



MAGAZINE

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France And Colonialism



*“France never really
came to terms with its
colonial heritage or its
colonial mindset.”*

-Vijay Prashad



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Daniel Ellsberg Has Passed Away. He Left Us a Message.

Norman Solomon



When Daniel Ellsberg died on Friday, the world lost a transcendent whistleblower with a powerful ethos of compassion and resolve.

Ellsberg's renown for openly challenging the mentalities of militarism began on June 23, 1971, when he appeared on CBS Evening News ten days after news broke about the Pentagon Papers that he'd provided to journalists. Ellsberg pointedly said that in the 7,000 pages of top-secret documents, "I don't think there is a line in them that contains an estimate of the likely impact of our policy on the overall casualties among Vietnamese or the refu-

gees to be caused, the effects of defoliation in an ecological sense. There's neither an estimate nor a calculation of past effects, ever."

And he added: "The documents simply reflect the internal concerns of our officials. That says nothing more nor less than that our officials never did concern themselves with the effect of our policies on the Vietnamese."

Ellsberg told anchor Walter Cronkite: "I think we cannot let the officials of the Executive Branch determine for us what it is that the public needs to

know about how well and how they are discharging their functions.”

The functions of overseeing the war on Vietnam had become repugnant to Ellsberg as an insider. Many other government officials and top-level consultants with security clearances also had access to documents that showed how mendacious four administrations had been as the U.S. role in Vietnam expanded and then escalated into wholesale slaughter.

Unlike the others, he finally broke free and provided the Pentagon Papers to news media. As he said in the CBS interview, “The fact is that secrets can be held by men in the government whose careers have been spent learning how to keep their mouths shut. I was one of those.”

Ellsberg’s mouth, and heart, never stayed shut again. For the 52 full years that followed his release of the Pentagon Papers, he devoted himself to speaking, writing and protesting. When the war on Vietnam finally ended, Ellsberg mainly returned to his earlier preoccupation — how to help prevent nuclear war.

This spring, during the three months after diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, Ellsberg made the most of every day, spending time with loved ones and speaking out about the all-too-real dangers of nuclear annihilation. He left behind two brilliant, monumental books published in this century — “Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers” (2002) and “The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner” (2017). They illuminate in sharp ghastly light the patterns of official lies and secrecy about military matters, and the ultimate foreseeable result — nuclear holocaust.

Ellsberg was deeply determined to do all he could to help prevent omnicide. As he said in an interview when “The Doomsday Machine” came out, scientific research has concluded that nuclear war “would loft into the stratosphere many millions of tons of soot and black smoke from the burning

cities. It wouldn’t be rained out in the stratosphere. It would go around the globe very quickly and reduce sunlight by as much as 70 percent, causing temperatures like that of the Little Ice Age, killing harvests worldwide and starving to death nearly everyone on earth. It probably wouldn’t cause extinction. We’re so adaptable. Maybe 1 percent of our current population of 7.4 billion could survive, but 98 or 99 percent would not.”

During the profuse interviews that he engaged in during the last few months, what clearly preoccupied Ellsberg was not his own fate but the fate of the Earth’s inhabitants.

He was acutely aware that while admiration for brave whistleblowers might sometimes be widespread, actual emulation is scarce. Ellsberg often heard that he was inspiring, but he was always far more interested in what people would be inspired to actually do — in a world of war and on the precipice of inconceivable nuclear catastrophe.

During the last decades of his life, standard assumptions and efforts by mainstream media and the political establishment aimed to consign Ellsberg to the era of the Vietnam War. But in real time, Dan Ellsberg continually inspired so many of us to be more than merely inspired. We loved him not only for what he had done but also for what he kept doing, for who he was, luminously, ongoing. The power of his vibrant example spurred us to become better than we were.

In a recent series of short illustrated podcasts created by filmmaker Judith Ehrlich — who co-directed the documentary “The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers” — Ellsberg speaks about the growing dangers of global apocalypse, saying that nuclear war planners “have written plans to kill billions of people,” preparations that amount to “a conspiracy to commit omnicide, near omnicide, the death of everyone.” And he adds: “Can humanity survive the nuclear era? We don’t know. I choose to act as if we have a chance.”

