



MAGAZINE

MAY 2023

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20 Theses for Liberation

Climate Justice

Current and Brewing
Conflicts



*"In Britain, the
silence of the liberal
intelligensia is the
silence of intimidation."*

-John Pilger



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20 Theses For Liberation

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The idea of a movement of movements is not new. The concept remains popular, logical, and inspiring yet remains just that—a concept. Near universal woes such as inequality, climate change, and fascist stirrings could pressure diverse movements into a holistic progressive bloc, and in some cases, there has already been progress towards such convergence. There is a rising desire and will for coming together, but in practice, cohesion and even solidarity remain largely elusive.

What is missing is often identified as strategic organizing, while at the same time our anti-authoritarian and pluralist values rightly cause us to shy away from rigid blueprints and vertical chains of command. However, this dilemma presents a false choice. We must get organized, but we don't need to abandon diversity and self-determination in order to come together around vision and strategy if we build our values into shared vision. Perhaps further effort towards conceiving, sharing, and utilizing a broad but unifying vision and strategy could provide much needed structure for a movement of movements to grow and thrive. And why now? Because there currently seems to be more hunger than in a long time for unity even as there is also considerable doubt about attaining it.

Below, we propose some basic insights, claims, and commitments that all seekers of new societal relations might choose to further develop and refine. The 20 theses are not ours per se, but come from many movements over years, decades, and even centuries.

Of course, none of the organizational or individual signers agree with every word of what follows. Rather, we all feel that in sum the 20 theses provide an excellent basis for debate and elaboration that can, over time, inform not just agreed opposition to existing injustices, but collective pursuit of a better world.

Here are the twenty proposed theses we together submit for consideration, debate, and refinement.

Thesis One: Foundations

To be comprehensive and liberatory, long-term aims must centrally address polity, economy, kinship, culture, ecology, and international relations because each of these aspects of life not only profoundly influences peoples' options and well being, but also because due to extensive entanglement, each contributes to and even reinforces and reproduces the defining features of the rest, so that all have priority strategic importance.

Thesis Two: Polity

To eliminate political elitism and domination, to be liberatory, political institutions will need to establish transparent mechanisms to carry out and evaluate political decisions and to convey to all citizens self managing political say proportionate to effects on them. To accomplish that will in turn require that liberatory political institutions include grassroots assemblies, councils, or communes (and federations of those) by which people can manifest

their views. It will likewise require that liberatory political institutions provide advanced public education so people's views are well formed and clearly expressed. And to ensure that deliberations and decisions are made consistent with people's interests, it will require frequent direct policy participation or, when needed, re-callable representation and delegation that utilizes appropriate voting algorithms.

Additionally, to ensure freedom to each person consistent with freedom to all people, and to benefit all people while also protecting and even advancing diversity, liberatory political institutions will need to guarantee maximum civil liberties. This will of course include freedom to speak, write, worship, assemble, and organize political parties.

To ensure diversity and continuous development, liberating political institutions will need to welcome, facilitate, and protect dissent, and to guarantee to individuals and groups means to pursue their own goals consistent with not interfering with the same rights for others.

Regarding violations, to attain justice while promoting rehabilitation, liberatory political institutions will need to foster solidarity and to provide inclusive means to fairly, peacefully, and constructively adjudicate disputes and violations of agreed norms.

Finally, in light of the entanglement of all key facets of society, liberatory political institutions will have to be compatible with new features in other dimensions of life and vice versa.

Thesis Three: Kinship, Gender, and Sexuality

To achieve an end to denials based on sex, gender, identity, or age, new kinship institutions will need to ensure that no individuals or groups—by gender, identity, sexual orientation, or age—are privileged above or dominate others in income, influence, access to education, job quality, or any other dimension of life that bears on quality of life. To attain

that end, liberatory gender and kin institutions will need to respect marriage and other lasting relations among adults as religious, cultural, or social practices, but will need to reject such ties as ways for sectors of the population to gain financial benefits or social status that others lack.

Both for equity and also for the enrichment of personality and affirmation that care-giving conveys, liberatory gender and kin institutions will need to respect care-giving as a central function of society including, perhaps even making, care-giving a part of every citizen's social responsibilities, and in any event otherwise ensuring equitable burdens and benefits among people of all genders for all household and child raising practices.

Liberatory gender and kin institutions will need to not privilege certain types of family formation or role over others, but instead to actively support all types of families consistent with society's other norms and practices. And to promote children's well-being and affirm society's responsibility for all children, liberatory gender and kin institutions will need to affirm the right of diverse types of families to have children and to provide them with love and a sense of rootedness and belonging, and will need to minimize or eliminate age- and or gender-based permissions and or restrictions, instead utilizing non-arbitrary means for determining when an individual is too old (or too young) or otherwise able or not able to receive benefits or shoulder responsibilities.

To ensure that each person honors the autonomy, humanity, and rights of others, liberatory gender and kin institutions will also need to centrally affirm diverse expressions of sexual pleasure, personal identity, sexual identity, gender identity, and mutual intimacy while they provide diverse, empowering sex education as well as legal prohibition against non-consensual sex.

And finally, in light of the entanglement of all key facets of society, liberatory kinship institutions will have to be compatible with new features in other dimensions of life and vice versa.

Thesis Four: Race, Ethnicity, Culture and Community

Liberating cultural/community relations, including race, ethnic, national and religious, requires that we rectify the negative historical and contemporary impacts of racist, colonial, and otherwise bigoted structures and neo-liberal policies and practices on countries and communities, especially in the global South.

Liberating culture and community will require implementing new participatory cultural/community institutions that ensure that no individuals or groups—by race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, or any other cultural community identification—are privileged above or dominate others. To that end, liberatory cultural and community institutions will need to ensure that people can have multiple cultural and social identities, and will need to provide space and resources for people to positively express their cultural/community identities however they choose while recognizing that which identity is most important to any particular person at any particular time depends on that person's situation and assessments.

Liberatory cultural and community relations will also need to explicitly recognize that many rights and values exist regardless of cultural identity, so that all people deserve self management, equity, solidarity, and liberty, even while society also protects all people's right to affiliate freely to enjoy diversity.

To end the reality and even the fear of colonization and race, caste, religious, or national suppression, liberatory cultural and community relations must also provide all cultural communities guaranteed access to means to preserve their cultural integrity and practices.

Liberatory cultural and community relations will also need to eliminate barriers to free exit from all cultural communities, including nations, and must impose no arbitrary non cultural barriers to free entry, including affirming that communities that guarantee free entry and exit can be under the

complete self determination of their members so long as their policies and actions don't conflict with society's overall agreed norms.

And finally, in light of the entanglement of all key facets of society, liberatory cultural/community institutions will have to be compatible with new features in other dimensions of life and vice versa.

Thesis Five: Economy

Liberating economics will require implementing new economic institutions that ensure that no individuals or classes are privileged above or dominate others and that all economic actors are able to participate fully in determining their own economic lives. To attain such classlessness, liberatory economic institutions will need to preclude owning productive assets such as natural resources and factories so that ownership plays no role in determining people's decision-making influence or share of income.

To attain classlessness, new economic institutions will also need to ensure that all workers have a say in decisions, to the extent possible, proportionate to effects on them, sometimes best attained by majority rule, sometimes by consensus or other arrangements. This will, in turn, entail that new economic institutions have venues for deliberation including worker and consumer councils or assemblies, including that new economic institutions eliminate corporate divisions of labor that typically give about one-fifth of workers empowering tasks while they consign to four-fifths mainly rote, repetitive, and obedient tasks.

Thus, instead of producing a class division based on differential empowerment, liberatory economic institutions will need to ensure that each worker enjoys a share of empowering tasks via suitable new designs of work that convey to all workers sufficient confidence, skills, information, and access to participate effectively in self-managed decision making.

Additionally, to attain equity, liberatory economic

institutions will need to ensure that workers who work longer or harder or at more onerous conditions, doing socially valued labor (including socially valued training), earn a proportionately greater share of the social product but do not earn payment according to property, bargaining power, or the value of personal output—while all who are unable to work nonetheless receive full income.

Likewise, liberatory economic relations will need to avoid both market competition and top-down planning, since each produces class rule, alienation, and ecological degradation among other violations. In their place, liberatory economic relations will need to find ways to conduct decentralized cooperative negotiation of inputs and outputs via workers and consumers councils and federations of councils, with additional participatory facilitating structures as needed.

And finally, in light of the entanglement of all key facets of society, liberatory economic institutions will have to be compatible with new features in other dimensions of life and vice versa.

Thesis Six: Internationalism

Internationalism means valuing people in other countries and being in solidarity with their just struggles for decent lives. Liberating international relations will require implementing new participatory international institutions that ensure that no nations or geographic regions are privileged above others, and that, until that is achieved, move toward that result. As a means to that end, liberatory international relations will need to end the subordination of nations in all its forms including colonialism, neo-colonialism, and neoliberalism, but also residual differences in collective wealth.

Liberatory international policy and structures will need to foster equitable internationalist globalization in place of exploitative corporate globalization, including diminishing economic disparities in countries' relative wealth, protecting cultural and social patterns internal to each country, and facili-

tating international entwinement as people desire, including implementing reparations and international exchange and aid as well as border redefinitions with these ends in mind.

Thesis Seven: Ecology

Not only for liberation, but literally for human survival, to liberate ecological relations will require implementing new participatory ecological practices that first and foremost cease and reverse unsustainable resource depletion, environmental degradation, climate change, and other ecosystem disrupting trends.

