollar project created 80-100 good jobs and reduces dependence on foreign sources of energy.

LIUNA members were vital to the construction of the Central Light Rail Transit project which connects St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis. It includes 9.8 miles of underground track and 18 stations in addition to 5 shared with the METRO Blue Line in downtown Minneapolis. The \$1 billion project was funded by federal, state, as well as local sources. In 2016, the Green lines provided ap-

proximately 12.7 million rides.

LIUNA members are building many solar power plants in California, including the Mojave Solar Plant. The project received \$1.2 billion in funding from the federal government and created 830 construction jobs and 70 permanent operation jobs as well as thousands of indirect jobs. The plant is expected to generate 617,000 MWh of power annually, enough power for more than 88,000 households.

In Boston, LIUNA Local 7 members assisted in a \$63 million project to rebuild and improve public housing buildings by implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy measures that will save the Housing Authority over \$56 million annually. The project created more than 600 local jobs.

These green projects don't make up for the climate-destroying projects LIUNA members work on or the union's unrelenting hostility toward those who oppose them. But it does show that the direct interest of workers in climate protection and a Green New Deal is so powerful that even the unions that fight climate protection also have to recognize their members' interest in advancing it.

Minneapolis Janitors Strike for a Green Training Fund

On February 27, 2020 thousands of Minneapolis cleaning workers walked off their jobs and struck their downtown commercial high-rises. Among their key demands was that their employers take action on climate change. It was one of the first—as far as I have been able to discover, the very first—union-sanctioned strike in the U.S. for climate protection demands.

The janitors are members of Service Employees International Union Local 26. They are employed by over a dozen different subcontractors to clean corporate buildings like IDS, Capella Tower, EcoLab, U.S Bank, Wells Fargo, United Health Group, Ameriprise and many more across the Twin Cities. The workers are overwhelmingly immigrants and people of color.

Local 26's concern with climate goes back at least to 2009. Lots of people both on staff and in the leadership of the union care about issues of climate and the environment, which came up frequently in conversations. Climate was a popular issue that resonated for the union's members. A high proportion of them were immigrants, and many of them were well aware

of the impact of climate change on their homelands. Elsa Guaman, a janitor at ABM who cleans the United Health Group headquarters, said, "We are people from the countryside in Ecuador, and when I was young it was a fertile place. But then the droughts began, and the land didn't produce anymore. As people who lived on what we took from the earth, we had to leave. We were not alone, millions of people from the areas near my village left too, in one of the biggest migrations ever out of South America. Now I clean buildings that are some of the biggest polluters in Minnesota, which furthers the same problem that made me immigrate. This must be addressed. I think if we win green cleaning, we can send a message." [13]

But what could their union do about climate change besides put out statements and support other organizations? They learned a partial answer from California janitors who had won demands for "green cleaning." Local 26 included green cleaning demands in their 2009 negotiations. They won contract language establishing in each company an "Ad Hoc Committee" of union and company representatives. It would "review the use of green chemicals." It recognized company responsibility for a safe and healthy

workplace and "the use of materials that contribute to a healthy and sustainable ecological environment." The employer would provide training to employees on the "use, mixing and storage" of cleaning chemicals. The employer "shall make every effort to use only green, sustainable cleaning products where possible."

The janitors continued trying to strengthen the environmental language in subsequent contracts. In 2019, the union presented a demand for the creation of a green technician janitorial training program. It brought in janitors from California who already had such a training fund. According to Local 26's bargaining update for its members, "Our members are uniquely positioned to help lead the change we all need, in helping to convert to clean energy in this especially important sector. Top down policies won't work if the people who will be responsible for implementing these changes on a day to day basis don't have a voice. One key is training for front line janitors, as green technicians, so that they have the skills."

Local 26 demanded a "training program for Green Technicians (including \$0.20 differential) and expanded use of green cleaning." The union also proposed to create

a “table” with building owners and community groups focused on climate to develop “bold solutions.” They would include “GREEN NEW DEAL” policies, getting Minnesota to 100% renewable energy, reducing waste, and closing the HERC incinerator that burns trash from downtown office buildings and pollutes nearby neighborhoods.[14]

On February 27, 2020 the janitors walked out for one day as planned. They set up picket lines outside the downtown buildings. Then they were joined by youth climate strikers and other supporters in a march through downtown. Former local 26 staffer Steve Payne said,

I don’t know that I’ve ever seen a more powerful union action. There were at least a couple hundred environmental allies that joined the picket lines—which is really impressive. The chants shifted from English to Spanish to Somali, people were dancing to hip hop and Latino music. It was a great mixing of all the parts of our movement we need: white middle class environmental activists, young diverse climate strikers, low wage immigrant workers—all fighting for the same set of demands.

After their one-day warning strike, the janitors went back to work as planned. Then they

announced they would strike again—whereupon, after a marathon 22-hour bargaining session, they won a contract that included funding for a Labor-Management Cooperation Fund for a green education initiative as well as significant wage, sick day, and other demands. The janitors approved the new contract unanimously.[15]

Minneapolis janitors have started taking classes paid for by the new labor management fund. Thanks to the fund they received their regular pay while taking classes. As a prelude to the green education initiative, in 2021 the first class of 15 janitors graduated from English language classes.[16]

These examples represent only a small fraction of union-based programs that embody the climate-protecting, job-creating, justice-expanding principles of the Green New Deal. The workers involved in these “Green New Deal from Below” programs range from electrical workers to construction laborers to commercial building cleaners. Their unions include the IBEW, LIUNA, and SEIU. They are training the workers who are essential to building the new economy. They are fighting for policies that increase jobs and justice by protecting the climate. And they are actually creat-

ing the products and services that are necessary for a prosperous climate-safe future.

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The next commentary will explore additional examples of union-based, job-and-justice expanding climate protection.

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