‘We Will Not Surrender’: The Extraordinary Palestinians of Jenin

Ramzy Baroud

On June 19, a large Israeli military force raided the northern Palestinian town and refugee camp of Jenin from multiple directions. Not only did the raid fail, it backfired, and it also created a precedent in Israel’s decades-long war on the ever-rebellious Palestinian region.

Israel killed eight Palestinians and wounded 91 more, following hours of clashes involving Israeli soldiers, on the one hand, and unified Palestinian Resistance groups, on the other.

Israel only admitted to the wounding of eight of its soldiers, with some Israeli media outlets speaking of critical injuries among the invading troops and others claiming only moderate wounds.

The reality on the ground, however, suggested that an extraordinary battle had taken place. Locally produced videos showed Israeli military vehicles blown up, engulfed in clouds of fire and smoke, among them the Panther troops carrier – known as Nimr – a monstrous, well-fortified vehicle used in moderate to heavy combat.

A total of seven vehicles, along with a military helicopter were blown up or damaged in what was meant to be a routine Israeli raid on Jenin, which has often resulted in the killing of several so-called ‘wanted’ Palestinians – a reference to fighters who resist the Israeli military occupation.

The military wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad – the main resistance forces in Jenin, in addition to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – issued statements detailing the courage of their fighters and celebrating the legacy of those who have been killed in the fighting.

But not all Palestinians killed were fighters. Israel targets civilians, including children, women, medics, and journalists, as a matter of course. One of the Jenin victims was a 15-year-old boy named Ahmed Saqr. Another is a 14-year-old girl named Sadil Ghassan Turkman. A journalist, Hazem Emad Nasser, was also wounded.

One of those killed, Amjad Aref Abu Jaas, is the father of a Palestinian youth, Wasim, who was killed by the Israeli army during a previous invasion of Jenin, on January 25.

The fact that a son and a father were both killed, a few months apart, by Israel is indicative of Israel’s relationship with Jenin. Israel sees Jenin as the beating heart of Resistance – armed or otherwise – in the Occupied West Bank. Therefore, Jenin has been Israel’s main target for decades, simply to downgrade – never crush – the intensity of the Resistance there.

Israel knows that crushing the Resistance in Jenin is not possible. Though the far-right ministers in Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing government are constantly making such a demand, the Israeli military understands the difficulty – in fact, the impossibility of such a task.

Generational Resistance

The Jenin refugee camp was established in 1953 by the United Nations Palestinian Refugees Agency (UNRWA). The inhabitants of the camp are refugees who were expelled by Israeli Zionist militias and gangs during the Nakba, the ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine in 1947-48.

The camp has grown in terms of size and population over the years, though poverty and neglect

have remained its main features. The history of the camp and its inhabitants has been the main drive behind their ongoing resistance.

In my 2003 book, *Searching Jenin*, I detailed the accounts of many of the camp's residents as they described the legendary battle and the subsequent massacre of April 2002.

The pride and toughness of the residents of Jenin struck me, although I am quite familiar with the tenacity of the resilience of Palestinians, in general. Despite the killing of dozens of its inhabitants, the wounding of hundreds, the arrests of many and the destruction of entire neighborhoods, the Jenin residents insisted that the resistance is not over and that the next generation will soon continue what they have begun.

Writing about Jenin in recent months, I realize that many of the family and clan names are repeated, whether in the last name of fighters and martyrs, but also journalists, medics and civilian victims are mentioned. Somehow Jenin, though in near complete isolation, ongoing suppression, and utter neglect, has been resurrected from the ashes of the past.

I wonder if the young Israeli soldiers who keep invading Jenin, killing a few Palestinians at a time with each invasion, know anything about that history, about where these refugees came from, and that, no matter how violent and well-armed their bloody quests can be, Jenin will never surrender.

In other words, for Israel, the battle of Jenin is already lost.