To such ends, liberatory ecological relations will need to facilitate not only an end to fossil fuels, but an ecologically sound reconstruction of society that accounts for the full ecological as well as social/personal costs and benefits of both short- and long-term economic and social choices, so that future populations can sensibly decide levels of production and consumption, preferred duration of work, degrees of self and collective reliance, energy use and harvesting, stewardship, pollution norms, climate policies, conservation practices, consumption choices, and other future policy choices.

Liberatory ecological norms and practices will also need to foster a consciousness of ecological connection, responsibility, and reciprocity so that future citizens understand and respect the ecological precautionary principle and are well prepared to decide policies regarding such matters as animal rights or vegetarianism that transcend sustainability.

Where theses 1 – 7 above address attaining a degree of visionary unity regarding what we seek, theses 8-20 below seek to attain a degree of strategic unity regarding how to win what we seek.

Thesis Eight: Organize

Liberatory organizations are needed for groups to work effectively together with shared intentions

while discovering new insights, retaining and sharing lessons, and collectively applying lessons from their own experiences. Such liberatory organizations will need to facilitate learning, preserve lessons to provide continuity, combine and apply energies and insights to win changes, and sustain support for members.

Thesis Nine: Be Strategic

To win liberation requires organizing that counters cynicism with hope, that incorporates seeds of the future in the present, that grows membership and commitment among the class, nationality, cultural, age, ability, and sexual/gender constituencies to be liberated, and that wins reforms without becoming reformist. Liberatory organizing requires relevant, flexible strategy, guided by shared vision, to consistently progress along a trajectory towards lasting, fundamental change.

Thesis Ten: Center Vision

Liberatory organizing will need to realize that doubt about the possibility of a better society is a primary impediment to people seeking change. To combat cynicism rooted in doubt and to engender informed hope will therefore need to be a permanent organizing priority. To that end, liberatory organizing will need to always offer and clarify the possibility and merit of vision and the efficacy of activism, even beyond indicating, detailing, and explaining the pains people currently endure and the tenacious obstacles to change people currently confront.

Thesis Eleven: Promote Participatory Decision Making

To arrive at well-considered decisions, collectively implement decisions, and monitor that such decisions have been carried out correctly, a liberatory organization will need to provide extensive opportunities for members to participate in organization-

al decision making, including engaging in deliberations with others. To those ends, a liberatory organization will need to establish internal structures that facilitate everyone's participation including, when possible, offering childcare at meetings and events, finding ways to reach out to those who might be immersed in kinship duties, striving to meet diverse accessibility needs, and aiding those with busy work schedules.

A liberatory organization will need to also provide transparency regarding all actions by elected or delegated leaders, including placing a high burden of proof on keeping secret any agenda, whether to avoid repression or for any other reason, and to provide a mechanism to recall leaders or representatives who members believe are not adequately representing them, as well as to provide means to fairly, peacefully, and constructively resolve internal disputes.

Thesis Twelve: Build Empowerment, Not Hierarchy

To be liberatory, an organization's structure and policies will need to approximate, as well as circumstances and priorities allow, the self-management norm that "each member has decision making influence proportional to the degree they are affected."

To that end, a liberatory organization will need to be internally classless including being structured so that a minority who are initially disproportionately equipped with needed skills, information, and confidence do not form a formal or informal decision-making hierarchy that leaves initially less-prepared members to perpetually follow orders or perform only rote tasks.

Likewise, over time, a liberatory organization needs to apportion empowering and disempowering tasks to ensure that no individuals or sectors of members have a relative monopoly on information or position, and no subset of members has disproportionate say whether due to race, gender, class, or other attributes.

Thesis Thirteen: Celebrate & Protect Diversity

A liberatory organization must monitor and work to correct instances of sexism, racism, classism, ableism, transphobia, and homophobia, including having diverse roles suitable to people with different backgrounds, personal priorities, and personal situations.

To those ends, a liberatory organization will need to celebrate internal debate and dissent and to allow dissenting views to exist and be tested alongside preferred views. It will need to guarantee members' rights to organize "currents" or "caucuses" with full rights of democratic debate.

Likewise, a liberatory organization will need to ensure that national, regional, city, and local chapters, as well as different sectors of the organization, can respond to their own circumstances and implement their own programs as they choose, so long as their choices do not block other groups equally addressing their own situations, or deny the shared goals and principles of the whole organization.

Thesis Fourteen: Start Now! Prefigure, Practice, Experiment, & Refine

Liberatory organizing will need to plant the seeds of the future in the present to enhance hope, to test and refine ideas, and to learn experiential lessons able to inform strategy and vision. To plant seeds of the future under present class, race, gender, sexual, age, ability, and power relations, liberatory organizing will need to not only constructively address the ways it's members interrelate but to also establish internal norms that support building exemplary workplace, campus, and community institutions that represent and refine the values of the movement, which the organization then in turn offers as liberating alternatives to the status quo it combats.

Thesis Fifteen: Engage in Outreach & Build Structures of Outreach

To constantly grow membership among the class, community, nationality, and gender constituencies it aims to liberate, liberatory organizing will need to learn from and seek unity with audiences far wider than its own membership. It will need to attract and affirmatively empower young people and to organize people currently critical and even hostile to its aims, not least by participating in, supporting, building, and aiding diverse social movements and struggles beyond its own immediate agendas, and also by explicitly directly and respectfully addressing critical and even hostile constituencies in communities, on campuses, and at work.

Liberatory organizing will also need to seek, develop, debate, disseminate, and advocate truthful news, analysis, vision, and strategy among its members and especially in the wider society, including developing and sustaining needed media institutions and means of face-to-face communication as well as using diverse methods of agitation and struggle—from educational efforts to rallies, marches, demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, occupations, and diverse direct action campaigns—to win gains and build movements.

Thesis Sixteen: Build Power Blocs

To sustain deep unity, liberatory organizing will need to go beyond seeking coalitions of diverse organizations and movements who agree on a minimum focus, to develop new forms of cross-constituency and cross-issue mutuality. New blocs of activist movements, campaigns, and organizations will often need to take as their shared program not a least common component of what they all individually favor, but the totality of their individual priorities, even including their differences, so that each movement, campaign, and organization in the bloc aids the rest and all thereby become dramatically more powerful.

Thesis Seventeen: Build Trajectories of Commitment & Momentum

Liberatory organizing will need to seek changes in society for citizens to enjoy immediately, while it also establishes by the words and methods of its struggles, the means it uses in its organizing, and the ideas it broaches and broadcasts, a likelihood that all those involved will pursue and win more change in the future. Liberatory organizing will need to seek short-term changes of its own conception by its own actions, but also need to seek short term changes that others conceive by supporting other movements and projects, both internationally, by country, and also locally, including addressing such matters as climate change, arms control, war and peace, the level and composition of economic output, income, agricultural relations, education, health care, housing, income distribution, duration of work, gender roles, racial relations, immigration, policing, media, law, and legislation.

Liberatory organizing will need to seek and win gains by means that reduce oppression in the present and that prepare means, methods, and alliances able to win more gains in the future, always leading toward liberation.

Thesis Eighteen: Choose Tactics to Serve Strategy

Liberatory organizing must embrace a diversity of tactics suited to diverse contexts that best serve flexible, resilient strategies guided by shared vision.

Liberatory organizing will need to connect efforts, resources, and lessons across continents and from country to country, region to region, community to community, workplace to workplace, and campus to campus, even as it also recognizes that strategies and tactics suitable to different places and different times will differ.

Liberatory organizing will need to take a long and encompassing view, so as to focus not solely

on immediate tactical success or failure—such as stopping a meeting, completing a march, or winning a vote—but also and even mainly on broader matters such as how many new people are reached, what commitments are enlarged or enriched, and what infrastructure is created. It will need to combine respect for the urgency of immediate injustices that need to be righted with the patience that major long-term change requires.

Liberatory organizing will, to that end, need to understand that vision orients aims, strategy informs program, and tactics implement plans. For each, it will need to pay close attention to implications of choices for advancing immediate campaigns, organization, and consciousness, but also for advancing longer run prospects, all for those immediately involved and for those viewing from a distance. For example, it will need to judge calls for participation in electoral politics case by case, including cultivating a cautious electoral attitude because of the captivating and corrupting dynamics of electoral campaigns, even while also recognizing their outreach potential and reform relevance.

Thesis Nineteen: Practice Regenerative Organizing

Liberatory organizing will need to develop mechanisms that provide financial, legal, employment, and emotional support to its members so that its members can be in better positions to participate in campaigns as fully as they wish and to navigate the various challenges and sometimes negative effects of taking part in radical actions.

Liberatory organizing will need to substantially improve the life situations of its members, including aiding their feelings of self-worth, their knowledge, skills, and confidence, their mental, physical, sexual, and spiritual health, and even their social ties and engagements and leisure enjoyments. It will need to take a positive approach in all interpersonal and organizational matters, always seeking ways forward. It will need to address disagreements not to win against others, or to elevate self, but to find

ways all can progress collectively successfully. Thus minority positions will need to be protected and preserved, as possible, in case in time they prove essential.

Thesis Twenty: Foster Leadership From Below

Liberatory organizing will need to understand that we are all different and that successful insights and paths forward are found, communicated, and advocated by some people earlier than by others in acts of “leadership”. Liberatory organizing will need to celebrate such acts but also to prioritize methods that ensure acts of leadership do not yield lasting differential empowerment. The key personal contribution of any leading person or group is elevating other persons or groups into leading, while organizational relations must propel and abet that priority.

Conclusion: Three Goals

Our primary goal is to make the case that organizers and diverse movements would benefit immensely from a widely shared positive perspective. We would benefit from a framework for coalescing around shared vision and strategy, for helping to identify shared aims, and for leveraging collective power to win immediate reforms on a trajectory of societal transformation.