It Is Not Over

Jenin terrifies Israel, because it is a representation of a much greater fight undertaken by Palestinians in besieged Gaza and throughout the Occupied West Bank. They know that all Palestinians are watching the events underway in Jenin – but also in Nablus and its environs, Al-Khalil (Hebron), Jericho, and more. When Jenin resists, Palestinian Resistance rises in unison.



In April 2002, during the invasion of major Palestinian cities of the West Bank, the destruction of Jenin was meant to be the tragic end of an equally tragic Palestinian story. The survivors eventually trickled back into the camp, collected and buried the bodies, often in mass graves, looked after the wounded, and slowly began rebuilding their shattered lives.

Then, all of Palestine was bleeding; Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Gaza were reeling under the heavy weight of Israeli tanks, which left in their wake massive destruction and a high death toll. Israel emerged bruised but triumphant. The Palestinian Authority's police force was restructured around Israeli priorities and with American training and funds. Palestine, it was thought, was squarely defeated.

But the prophecy of those I interviewed two decades ago turned out to be true: The resistance is not over, and the next generation will soon continue what we have begun.

Since then, many of my eyewitnesses have died – old age, broken hearts, Israeli bullets, and so on. Some are currently in prison. But others are still alive to remind us that freedom is precious and that the desire for justice can never be killed or defeated, no matter the enemy's firepower or the sacrifices. Because it is innate and God-given, and because Jenin knows its history too well.

The 10th Anniversary of Boston's LGBTQ Elders of Color

Sue Katz

On Sunday June 18, Boston's LGBTQ Elders of Color (EOC) – also known as Flashback – held a gala luncheon and dance at the Sheraton Boston Hotel's Constitution Ballroom to celebrate their 10th anniversary. In addition, they marked Pride month, Juneteenth, and even Father's Day. They presented awards to outstanding community members and provided a fabulous entertainer.

Since their inception, EOC has been working to break the isolation that too often accompanies the ageing process. They are inclusive and welcoming, offering both informational and social activities that draw in a range of people of color and their allies.

In 2013, Black activists began organizing, with the support of Boston's Fenway Health and its LGBT Aging Project. The following February they were ready to invite people to get together during Black History Month for a social event they called Flashback. They hoped to connect with two or three dozen queer elders of color, but were overwhelmed by the crowd of almost 100 community members. I believe there was a scramble to bring in some extra pizza, last minute.

Since then, they have not only organized monthly dinner meetings, they have also sponsored an annual holiday party, been the life of the elder posse who ride the Pride Trolleys, and held this annual awards party during Pride month. EOC adapted to Covid by mastering Zoom right away, and continued bringing programs around health, the arts, and coping with the pandemic, which hit communities of color especially hard. Boston is a city of shocking wealth disparity, health service inequality, and historical racism. LGBTQ elders of color are holding it together by holding together.



The founders, all of whom continue their activism, include the original co-chairs Paul Glass and Shirley Royster; the beloved outreach expert Gloria Charles; and the photographer/archivist Charles Evans who brought an amazing 10-year slideshow retrospective to the anniversary party. These four are also among the best dressed dazzlers in all of Boston. Paul Glass continues as President of the organization today. For this article, he commented on EOC's activities, now supported by the Multi-cultural AIDS Coalition with which they merged in 2021: "We are committed to providing Flashback Cafe, our monthly supper club, and Flashback Sunday events. It's how we keep our LGBTQ aging population, particularly older adults of color, socially engaged and prevent their self-isolation."



The dignitaries of the day included the much-honored Dr. Gary Bailey, Assistant Dean for Community Engagement and Social Justice at Simmons University. His list of accomplishments is vast, as is his massive capacity to engage the community. His calm, insightful, and inspiring speech at the event was a reflection of the many leadership positions he holds in his field of Social Work as well as in the LGBTQ African-American community.

Rev. Irene Monroe was honored for both the speaking and writing she has long contributed to the national LGBTQ fabric. One reason she is so popular and respected is that she brings humor to her activism. For example, her involvement in national organizations have included Christian Lesbians Out (CLOUT) and Seminary Lesbians Under Theological Stress (SLUTS). Rev. Dr. Monroe writes a highly syndicated column and has a weekly broadcast on Boston Public Radio.