Would it matter if activists were to arrive at such a shared outlook that could span a country, many countries, or even the world? Would it matter if people who mainly address and seek anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-ecocide, or anti-war gains were to all share a unifying positive vision? Would it matter if behind calls to enrich and align struggles in different places for different gains, there arose a shared perspective?

If not, there's no need to think further on sharing these or any other theses on liberation. But if such a shared stance could assist each progressive, radical, revolutionary endeavor and could especially align

them into much more effective mutual support, then seriously considering the idea of arriving at a shared positive perspective and a strategy for achieving it is essential.

Our second goal is to move forward from identifying the need for a widely shared visionary and strategic framework, to proposing this particular draft framework for engagement. Are these ‘20 Theses for Liberation’ sensible, flexible, and general, but also rich enough to sustain a productive discussion and even generate shared, effective advocacy? They come from movements, experiences, organizations and diverse individuals, but we do not propose them as the only possible formulation.

Across the broad spectrum of progressive and radical movements, there are sure to be reactions that these 20 theses are too long, too specific, lack something favorable, include something unfavorable, go beyond our means, utilize imprecise or un-preferred terminology, or are just something that no matter how worthy, will likely be ignored. Our hope is that these concerns are not a stopping point, but a starting point for undertaking further examination, discussion, debate, improvements, and refinements towards a shared basis, however different it might look from this draft, for future activism and organization building.

How might such a final shared viewpoint emerge? By people talking, writing, reading, debating in person, in periodicals, in organizations. The result, of course, wouldn't be a fixed, unchangeable stance. It would instead continually alter in accord with new experiences, contexts, and insights. The best result would be a continued, collective process of refining, adapting, and utilizing a unifying framework. We would be building and sustaining a culture of coalescing around shared vision and strategy—which is the work of building a movement of movements. We would be bringing separate agendas into powerful solidarity with one another.

Our third and final goal is to invite engagement and responses to these 20 Theses, for which we must stop writing and start listening.

Me, You, and 20 Theses For Liberation

Michael Albert

On May 1 2023, various media outlets and organizations co-published an essay titled 20 Theses for Liberation. Thirty progressive activists initially signed it. 5 international organizations initially host and advocate for it. Many other venues are displaying it. And its own page at <https://4liberation.org> displays all that and additional information and also provides a form for you to add your support as another signer. I sincerely hope you will visit 4liberation.org to consider signing on yourself.

But at this point, skeptical, you might very reasonably ask: Why now? Why theses? Why sign? And what next?

As a co-author, I know the 20 Theses don't mean to present a program. A program would differ dramatically in different countries, regions, and even cities as well as from one year and even one month and sometimes one week to the next. The 20 Theses want to bridge all those realms. And I also know the 20 Theses don't mean to say this way or no way. They don't mean to be commandments. They just mean to be a collection of diverse wisdom offered to try to help unify a movement of movements across issues, focuses, and borders. They offer themselves as a starting point to propel conversations to develop better, richer, more inspiring formulations. So, with that clarified, here are answers to the above four questions that propelled me to be part of this project. I hope they will resonate for you too.

Why now?

I was recently 76. That just means I have been around a long time. But being around a long time has told my eyes and ears, my beliefs and passions, that our current time is different.

I remember nightmares of nukes, the Cuban missile crisis, duck and cover, Vietnam, Indochina, maddening nationalism, and the stream of persistent

barbaric international horrors since. I remember vile sentiments among elites and I remember ugly sentiments percolating through daily life each many times over. I remember ecological worries first rising to public sight a half century back and increasing ever since. And I remember much more, and yet I remember nothing so threatening to human well being and even to human survival as today's growing fascist projects, today's festering interpersonal and international anti social violence, today's burning ecological nightmares, and today's growing threat of nuclear extermination. Now is to my aged eyes the most dangerous of times.

Yet I also remember the American Sixties, the French May '68, diverse movements churning, and varied consciousnesses rising ever since. I remember advances lost but also won. Movements born, struggling, but also slumbering. Yet, call me crazy, while I can feel in my old bones that these are the most dangerous of times, they also strike my still young soul as the most promising of times. Humanity faces possible extinction—but large sectors of humanity now know it, and many have got to already be or will soon become eager for reasoned, passionate, militant change, not solely in one realm, not solely for one moment, and not to just create a momentary pause in the ugliness, but in all realms and for all times, to create a stupendous revolution in values, views, and institutions. That is an organizer's invitation. We can hear the invitation all over the world, from Europe to Asia, from the Middle East to the U.S., from Africa to Latin America. In France, Germany, the UK, Iran, Israel, Sri Lanka, Peru and elsewhere, the signs of times changing are unmistakable.

So 20 Theses, why now? Because now public opposition to racism, to sexism, and to all manner of sexual oppressiveness is rising and more and more people are ready to rumble for change. Because



TEMPORARY SANITY mural by Mike Alewitz - Roosevelt School, New Brunswick, NJ, 1999 Dedicated to temporary workers.

now, literally all around the world, working people are organizing not only for immediate gains but against systemic injustices and for encompassing liberation. And because now, the simple truth is, later may be too late. Less apocalyptically and more optimistically, because now just beneath the surface, revolutionary aspirations and spirit are awakening. Because now we need battles for immediate specific gains whose pursuit can lead to sustained multi focus struggle for a new world. And because now winning such gains in such ways will require movements that share vision and strategy and that, on that shared foundation, exercise incandescent, inspiring, mutual aid. So why now? Because now is our time for unity.

Why “Theses”?

For me, it is because to share core insights about vision and strategy sufficient for effective unity we need to enunciate, discuss, refine, and come together around bottom up, widely conceived, openly vetted and continually updated insights that can sustain collective struggle and mutual support without

so over-reaching that they curtail creative diversity born from different circumstances. These because we do not need some presumed universal blueprint. We do not need top down marching orders. But we do need visionary and strategic unity that both respects diverse heritages and simultaneously facilitates continually emerging unifying insights.

But how can we arrive at, share, and continually update such needed insights? We can write, read, and above all listen and talk about what we have already and what we will soon experience. So why 20 Theses? The dictionary says a thesis is “a statement or theory that is put forward as a premise to be maintained or proved.” The 20 Theses for Liberation put forward 20 statements, plus an introduction and conclusion. They intend that each statement, 1 – 20, be assessed, refined, enriched, and when settled, maintained until they are further improved to be maintained anew. “Thesis” is just a word. It applies. But if you would prefer to refer to the 20 Theses as 20 statements, ideas, precepts, themes, insights, or whatever, so be it. It’s the ensuing conversation that will matter.

Why sign?

Of course signatures aren't marches. A name on a form isn't a strike. A name on a form isn't itself actual face to face organizing and organization building. But many names together can convey a sense of possibility. Many names can give folks a reason to relate. Many names can convey motivation to spend some time reading, thinking, assessing, and hopefully signing on. The initial signers no doubt each hope their name will inspire attention and critical sharing. We'll see.

But you may wonder, how can I sign on to words I didn't write?

In all likelihood each co-author would, on their own, express this or that thesis or even all 20 Theses a little differently. Each co-author would include or remove something if he or she wanted to arrive at a perfect, precise statement of their own personal current views and inclinations. But to perfectly present each co-author's individual views wasn't the point. To wholly encompass any one signer's or the sum of all signers' totality of views wasn't the point. The 20 Theses don't mean to cover all things for all people. But they do hope to offer a collection of core foundational insights for, well, all those who agree. They hope to offer a starting point to work off to arrive at a set of widely shared pivotal views about vision and strategy sufficient to sustain mutual aid within an increasingly effective movement of movements. What broad shared commitments can get myriad struggles which seek different specific but compatible ends by different specific but compatible means to see themselves as all together constituting a set of intersecting mutually supportive parts of a larger whole?

You say you wouldn't yourself formulate one or more of the 20 theses precisely the way the 20 Theses formulate them? You say you have additional ideas for or concerns about possible refinements? No problem. That will be much needed material for the conversation that the 20 Theses seek. What is now reason for you to sign is only that you, like

the co-authors, feel that the 20 Theses provide a good basis for seeking shared vision and strategy, and that you agree with their intent and overall direction. So, in that case, why sign? To express your support and hope. To add your name to the call in hopes your doing so will increase its credibility and prospects.

And what next?

This may seem the hardest of the four questions, yet in most respects it is the easiest. Answer: Different strokes for different folks. First step is to get the 20 Theses and particularly the 4liberation.org site widely visible to motivate more people to sign. Second step is to add your thoughts to an emerging discussion by reposts, articles, and especially conversations so as to spread, apply, refine, and share the evolving insights. From there, we will all see together where this will go. Here is how the 4liberation.org site answers "what next?": "Engage, Adapt, Share."

The site suggests we each consider, How does the 20 Theses for Liberation framework relate to your context, or not? How can unifying themes about vision strategy be applied in your life? Do you have a local history or practice of collective strategic organizing? How can a shared organizing framework become more accessible and actionable in your community? How might we connect and act together?

It says, "Dig in, connect, discuss, adapt, write, create, build & share! Send articles, art, ideas, and projects to connect@4Liberation.org with in the subject line. Share on social media using."

Are these steps worth some of your time to interact with your family members, friends, students, schoolmates, and co-workers? We never know in advance, do we? But I am trying to "dig in, connect, discuss, adapt, write, create, build & share" because I think it is worth my time to do so. I hope you will too.