Harold du Four-Anderson, was unable to attend, but sent a message which was read out. He was honored for his decades of HIV/AIDS advocacy and education and for founding in 1990 the Bayard Rustin Community Breakfast. This import-

ant annual event on the calendar of the LGBTQ community of color celebrates Rustin, who was a central civil rights activist, the architect of MLK's March on Washington, and later a gay rights advocate.

La Kia Mondale, the current reigning Florida National Showgirl Supreme, 2023, was recognized for her day-job in P-Town as a Sexual Health Community Health Worker, and for her evening work as a top drag performer. She is also on the Board of the Trans Emergency Fund of Massachusetts. In a splendor of shiny fabric and gorgeous moves, she entertained the room with a delicious lip-synch, demonstrating why she was chosen as Miss Boston Pride in 2010.

To cap off the afternoon, the dance floor was filled thanks to the joyous music of Derrick Grissett of Rhythm Knights DJ's & Entertainment, who has kept the group moving at many EOC events. As people reluctantly left the hotel, it was clear that the LGBTQ Elders of Color have mastered the art of combining community dignity with the best parties in town.

The Right to Seek Safety

Kathy Kelly

Through a WhatsApp message from Portugal, my friend Eunice Neves asked to share a moment with me. She was with an Afghan couple, Frishta and Mohammad, and their baby son, Arsalan. The young family has resettled in Mértola, a small city in southern Portugal. They looked forward to celebrating World Refugee Day as part of a project which the Portuguese government lauds as a model for refugee resettlement.

I had first met Frishta in 2015 when she was a volunteer teacher, in Kabul, Afghanistan. At a school for “street kids” she helped young child laborers gain literacy and math skills, while also learning basic ideas about nonviolence. The children could be rowdy and boisterous, but when Frishta entered the classroom, they were eager to please their talented teacher.

Frishta’s altruism and skill made her a target for persecution when the Taliban ascended to power. Following death threats to her and her husband, the couple fled their home just prior to the Taliban takeover of Kabul. Days later, on August 21st, 2021, Frishta gave birth to Arsalan.

Eventually, after harrowing and harsh months seeking refuge in Pakistan, the family found a safe haven in Portugal. An international group of activists familiar with the former volunteer group helped devise a model resettlement project. Now, 25 young Afghans have been integrated in Portuguese cities.

Eight of the young people have spent 13 months in Mértola, helping rehabilitate arid land through syntropic farming and permaculture. Together, they pursued a program designed to fully integrate them into Portuguese society.

During today’s conversation, Arsalan amused himself with a garden hose by watering the flowers, the walls and himself. “Look where he is now,” said

Eunice, shifting the phone to show Arsalan, fully clothed, splashing contentedly in a small tub he had partially filled with water. From his makeshift boat, he blew me a kiss!

Arsalan’s security, in sharp contrast to the dangerous circumstances surrounding his birth, should epitomize the story of every vulnerable refugee seeking a safe haven. Sadly, tragically, and shamefully, on this World Refugee Day, we must recall a tragedy all too familiar which took place last week. In the deepest part of the Mediterranean Sea, a ship carrying at least 100 children, among hundreds of others, capsized.

Irish author Sally Hayden, who, for years, has accompanied migrants attempting to enter Europe, writes:

“The dead are victims of the world’s inequality. They are victims of the fact that the privileged of this planet have freedom of movement simply due to the luck of where they were born, while much of the rest must risk their lives in the hope of accessing a secure, dignified life....Those who survive that journey live with huge trauma – many have told me how they are haunted by memories of watching family members or friends drown; how they appealed for help, but their distress calls were ignored; how, when the boat engines failed or fuel ran out and they drifted, they were certain they would die of thirst one by one.”

The mind revolts and simply will not consent to imagine the terror felt by a single child, much less the hundred or so who drowned and sank to the ocean’s deepest depths inside that boat last Wednesday. Photos of the boat before it sank showed the upper decks entirely packed with would-be migrants, meaning that, horrifically, the lower decks were crammed with migrants – including most of the children – as well.



Thousands of new Rohingya refugee arrivals cross the border near Anzuman Para village, Palong Khali, Bangladesh.