Labor For Liberation

Alexandria Shaner

On May 1 2023, an essay called 20 Theses for Liberation was co-published by various media outlets and organizations. It is co-authored by 30 progressive activists (among whom, I am one), co-hosted by 5 international organizations, and is intended to become a widely shared and dynamic organizing strategy towards mutual aims where vision, values, policy, and prefiguring can converge in an accessible and actionable way. It aims to be a “living document” on an online portal for participants to engage with and adapt while connecting with one another in solidarity.

The essay ends with a call to action for participants to engage by adapting the framework to their diverse contexts and exploring how it relates to their communities. We are each asked to make the leap from guiding vision and strategic norms, to applications in our own areas of expertise, our own lives. In this way, the 20 Theses for Liberation is intended as merely a jumping off point for a larger project of building a much needed culture of unity in collective self-determination.

What would such a shared perspective be? “The result, of course, wouldn’t be a fixed, unchangeable stance. It would instead continually alter in accord with new experiences, contexts, and insights. The best result would be a continued, collective process of refining, adapting, and utilizing a unifying framework. We would be building and sustaining a culture of coalescing around shared vision and strategy—which is the work of building a movement of movements. We would be bringing separate agendas into powerful solidarity with one another” (20 Theses for Liberation).

To kick off what we hope will be wide and diverse engagement, and in honor of International Workers Day, I was asked by one of the co-host-

ing organizations, RealUtopia.org, to comment on how the 20 Theses for Liberation relates to the labor movement. The relationship has nested implications:

- First, the vision and strategy proposed by the 20 Theses helps us consider how we organize and progress internally, within work teams, networks, unions, federations, etc. When we look at our own organizations for struggle, are we practicing what we seek or mirroring the oppressive relations we claim to resist?
- Next, the 20 Theses are applicable to building solidarity and power within the broader labor movement, beyond any one group or campaign and across industries and countries. It provides strategic norms for achieving broad worker solidarity.
- Third, the 20 Theses bears on inter-movement organizing when applied to building relationships and capacity for intersectional solidarity, program, and action. For example, in building the urgently needed power bloc that includes both the labor and climate justice movements, labor must be integral in developing and forcing a just transition to a decolonized economy and society that prioritizes people and planet over profit.
- Finally, via these nested applications, the 20 Theses is also a unifying vision and strategy that can be adapted to relate to diverse people from all over the world, by diverse people from all over the world. In this way, the outermost layer of all the nested applications is like a snowball picking up size and speed as it rolls onward, growing and being shaped by everyone who joins it.

Getting more specific within these nested layers of strategic organizing, below are some proposals

that arise from applying the 20 Theses for Liberation to the labor movement today. Part 1 deals with applying the 20 Theses as a lens to guide labor organizers, while Part 2 explores inter-movement organizing using the example of the labor and environmental movements.

20 Theses for Liberation Inside Labor Organizing

The history of strategic organizing in the labor movement has been marked by changing circumstances and challenges, and it has consistently evolved, sometimes more and sometimes less successfully, to adapt to the needs of workers and achieve their goals. Today's organizing efforts need to be inclusive, grassroots-driven, creative, legally and politically savvy, and focused on building public support. By applying lessons from the past, leveraging relevant strategies and tactics, and most importantly, by coalescing around shared vision and strategy towards mutual aims, the labor movement can make progress in advancing workers' rights, improving working conditions, and achieving economic justice in the present day while continuously pushing towards sustained, fundamental changes in labor relations across society.

In response to the current challenges of neoliberalism, neocolonialism, systemic racism, rapid technological innovation, and ecological collapse, the labor movement has adopted new strategies and tactics like grassroots organizing, community-based campaigns, and alliances with other social movements, such as civil rights, environmental, and immigrant rights organizations. Labor unions have also used legal and political strategies to advocate for pro-worker policies, such as raising the minimum wage, expanding access to healthcare, and protecting workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. The vision and strategy laid out in the 20 Theses for Liberation aligns with these developments, and can be used to further demands and guide strategic organizing on an increasingly radical systemic trajectory while building collective power to achieve more, faster.

Labor organizing, through the participatory lens laid out in the 20 Theses, would prioritize principles of economic democracy, equity, solidarity, and worker empowerment, as well as the sought gains of anti racist, environmental, and feminist movements. The economic vision proposed in the 20 Theses advocates for decentralized decision-making, collective ownership of productive assets, equitable distribution of resources and wealth, the protection of diversity, and ending class-based divisions of labor.

What would this mean specifically? It would look different across diverse contexts, as it should, however some concrete possibilities could develop in the following areas:

Worker Self-Management: The 20 Theses for Liberation emphasizes worker self-management, which means that decisions about workplace conditions, production processes, and distribution of goods and services are made collectively by workers themselves. Labor organizing efforts would focus on empowering workers to have a meaningful voice and decision-making power in their workplaces, through mechanisms such as worker cooperatives, workplace councils, and democratic decision-making processes. This would involve organizing efforts to promote democratic governance structures in the workplace, where workers gain steadily increasing control over their working conditions and the direction of their work.

Economic Democracy: The 20 Theses for Liberation seeks to create economic systems that are democratic and participatory, rather than hierarchically controlled by a few individuals or corporations. Labor organizing through this lens would prioritize creating democratic economic structures, where workers have a say in the allocation of resources, investment decisions, and distribution of wealth. In today's context, this could involve advocating for policies that promote cooperative and collective ownership, profit-sharing arrangements, and participatory budgeting, where workers have a direct role in shaping economic decisions that affect their lives.



"Labor Solidarity has no Borders." This mural by Mike Alewitz was painted in Los Angeles in 1992 to advocate for immigrant worker's rights. The green monster—"the green monster of capitalism" was also seen in a 1985 mural for Hormel strikers painted by the same artist.

Equity and Social Justice: The 20 Theses for Liberation places a strong emphasis on equity and social justice, with the goal of eliminating disparities in income, wealth, and access to resources. Labor organizing efforts would prioritize addressing issues of inequality in the workplace, such as wage disparities, discriminatory practices, and unfair labor practices. This could involve advocating for fair labor laws, promoting pay equity, and challenging discriminatory practices that disproportionately affect marginalized workers, such as workers of color, women, LGBTQ+ workers, and workers with disabilities.

Solidarity and Cooperation: The 20 Theses for Liberation promotes cooperation and solidarity among workers and communities, rather than competition and individualism. Labor organizing through this lens would prioritize building alliances and collaborative efforts among workers, unions, communities, and other social movements. This could involve forming coalitions with other labor unions, community organizations, and social justice groups to advocate for shared issues, such as worker rights, affordable housing, healthcare, education, and sustainability practices. It could also involve promoting

cooperative networks, where workers and communities collaborate and support each other in economic activities.

Education and Empowerment: The 20 Theses for Liberation emphasizes the need for education and empowerment of workers to actively participate in economic decision-making. Labor organizing efforts would prioritize educating workers about their rights, labor laws, and economic principles, as well as building their capacity to engage in collective bargaining, negotiation, and decision-making processes. This could involve providing training, resources, and support for workers to understand and navigate the economic system, and empowering them to actively participate in shaping their own economic realities. It could also involve demands for redistributing workplace tasks in a non-hierarchical and fair way, so that empowering, rote, and care-work tasks are increasingly balanced across a workplace. In the context of the need to adapt entire industries to an ecological economy, it could also involve training and re-skilling workers preemptively to transition to green jobs, and to organize policy demands for achieving a just transition for all workers that gives voice to all workers.

Sustainability and Environmental Justice: The 20 Theses for Liberation recognizes the importance of ecological responsibility and reciprocity in economic systems. Labor organizing efforts through this lens would prioritize advocating for environmentally sustainable workplace practices, addressing issues such as climate change, pollution, habitat destruction, and resource depletion as well as simultaneously advocating for policies that guarantee the livelihoods of all people. This could involve campaigns, in diverse contexts, for policies such as green job guarantees, universal basic income, broadening sustainable public provisioning systems for housing, transportation, communication, healthcare, education and food, advocating for environmental regulations, and ensuring that workers have a voice in shaping workplace practices that impact the environment. It would also mean workers participating in expanding the commons to meet the basic needs of communities sustainably.

Through these potential applications, and through a diversity of other possibilities relevant to various contexts, labor organizing using the 20 Theses for Liberation as a broad guiding framework would prioritize worker self-management, economic democracy, equity, solidarity, empowerment, and sustainability. It would seek to create workplaces and economic systems that are democratic, equitable, and socially and ecologically responsible, with the goal of empowering workers to have a meaningful voice in economic decision-making and promoting economic justice for all workers.

Labor & Climate Action #4Liberation

Inter-movement solidarity is a key aim of the 20 Theses for Liberation and it plays a critical role in today's labor context by fostering collaboration, amplifying voices, and building collective power. By working together with other social movements, labor unions and worker organizations can address the complex challenges faced by workers today, such as inequality, discrimination, systemic racism and sexism, and precarious

work, and advocate for policies and practices that promote economic justice, sustainability, and social equity. Inter-movement solidarity is an important strategy for labor organizing efforts to build a more inclusive, resilient, and impactful movement that advances the rights and well-being of all workers.

The example that must come to the forefront of labor intersectionality today is climate justice. All workers live on Earth, and the more our economic and social systems are stressed by ecological collapse, the more workers will bear the brunt of the suffering. This is not a prediction — it is happening now, especially in the Global South, but does not exclude many workers in the Global North. The people affected disproportionately by climate change are the very people who are affected disproportionately by unjust labor relations. However, there is a positive side to this situation. Workers are also uniquely positioned at a crucial leverage point for forcing comprehensive change — production. This is an opportunity for what could be the greatest grassroots power-bloc in history, and just might be our salvation as a species.

If we are to move beyond a fossil-fuel economy and capitalism's overall need for endless extractive growth without leaving workers behind, workers must be engaged in the struggle. The labor and climate justice movements can come together to advance their shared goals of addressing climate change by transforming our economy and society to promote wellbeing and fulfillment within planetary bounds, and advocating for workers' rights in all countries. The 20 Theses for Liberation is relevant as a shared visionary and strategic framework to help bring these movements together, each taking leadership in their own areas of expertise, while supporting and adding their perspectives and experience to collectively pursue mutual aims.

Getting more specific will require that participants continually examine their context to assess the relevance and potential impacts of organiz-

ing strategy. However, we can begin to consider some potential strategies for collaboration and increased interdependence:

Green Jobs and Just Transition: As previously touched upon, the labor and climate justice movements can collaborate to promote the creation of green jobs and a just transition for workers in industries that are transitioning away from fossil fuels. This includes advocating for policies that support job training and job placement for workers in industries such as coal, oil, and gas that will be impacted by climate action measures. It can also mean campaigning for green jobs guarantees, shorter work weeks with a living wage, UBI, and expanding public access to basic needs. By working together, the labor and climate justice movements can ensure that the transition to a more sustainable economy is equitable and inclusive, and that workers are not left behind. If any transition is to occur, workers must have a say in what this transition should look like, in which case they will become the powerful advocates needed to force meaningful action now.

Joint Campaigns and Actions: The labor and climate justice movements can collaborate on joint campaigns and actions to advocate for policies and practices that prioritize workers' rights and environmental protections. This could include joint rallies, protests and other actions that raise awareness about the intersectionality of climate and labor issues, and demand action from policymakers and corporations. More importantly in today's context, moving beyond raising awareness to disruption, the mighty power of the strike must be included in the quiver of nonviolent civil-disobedience. By joining forces, the labor and climate justice movements can amplify their voices and increase their collective impact. By taking the struggle to production itself, something only workers can do, these actions will have the greatest impact.

Solidarity on Ecological and Workers' Health: The labor and climate justice movements can work together to address both ecological health and

workers' health concerns. This includes advocating for safe and healthy working conditions, protection from hazardous substances and pollutants, and access to clean air and water for workers and communities. By collaborating on environmental and health-related issues, the labor and climate justice movements can promote policies and practices that prioritize the well-being of workers and the planet.

Advocacy for Just Climate Policies: The labor and climate justice movements can collaborate in advocating for just climate policies that prioritize the needs and rights of workers and communities, particularly those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The labor movement needs to join the environmental movement in advocating for policies that remove the economy's dependence on growth so that we can transition to production only of what is needed for the wellbeing of people and planet. This means an end to planned obsolescence and fossil fuel subsidies, the selective downscaling of certain industries and the growth of other industries, debt forgiveness, funding public services, eliminating unnecessary waste, and ensuring that basic livelihoods are not tied to employment. It includes advocating for policies such as renewable energy and efficiency incentives, climate mitigation and adaptation measures that create green jobs, and policies that promote energy democracy and community ownership of renewable energy resources. Here again, labor and environmental concerns are aligned in the need for increasing access to the things we all need to live a good life – sustainable and good quality food, housing, transportation, and education, clean water, community, and self-determination. By anchoring organizing in shared vision and strategy, we avoid the trap of the false narrative that labor and climate concerns must be at odds. By working together, the labor and climate justice movements can advocate for policies that address the environmental, economic, and social aspects of the climate crisis.

Intersectional Approaches: The labor and climate justice movements can adopt intersectional

approaches that recognize the ways in which climate change disproportionately affects the Global South and marginalized communities, including low-income workers, people of color, indigenous communities, and other vulnerable populations. By acknowledging and addressing the intersectionality of climate and labor issues, the labor and climate justice movements can collaborate on solutions that are inclusive, equitable, and just, while attracting and engaging an ever increasing number of people from all walks of life.

Consciousness Raising & Empowerment: The labor and climate justice movements can collaborate on education and awareness-building efforts to highlight the connections between climate change and workers' rights. This includes raising awareness among workers and the broader public about the impacts of climate change on workers, the need for just transition policies, and the benefits of a sustainable and equitable economy. It means an outreach strategy that immediately engages workers and the public in democratic forums so that their voices are at the forefront of developing policy demands for a just transition. By empowering and mobilizing workers and the public, the labor and climate justice movements can build a broader base of support and increased participation towards their shared goals.

Participatory Decision-Making: The labor and climate justice movements can promote participatory decision-making processes that involve workers and communities in shaping the priorities, strategies, and tactics of their movements. This includes creating spaces for workers and community members to actively participate in decision-making processes, such as town halls, forums, people's assemblies, and participatory planning sessions. By promoting participatory decision-making, the labor and climate justice movements can ensure that the voices and perspectives of workers and communities are leading their efforts.

Conclusions

The 20 Theses for Liberation draws on a broad range of thinking and movements from all over the world. It is intended to be continuously adapted by diverse people and movements to suit their own diverse contexts. It is a practice of commoning.

The above proposals are only one example of potential, immediate applications for this project, and like the 20 Theses essay itself, is not intended to be a fixed end, but rather the beginning of increased dialogue, deliberation, and collective action across all the interlinked spheres of life. The point of the 20 Theses for Liberation project is to place a permanent value on uniting around positive vision and strategic norms towards mutual aims. We must build a culture of strategic organizing that returns again and again, over ever changing terrain and increasing urgencies, to clear sighted vision and to solidarity.

Getting organized will be the spark that ignites the changes that people are already not just longing for, but working for, though too often in relative isolation. When we have been focused so long on resisting what we don't want, that we lose sight of what we do want, we must return to positive vision. When we become oppressed by one another while struggling to change the very systems that promote these oppressions, we must return to practicing what we seek. When we get stuck in the specifics of policy and tactical decisions, or between contending or even conflicting interests, we must return to a shared framework to remain rooted in deep solidarity as we look for ways forward, together. When the truth is constantly obfuscated by the powerful, and by our hegemonic narratives, so that we think we are surrounded by enemies on all sides, we must return to the ideas of interdependence and community. Here, we re-discover that what we need to do to live better lives now, is exactly what we need to do for our fellow workers, for our neighbors, for our brothers and sisters on the other side of the world, and for the planet itself.

Can You Fight for Climate Justice Without Being Antiwar?

Teddy Ogborn

Can organizations sincerely say they are leading the climate justice fight without also being unapologetically antiwar? Short answer – no. Here's why.

We cannot end climate change without ending war. The United States military is the planet's largest single emitter of greenhouse gasses and consumer of oil. The US military and its weapons, consistently deployed to secure economic dominance for the few while ensuring suffering for the many, has no place on a just and livable planet. The corporate interests and fascist, militarist tendencies that lead humanity into conflict are the very same that view our Earth, its atmosphere, and its abundant life as a resource to be exploited for profit. Ending war means ending the war economy – the colonial system of extraction and exploitation that got us into this mess in the first place.

That a more peaceful world could be a result of the broad system change climate activists are calling for is no coincidence. But the theoretical intersection alone isn't enough! Environmentalists and climate change activists must make a commitment to peace explicitly. Our planet depends on it.

There are already plenty of reasons to oppose war such as the threat of nuclear destruction, massive civilian casualties, and violence against women and the concentration of fascist imperialist powers into corporatized hands. But if that is not enough for folks doing important work in climate justice to also oppose all wars, then let's also consider – militarism and the war economy.

The Pentagon is already the planet's largest single institutional emitter of fossil fuels, and US-backed conflicts around the world since WWII can always be tied back to economic gain dominance, espe-

cially via the private control of fuel and natural resources. A war with China, which the US has gradually encircled with hundreds of military bases and weaponry, is being provoked for economic reasons as the government and media manufacture the consent of the American public. This will only result in the increase of Pentagon funding (already at \$858 billion), siphoning off billions of dollars of taxpayer money to infrastructure and weaponry which is destroying our climate.

Many people don't realize that every solution to climate change already exists. The problem is the government simply will not fund it while its priority is war. Demilitarization is one of the most important things we can do for the climate, and for living beings inside and outside conflict zones.

Currently, our measure of success as a country is based on how much we can destroy and exploit. While the basic tenets of capitalism are taught in America as economic law, this is hardly the case. The economic system we operate under is a choice. There are other options. Our broken and optional system – where income inequality is at an all-time high, the poor have little access to healthcare, and the climate is nearing deadly tipping points – is driven by capitalists and federal economists who love to talk about the profit-oriented metric Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. This metric, which is used as an indicator of our country's well-being, tells us the amount of financial profit produced by economic activity in a given time period. Which is pretty ridiculous when well-being is obviously a function of things that aren't liquid cash, like quality of education, healthcare, and biodiversity.

Essentially, under a GDP-oriented economy, half of a country's forest cover could be destroyed and



the poverty rate in all major cities could double over the course of a year, but as long as billionaires continue to increase their profits, the illusion of progress persists. But if we manage to change how we measure progress in this country, we may actually be able to achieve some. Genuine Progress Indicator is a metric which places value on things like improving air quality and food security. With GPI in place, lawmakers and activists would have the most undeniable picture yet of the cost of war on people and planet

And what is the cost of war to the environment? Take the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to massive death and displacement, as well as environmental damage with exponential increases in greenhouse gas emissions from rocket attacks and explosions. Attacks on infrastructure—railways, electrical grids, apartment buildings, oil depots—have led to hollowed-out cities blanketed by charred rubble and toxic munitions.