It's estimated 500, or even 750, people were on board. There were only 104 survivors, mostly young adult males with the strength to cling for hours onto available wreckage. There were no life preservers; legal migration had been made near-impossible.

Writing from Ireland, Ed Horgan, a campaigner for Irish neutrality, calls this a tragedy in which “hundreds of migrants were fleeing wars and dire poverty and human rights abuses.”

Horror spreads everywhere when militarism reigns and weapon sales proliferate, causing displacement and rising numbers of people fleeing violence.

Horgan holds The European Union's Border and Coast Guard agency, FRONTEX, partly accountable, noting they and the Greek Coast Guard, “had been monitoring this ship for up to 12 hours prior to the disaster, and failed to offer any practical assistance until it was too late.”

Here in the United States, where I live, similar tragedies unfold. One of my closest friends, Laurie Hasbrook, has worked to accompany refugees arriving in Chicago for more than two decades. Last weekend, with two other volunteers, she was almost arrested for attempting to serve food and supply

warm clothing to shivering and famished migrants who had newly arrived in Chicago. U.S. activists in the southwest face criminal charges for attempting to save the lives of migrants by dropping off water and food supplies along routes where needy people might access the supplies.

We have much to learn from people in Portugal who've created model projects based on mutual respect and creative problem-solving as they've welcomed young Afghans to become integral members of Portuguese society.

Upholding the right to safety, we should stop pouring money into the coffers of military contractors. These merchants of death take us down the road of militarism and exploitation.

Rather than be led by fortress Europe or US-led NATO full spectrum dominance, we should find security by extending the hand of friendship and seeking reciprocal, survivable plans to rehabilitate lands and communities. It's vital that people worldwide persuade governments to promote global peace and justice instead of wars and military domination which inevitably lead to tragedies like the one which occurred last week in the Mediterranean Sea.

Durban Deceits Threaten Global Climate Politics

Patrick Bond

The potential new leader of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the world body’s Nobel Prize-winning scientific network – could well be a long-serving Durban municipal official, Debra Roberts, assuming she wins an election to be held in Nairobi in late July. Yet Durban’s climate-resilience failure features greenwashing so far-reaching that it was even reproduced in a 2018 IPCC report: “Individual political leadership in municipal government, for example, has been cited as a factor driving the adaptation policies of early adapters in Quito, Ecuador, and Durban, South Africa.”

In reality, not only political leadership in Durban, but the city’s mitigation and adaptation policies, have been characterized by climate injustice (and the same is true for Quito municipality) and incompetence. The world began to realize this in April-May 2022 when 500 people died due to the utter lack of municipal climate-proofing during two bursts of flooding whose impact was twice as severe thanks to greenhouse gas emissions.

A central concern about this candidacy is that over the last three decades, well-paid white municipal bureaucrats with environmental, public health and climate responsibilities (not just Roberts) have mainly ignored Durban’s prolific community struggles to end lethal toxic pollution and greenhouse gases emitted by local petrochemical firms and refineries. This has been especially blatant in South Durban where environmental-justice activists receive international recognition for fighting corporate and municipal sloth, but where inevitably, politicians and city officials are letting them down, notwithstanding post-flood rebuilding rhetoric to the contrary.

Durban’s Climate Action Plan greenhouse-gas mitigation has not only been inadequate. In addition, climate-resilience programming has placed inordinate emphasis upon maintenance of the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D’MOSS), a vast (95 000-hectare) set of protected areas whose 1982 apartheid-era roots reflected historic racial buffer-zoning between white and black residential areas. This is an inconvenient truth, rarely mentioned, but three exceptions are the buffers separating (black African) Cato Manor township from the (white-dominated) neighborhood area adjoining the University of KwaZulu-Natal; the (traditionally-Indian) area of Kenville in Durban North; and the wealthy (white) Upper Highway suburbs.

In such sites, wealthier residents appreciate D’MOSS not only for conservation purposes, but – when it keeps low-income blacks at bay – for its race/class separation function. One result, even Durban’s own municipal planning documents concede, is “a high degree of segregation of places of work and home due to past planning practices that promoted land use and racial zoning... [that] has largely precluded the development of mixed use environments.”