Additionally, the sabotage of the underwater Nord Stream pipelines supplying Russian gas to Germany led to the release of 300,000 tons of methane gas into the atmosphere, similar to the annual emissions of a million cars. According to the UN Environmental Programme, it was the largest release of methane gas emissions ever recorded.

The shelling of Ukraine's nuclear power plants, particularly the Zaporizhzhia plant, has increased fears of an explosion that would spread radiation throughout Ukraine and beyond.

As the fighting has now gone on for a year with no end in sight, Ukraine braces itself for further disruption of local ecosystems, forest fires, blackened trees, air pollution, sewage leaks and chemical contamination of rivers and groundwater in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has mutated the global fuel market, with Russian cuts of fuel exports and Western sanctions leading many European countries to resume filthy coal-fired power generation. US companies have also consolidated money and power as a result, dramatically increasing their exports of natural gas to Europe. These exorbitant profits will fuel the fossil fuel economy for years to come.

Funding endless war is an existential threat to human life and one of the leading causes of climate change. In order to achieve climate justice and secure a sustainable future, climate and environmental groups must adopt an antiwar position for people and the planet. To defend Earth, we must end wars.

On the Coming War: Speak up. Now.

John Pilger

In 1935, the Congress of American Writers was held in New York City, followed by another two years later. They called on 'the hundreds of poets, novelists, dramatists, critics, short story writers and journalists' to discuss the 'rapid crumbling of capitalism' and the beckoning of another war. They were electric events which, according to one account, were attended by 3,500 members of the public with more than a thousand turned away.

Arthur Miller, Myra Page, Lillian Hellman, Dashiell Hammett warned that fascism was rising, often disguised, and the responsibility lay with writers and journalists to speak out. Telegrams of support from Thomas Mann, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, C Day Lewis, Upton Sinclair and Albert Einstein were read out.

The journalist and novelist Martha Gellhorn spoke up for the homeless and unemployed, and 'all of us under the shadow of violent great power'.

Martha, who became a close friend, told me later over her customary glass of Famous Grouse and soda: 'The responsibility I felt as a journalist was immense. I had witnessed the injustices and suffering delivered by the Depression, and I knew, we all knew, what was coming if silences were not broken.'

Her words echo across the silences today: they are silences filled with a consensus of propaganda that contaminates almost everything we read, see and hear. Let me give you one example:

On 7 March, the two oldest newspapers in Australia, the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, published several pages on 'the looming threat' of China. They coloured the Pacific Ocean red. Chi-

nese eyes were martial, on the march and menacing. The Yellow Peril was about to fall down as if by the weight of gravity.

No logical reason was given for an attack on Australia by China. A 'panel of experts' presented no credible evidence: one of them is a former director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a front for the Defence Department in Canberra, the Pentagon in Washington, the governments of Britain, Japan and Taiwan and the west's war industry.

'Beijing could strike within three years,' they warned. 'We are not ready.' Billions of dollars are to be spent on American nuclear submarines, but that, it seems, is not enough. 'Australia's holiday from history is over': whatever that might mean.

There is no threat to Australia, none. The faraway 'lucky' country has no enemies, least of all China, its largest trading partner. Yet China-bashing that draws on Australia's long history of racism towards Asia has become something of a sport for the self-ordained 'experts'. What do Chinese-Australians make of this? Many are confused and fearful.

The authors of this grotesque piece of dog-whistling and obsequiousness to American power are Peter Hartcher and Matthew Knott, 'national security reporters' I think they are called. I remember Hartcher from his Israeli government-paid jaunts. The other one, Knott, is a mouthpiece for the suits in Canberra. Neither has ever seen a war zone and its extremes of human degradation and suffering.

'How did it come to this?' Martha Gellhorn would say if she were here. 'Where on earth are the voices saying no? Where is the comradeship?'

The voices are heard in the samizdat of this magazine and others. In literature, the likes of John Steinbeck, Carson McCullers, George Orwell are obsolete. Post-modernism is in charge now. Liberalism has pulled up its political ladder. A once somnolent social democracy, Australia, has enacted a web of new laws protecting secretive, authoritarian power and preventing the right to know. Whistleblowers are outlaws, to be tried in secret. An especially sinister law bans 'foreign interference' by those who work for foreign companies. What does this mean?

Democracy is notional now; there is the all-powerful elite of the corporation merged with the state and the demands of 'identity'. American admirals are paid thousands of dollars a day by the Australian tax payer for 'advice'. Right across the West, our political imagination has been pacified by PR and distracted by the intrigues of corrupt, ultra low-rent politicians: a Johnson or a Trump or a Sleepy Joe or a Zelensky.

No writers' congress in 2023 worries about 'crumbling capitalism' and the lethal provocations of 'our' leaders. The most infamous of these, Blair, a prima facie criminal under the Nuremberg Standard, is free and rich. Julian Assange, who dared journalists to prove their readers had a right to know, is in his second decade of incarceration.

The rise of fascism in Europe is uncontroversial. Or 'neo-Nazism' or 'extreme nationalism', as you prefer. Ukraine as modern Europe's fascist beehive has seen the re-emergence of the cult of Stepan Bandera, the passionate anti-Semite and mass murderer who lauded Hitler's 'Jewish policy', which left 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews slaughtered. 'We will lay your heads at Hitler's feet,' a Banderist pamphlet proclaimed to Ukrainian Jews.

Today, Bandera is hero-worshipped in western Ukraine and scores of statues of him and his fellow-fascists have been paid for by the EU and the US, replacing those of Russian cultural giants and others who liberated Ukraine from the original Nazis.

In 2014, neo Nazis played a key role in an American bankrolled coup against the elected president, Viktor Yanukovich, who was accused of being 'pro-Moscow'. The coup regime included prominent 'extreme nationalists' — Nazis in all but name.

At first, this was reported at length by the BBC and the European and American media. In 2019, Time magazine featured the 'white supremacist militias' active in Ukraine. NBC News reported, 'Ukraine's Nazi problem is real.' The immolation of trade unionists in Odessa was filmed and documented.

Spearheaded by the Azov regiment, whose insignia, the 'Wolfsangel', was made infamous by the German SS, Ukraine's military invaded the eastern, Russian-speaking Donbas region. According to the United Nations 14,000 in the east were killed. Seven years later, with the Minsk peace conferences sabotaged by the West, as Angela Merkel confessed, the Red Army invaded.

This version of events was not reported in the West. To even utter it is to bring down abuse about being a 'Putin apologist', regardless whether the writer (such as myself) has condemned the Russian invasion. Understanding the extreme provocation that a Nato-armed borderland, Ukraine, the same borderland through which Hitler invaded, presented to Moscow, is anathema.

Journalists who travelled to the Donbas were silenced or even hounded in their own country. German journalist Patrik Baab lost his job and a young German freelance reporter, Alina Lipp, had her bank account sequestered.

In Britain, the silence of the liberal intelligensia is the silence of intimidation. State-sponsored issues like Ukraine and Israel are to be avoided if you want to keep a campus job or a teaching tenure. What happened to Jeremy Corbyn in 2019 is repeated on campuses where opponents of apartheid Israel are casually smeared as anti-Semitic.

Professor David Miller, ironically the country's leading authority on modern propaganda, was sacked by Bristol University for suggesting publicly that Israel's 'assets' in Britain and its political lobbying exerted a disproportionate influence worldwide — a fact for which the evidence is voluminous.

The university hired a leading QC to investigate the case independently. His report exonerated Miller on the 'important issue of academic freedom of expression' and found 'Professor Miller's comments did not constitute unlawful speech'. Yet Bristol sacked him. The message is clear: no matter what outrage it perpetrates, Israel has immunity and its critics are to be punished.

A few years ago, Terry Eagleton, then professor of English literature at Manchester University, reckoned that 'for the first time in two centuries, there is no eminent British poet, playwright or novelist prepared to question the foundations of the western way of life'.

No Shelley spoke for the poor, no Blake for utopian dreams, no Byron damned the corruption of the ruling class, no Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin revealed the moral disaster of capitalism. William Morris, Oscar Wilde, HG Wells, George Bernard Shaw had no equivalents today. Harold Pinter was alive then, 'the last to raise his voice', wrote Eagleton.

Where did post-modernism — the rejection of actual politics and authentic dissent — come from? The publication in 1970 of Charles Reich's bestselling book, *The Greening of America*, offers a clue. America then was in a state of upheaval; Nixon was in the White House, a civil resistance, known as 'the movement', had burst out of the margins of society in the midst of a war that touched almost everybody. In alliance with the civil rights movement, it presented the most serious challenge to Washington's power for a century.

On the cover of Reich's book were these words: 'There is a revolution coming. It will not be like

revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual.'

At the time I was a correspondent in the United States and recall the overnight elevation to guru status of Reich, a young Yale academic. The *New Yorker* had sensationally serialised his book, whose message was that the 'political action and truth-telling' of the 1960s had failed and only 'culture and introspection' would change the world. It felt as if hippydom was claiming the consumer classes. And in one sense it was.

Within a few years, the cult of 'me-ism' had all but overwhelmed many people's sense of acting together, of social justice and internationalism. Class, gender and race were separated. The personal was the political and the media was the message. Make money, it said.

As for 'the movement', its hope and songs, the years of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton put an end to all that. The police were now in open war with black people; Clinton's notorious welfare bills broke world records in the number of mostly blacks they sent to jail.

When 9/11 happened, the fabrication of new 'threats' on 'America's frontier' (as the Project for a New American Century called the world) completed the political disorientation of those who, 20 years earlier, would have formed a vehement opposition.

In the years since, America has gone to war with the world. According to a largely ignored report by the Physicians for Social Responsibility, Physicians for Global Survival and the Nobel Prize-winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the number killed in America's 'war on terror' was 'at least' 1.3 million in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan.

This figure does not include the dead of US-led and fuelled wars in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Somalia and beyond. The true figure, said the report, 'could well be in excess of 2 million [or] approximately 10



times greater than that of which the public, experts and decision makers are aware and [is] propagated by the media and major NGOS?

‘At least’ one million were killed in Iraq, say the physicians, or five per cent of the population.

The enormity of this violence and suffering seems to have no place in the western consciousness. ‘No one knows how many’ is the media refrain. Blair and George W. Bush — and Straw and Cheney and Powell and Rumsfeld et al — were never in danger of prosecution. Blair’s propaganda maestro, Alistair Campbell, is celebrated as a ‘media personality’.

In 2003, I filmed an interview in Washington with Charles Lewis, the acclaimed investigative journalist. We discussed the invasion of Iraq a few months earlier. I asked him, ‘What if the constitutionally freest media in the world had seriously challenged George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld and investigated their claims, instead of spreading what turned out to be crude propaganda?’

He replied. ‘If we journalists had done our job, there is a very, very good chance we would have not gone to war in Iraq.’

I put the same question to Dan Rather, the famous CBS anchor, who gave me the same answer. David Rose of the Observer, who had promoted Saddam Hussein’s ‘threat’, and Rageh Omaar, then the BBC’s Iraq correspondent, gave me the same answer. Rose’s admirable contrition at having been ‘duped’, spoke for many reporters bereft of his courage to say so.

Their point is worth repeating. Had journalists done their job, had they questioned and investigated the propaganda instead of amplifying it, a million Iraqi men, women and children might be alive today; millions might not have fled their homes; the sectarian war between Sunni and Shia might not have ignited, and Islamic State might not have existed.

Cast that truth across the rapacious wars since 1945 ignited by the United States and its ‘allies’ and the conclusion is breathtaking. Is this ever raised in journalism schools?

Today, war by media is a key task of so-called mainstream journalism, reminiscent of that described by a Nuremberg prosecutor in 1945: ‘Before each major aggression, with some few

exceptions based on expediency, they initiated a press campaign calculated to weaken their victims and to prepare the German people psychologically... In the propaganda system... it was the daily press and the radio that were the most important weapons.'

One of the persistent strands in American political life is a cultish extremism that approaches fascism. Although Trump was credited with this, it was during Obama's two terms that American foreign policy flirted seriously with fascism. This was almost never reported.

'I believe in American exceptionalism with every fibre of my being,' said Obama, who expanded a favourite presidential pastime, bombing, and death squads known as 'special operations' as no other president had done since the first Cold War.

According to a Council on Foreign Relations survey, in 2016 Obama dropped 26,171 bombs. That is 72 bombs every day. He bombed the poorest people and people of colour: in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan. Every Tuesday – reported the New York Times – he personally selected those who would be murdered by hellfire missiles fired from drones. Weddings, funerals, shepherds were attacked, along with those attempting to collect the body parts festooning the 'terrorist target'.

A leading Republican senator, Lindsey Graham, estimated, approvingly, that Obama's drones had killed 4,700 people. 'Sometimes you hit innocent people and I hate that,' he said, but we've taken out some very senior members of Al Qaeda.'

In 2011, Obama told the media that the Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi was planning 'genocide' against his own people. 'We knew...', he said, 'that if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city the size of Charlotte [North Carolina], could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.'



This was a lie. The only 'threat' was the coming defeat of fanatical Islamists by Libyan government forces. With his plans for a revival of independent pan-Africanism, an African bank and African currency, all of it funded by Libyan oil, Gaddafi was cast as an enemy of western colonialism on the continent in which Libya was the second most modern state.

Destroying Gaddafi's 'threat' and his modern state was the aim. Backed by the US, Britain and France, Nato launched 9,700 sorties against Libya. A third were aimed at infrastructure and civilian targets, reported the UN. Uranium warheads were used; the cities of Misurata and Sirte were carpet-bombed. The Red Cross identified mass graves, and Unicef reported that 'most [of the children killed] were under the age of ten'.

When Hillary Clinton, Obama's secretary of state, was told that Gaddafi had been captured by the insurrectionists and sodomised with a knife, she laughed and said to the camera: 'We came, we saw, he died!'

On 14 September 2016, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in London reported the conclusion of a year-long study into the Nato attack on Libya which it described as an 'array of lies' — including the Benghazi massacre story.

The NATO bombing plunged Libya into a humanitarian disaster, killing thousands of people and displacing hundreds of thousands more, transforming Libya from the African country with the highest standard of living into a war-torn failed state.

Under Obama, the US extended secret 'special forces' operations to 138 countries, or 70 per cent of the world's population. The first African-American president launched what amounted to a full-scale invasion of Africa.

Reminiscent of the Scramble for Africa in the 19th century, the US African Command (Africom) has since built a network of supplicants among collaborative African regimes eager for American bribes and armaments. Africom's 'soldier to soldier' doctrine embeds US officers at every level of command from general to warrant officer. Only pith helmets are missing.

It is as if Africa's proud history of liberation, from Patrice Lumumba to Nelson Mandela, has been consigned to oblivion by a new white master's black colonial elite. This elite's 'historic mission', warned the knowing Frantz Fanon, is the promotion of 'a capitalism rampant though camouflaged'.

In the year Nato invaded Libya, 2011, Obama announced what became known as the 'pivot to Asia'. Almost two-thirds of US naval forces would be transferred to the Asia-Pacific to 'confront the threat from China', in the words of his Defence Secretary.

There was no threat from China; there was a threat to China from the United States; some 400 American military bases formed an arc along the rim of China's industrial heartlands, which a Pentagon official described approvingly as a 'noose'.

At the same time, Obama placed missiles in Eastern Europe aimed at Russia. It was the beatified recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize who increased spending on nuclear warheads to a level higher than that of any US administration since the Cold War — having promised, in an emotional speech in the centre of Prague in 2009, to 'help rid the world of nuclear weapons'.

Obama and his administration knew full well that the coup his assistant secretary of state, Patricia Nuland, was sent to oversee against the government of Ukraine in 2014 would provoke a Russian response and probably lead to war. And so it has.

I am writing this on 30 April, the anniversary of the last day of the longest war of the twentieth century, in Vietnam, which I reported. I was very young when I arrived in Saigon and I learned a great deal. I learned to recognise the distinctive drone of the engines of giant B-52s, which dropped their carnage from above the clouds and spared nothing and no one; I learned not to turn away when faced with a charred tree festooned with human parts; I learned to value kindness as never before; I learned that Joseph Heller was right in his masterly *Catch-22*: that war was not suited to sane people; and I learned about 'our' propaganda.

All through that war, the propaganda said a victorious Vietnam would spread its communist disease to the rest of Asia, allowing the Great Yellow Peril to its north to sweep down. Countries would fall like 'dominoes'.

Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam was victorious, and none of the above happened. Instead, Vietnamese civilisation blossomed, remarkably, in spite of the price they paid: three million dead. The maimed, the deformed, the addicted, the poisoned, the lost.

If the current propagandists get their war with China, this will be a fraction of what is to come. Speak up.

Winners and Losers in Sudan

Ramzy Baroud

The world is changing. In fact, it has been undergoing seismic change that long preceded the Russian-Ukraine war, and the recent US-Chinese tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

In fact, the US debacle in Iraq and the Middle East, and the humiliating retreat from Afghanistan were only signs of the decline in US power.

Leading US neoconservative strategists have once argued in “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources For a New Century” that aggressive intervention policies were meant to keep emerging great powers, like China, out of areas designated as US geopolitical domains. They sought to “preserve and extend (US) position of global leadership (through) maintaining the pre-eminence of U.S. military forces.”

They failed, and the future seems to head in a different direction than what the likes of Dick Cheney, John Bolton, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz had hoped for.

Instead, a whole new world order is emerging, one that is hardly centered round US-western priorities alone.

Indeed, what has taken place since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022, and the provocative visit by then-US House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, to Taipei in August of the same year, are an acceleration of an existing momentum of global shifts, that ranged from the emergence of new economic alliances, geopolitical formations, turf wars and, of course, competing political discourses. These changes are currently on full display in the Middle East, Africa and, indeed, much of the Global South.

While this can be considered a positive development, in the sense that a bipolar or multipolar

world can offer alternatives to countries that have been at the receiving end of US-western exploitation and violence, it can – and will – have negative manifestations as well.

More Than a Power Struggle

Though the current war in Sudan is understood to be a power struggle between two rival generals or, more accurately, corrupt warlords, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or Hemedti, it is also partly the outcome of a regional, and, increasingly, global power struggle as well. The regional and global dimension of the conflict in Sudan is itself an expression of the changing world order and the intense fight over resources and critical geographies.

Sudan is one of the richest African countries in terms of raw material, much of which remains un-exploited due to the country’s multifront and multilayered conflicts, starting in the South – which has led to the secession of the Republic of South Sudan, then West, namely Darfur and, as of now, everywhere else.

The North-South civil war and the Darfur crisis, too, were sustained and prolonged by outside parties, whether Sudan’s own neighbors or global powers. Sadly, in all these cases, the outcome was horrific in terms of human and material losses.

Sudan, however, was not the exception. Proxy wars in the Global South were one of the main features of the Cold War between Washington and Moscow, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-92. The dismantlement of the USSR, however, only exacerbated violence, this time channeled mostly through US-led or championed wars in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Now that global rivalry is back with a vengeance, global conflicts,

especially in resource-rich and strategic regions with no clear political allegiances, are also back.

Sudan will not be the last of such conflicts.

What complicates the picture in Sudan now is the involvement of other regional actors, each with a specific set of interests, as they take advantage of the quickly dwindling US leadership, which, till recently – was the Middle East's primary political and military hegemon.

The current shifts in power relations in the Middle East – as in other parts of the world – are also significant within historical, not merely current political contexts.



History Reversed

Since the Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed in 1916 between old colonial powers – France and Britain – with a minor, but still important involvement of Tsarist Russia, the Middle East and North Africa, along with Central Asia, were divided into various spheres of influence. Global priorities then were almost entirely Western.

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 was a watershed moment in world history, as it sowed the seeds for a possibility of a new global bloc to rival Western domination.

It took decades for that new bloc to emerge. In 1955, the Warsaw Pact was born, “unifying the Soviet Union and its allies against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a Western military alliance that saw the light six years earlier.

The rivalry between both camps was expressed in fierce economic competition, a political Cold War, a low-grade military conflict, proxy wars and two distinctly ideological discourses that defined our understanding of world politics for much of the 20th Century.

All of this came to a bitter end in the early 1990s. NATO won, while the Warsaw Pact, along with the USSR, disintegrated rapidly and in the most humiliating fashion. It was “the end of history”, Francis Fukuyama declared. It was the age of Western triumphalism and, by extension, more colonial wars, starting in Panama, then Iraq, Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq again, and elsewhere.

China factored in all of this, not as a major global political player, yet, but as a worthy adversary and prized ally. The historic visit by US President Richard Nixon to Beijing in 1972 thwarted efforts to unify the East against US-Western imperialism. That trip, which supposedly ‘changed the world’ – per the assessment of then-Ambassador Nicholas Plat, was indeed consequential. It was the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union as it gave Washington a massive advantage and strategic boost over its rivals.

But history is now being reversed in ways that only a few geopoliticians could have possibly predicted.

The New Powers

The road ahead is not entirely clear. But numerous signs, accompanied by tangible changes, suggest that the world is transforming. However, this metamorphosis is more visible in some regions than others. The geopolitical tug-of-war between old and new global rivals is most visible in the Middle East and Africa, in addition, of course, to South America, East Asia and Pacific regions. Each of these regions is undergoing its own re-ordering of power relations and dynamics.

In the Middle East, for example, Iran seems to be breaking away from its West-imposed isolation, while Saudi Arabia is challenging its old client regime status.

The latter move is particularly troubling for Washington, as it challenges two layers of Western domination of the Middle East: one which followed the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 – thus dividing the region into subregions under Western ‘protection’ and influence; and the other which resulted from the US-NATO invasion of Iraq. With massive political sway, an ever-growing military presence, and a weaponized US currency, Washington had dominated the Middle East with no serious competition for many years. This is no longer the case.

For years, Russia and China have been staking claims in the region, though using mechanisms that are wholly removed from the Western style of old colonialism and neocolonialism. While the Russians tapped into their long Soviet tradition of cooperation, the Chinese resorted to a more ancient history of friendly trade and cultural exchanges.

Now that Beijing has developed a more candid and unapologetic approach to foreign policy, China’s status as a new superpower shall demon-

strate its effectiveness in the Middle East in unprecedented ways. In fact, it already has. The recent Iran-Saudi Accords was a tremendous achievement for the new politically-oriented China, but the road ahead is still very challenging, as the region is rife with foreign contenders, and old and new conflicts. For China to succeed, it must present itself as a new and better model, to be contrasted with Western exploitation and violence.

But China does not hold all the keys, as the US and its Western and regional allies continue to hold significant influence. For example, the UAE is emerging as a powerful player in the current war in Sudan.

What is certain is that the consequences of the current fight for resources, influence and domination are likely to lead to smaller, though bloody conflicts, especially in countries that are politically and socially unstable. Sudan fits perfectly into this category, which makes its current war particularly alarming.

Although much has been said and written about Sudan’s gold, agriculture potential and massive wealth of raw materials, the fight over Sudan by outside parties is essentially a turf war due to Sudan’s unparalleled geopolitical location. Egypt, Ethiopia, UAE, Israel, and others are all keen to emerge winners in the ongoing war. Russia is monitoring the situation closely from its various African bases.

The US, Britain and France are wary of the dire consequences of direct intervention and the equally costly price of no intervention at all. China is still gauging the challenges and opportunities.

The outcome of the bloody Sudan war is likely to redefine, not only Sudan’s own political balances but the power relations of the whole region as well.

Who Said BDS Has ‘Already Failed’?: European Cities Boycott Apartheid Israel

Ramzy Baroud

A succession of events starting in Barcelona, Spain, in February, and followed in Liège, Belgium, and Oslo, Norway, in April sent a strong message to Israel: The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) is alive and well.

In Barcelona, the city’s Mayor canceled a twinning agreement with the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. The decision was not an impulsive one, although Ada Colau is well-known for her principled positions on many issues. It was, however, an outcome of a fully democratic process, initiated by a proposal submitted by left-wing parties at the city council.

A few weeks after the decision was made, specifically on February 8, a pro-Israeli legal organization known as The Lawfare Project, announced its intentions to file a lawsuit against Colau because she, supposedly, “acted beyond the scope of her authority”.

The Lawfare Project meant to communicate a message to other city councils in Spain, and the rest of Europe, that there will be serious legal repercussions to boycotting Israel. To the organization’s – and Israel’s – big surprise, however, other cities quickly advanced their own boycott procedures. They include the Belgian city of Liège and Norway’s capital city, Oslo.

Liège’s local leadership did not try to conceal the reasons behind their decision. The city council, it was reported, had decided to suspend relations with the Israeli authorities for running a regime “of apartheid, colonization and military occupation”. That move was backed by a majority vote at the council, proving once more that the pro-Palestinian moral stance was fully compliant with a democratic process.

Oslo is a particularly interesting case. It was there that the ‘peace process’ resulted in the Oslo Accords in 1993, which ultimately divided the Palestinians while giving Israel a political cover to continue with its illegal practices, while claiming that it has no peace partner.

But Oslo is no longer committed to the empty slogans of the past. In June 2022, the Norwegian government declared its intention of denying the label “Made in Israel” to goods produced in illegal Israeli Jewish settlements in Occupied Palestine.

Though Jewish settlements are illegal under international law, Europe did not mind doing business – in fact, lucrative business – with these colonies over the years. In November 2019, the European Court of Justice, however, resolved that all goods produced in “Israel-occupied areas” had to be labeled as such, so as not to mislead consumers. The Court’s decision was a watered-down version of what Palestinians had expected: a complete boycott, if not of Israel as a whole, at least of its illegal settlements.

However, the decision still served a purpose. It provided yet another legal base for boycott, thus empowering pro-Palestine civil society organizations, and reminding Israel that its influence in Europe is not as limitless as Tel Aviv wants to believe.

The most that Israel could do in response is to issue angry statements, along with haphazard accusations of anti-Semitism. In August 2022, Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt requested a meeting with then-Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, during the former’s visit to Israel. Lapid refused. Not only did such arrogance make a little difference in Norway’s stance on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but it also opened yet more margins

for pro-Palestinian activists to be more proactive, leading to Oslo's decision in April to ban imports of goods made in illegal settlements.

The BDS movement explained, on its website, the meaning of Oslo's decision: "Norway's capital ... announced that it will not trade in goods and services produced in areas that are illegally occupied in violation of international law." In practice, this means that Oslo's "procurement policy will exclude companies that directly or indirectly contribute to Israel's illegal settlement enterprise – a war crime under international law."

Keeping these rapid developments in mind, The Lawfare Project would now have to expand its legal cases to include Liège, Oslo and an ever-growing list of city councils that are actively boycotting Israel. But, even then, there are no guarantees that the outcome of such litigations will serve Israel in any way. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be true.

A case in point was the recent decision by the cities of Frankfurt and Munich in Germany to cancel music concerts of pro-Palestinian rock and roll legend, Roger Waters, as part of his 'This is Not a Drill' tour. Frankfurt justified its decision by branding Waters as "one of the world's most well-known anti-Semites". The bizarre and unfounded claim was rejected outright by a German civil court which, on April 24, ruled in favor of Waters.

Indeed, while a growing number of European cities are siding with Palestine, those who side with Israeli apartheid find it difficult to defend or even maintain their position, simply because the former predicate their stances on international law, while the latter on twisted and convenient interpretations of anti-Semitism.

What does all of this mean for the BDS movement?

In an article published in Foreign Policy magazine last May, Steven Cook reached a hasty conclusion that the BDS movement "has already lost", because, according to his inference, efforts to boycott Israel have made no impact "in the halls of government".



Photo: Jehan Alfarra

While BDS is a political movement that is subject to miscalculations and mistakes, it is also a grassroots campaign that labors to achieve political ends through incremental, measured changes. To succeed over time, such campaigns must first engage ordinary people on the street, activists at universities, in houses of worship, etc., all done through calculated, long-term strategies, themselves devised by local and national civil society collectives and organizations.

BDS continues to be a success story, and the latest critical decisions made in Spain, Belgium and Norway attest to the fact that grassroots efforts do pay dividends.

There is no denying that the road ahead is long and arduous. It will certainly have its twists, turns and, yes, occasional setbacks. But this is the nature of national liberation struggles. They often come at a high cost and great sacrifice. But, with popular resistance at home and growing international support and solidarity abroad, Palestinian freedom should, in fact, be possible.