Under Roberts’ climate leadership, the municipality has also embarked upon “Working on Rivers” small-scale pilot projects for keeping streams free of debris. But as shown by extreme pollution reaching the beaches after every major storm, these were trivial efforts in relation to the scale of watercourse degeneration and blockages in a context of severe storm-water drainage incapacity.

Debris flows to the ocean in part because of the municipality’s notorious waste-collection failure. The collapse of the Durban Solid Waste department’s integrity was so obvious that it led to former (2016-19)

Mayor Zandile Gumede's prosecution on more than 2000 counts of fraud, corruption and contravention of the Organised Crime Act and Municipal Systems Act.

But there were also widespread sewage breakdowns, in part due to neoliberal sanitation policies which generated extremely high E.coli concentrations in streams and rivers well before the April 2022 Rain Bomb destroyed pipelines and pumping stations across the city. Durban water manager Neil Macleod (also a white bureaucrat celebrated across the world) had in 2014 received the Stockholm Water Industry Award but to his credit admitted that class 'differentiation' was official urban policy, wherein "the flushing toilet is seen to be for rich people and dry sanitation is seen to be a solution for poor people."

Since then, worsening decay has disabled much of Durban's most vital infrastructure, for as one journalist reported, "the third-largest treatment works in the city has been largely dysfunctional since before the April floods and is currently the main source of sewage flowing into the Umgeni River" and from there, onward into the ocean, despoiling the city's beloved beaches.

Climate-proofing Durban should have entailed much greater attention to these sources of ecological degradation, often a function of inadequate municipal budgeting which, while not the blame of climate officials, would logically lead to far greater humility within the global environmental-management circuits where Roberts has built up a powerful reputation.

As another example, a 500-page 2016 World Bank report praised not only Roberts' "conservation planning" leadership and "resiliency planning for climate change adaptation." In spite of recording serious shortcomings in handling a rapid urbanization process, the Bank report cited the "leading role that eThekweni plays in the field of city environmental management in Africa and the World" – in the words of another (white) South African, Roland White, the bank's Global Lead for City Management, Governance and Financing.

Other municipal climate pilots include mitigating several landfills' methane emissions, but in a manner that entailed close collaboration with the World Bank. The 'privatization of the air' strategy Roberts promoted – i.e., reliance upon international carbon markets to fund (relatively tiny but expensive) methane-to-energy piping and generators – created a major source of friction and then community opposition next to Africa's largest dump, Durban's Bisasar Road landfill (located in a black neighborhood as was apartheid's logic).

A campaign to close Bisasar was led from the early 1990s by Sajida Khan, who in 2007 died of cancer caused by landfill pollutants across the road from her house. Her thousands-strong movement was defeated by municipal officials – especially two white men, city manager Mike Sutcliffe and project leader Lindsay Strachan – who were hungry for carbon credits. The municipality's continuation of Bisasar Road entailed filling it to maximum levels in order to sell more credits, but revenues were fatally undermined by crashing emissions-trading prices in the immediate wake of the 2008 world economic meltdown, revealing Durban's dependency on global financial capitalism at this critical pilot site.

Yet in spite of that failure, not only was there aggressive municipal greenwashing in advance of Durban's 2011 hosting of the United Nations COP17 summit. A few years later, in order to win a WWF "I Love Cities" popularity award for greenhouse gas mitigation in 2014, a municipal public-relations consultancy – Carver Media – hijacked international Twitter accounts in order to cheat the vote, again featuring the methane mitigation pilot project.

The 2014 WWF award application by the municipality was centrally based upon the carbon-market strategy: because of (a meagre) "7.5MWh of electricity produced from landfill waste, Durban is right to be proud of its renewable energy achievements."

Then, reinforcing climate hype over substance, Gumede – who had just been nicknamed the "Mayor

of Graft“ by CityPress newspaper – was in 2018 awarded a global WWF “One Planet City Challenge” climate prize at that year’s global summit in San Francisco hosted by California governor Jerry Brown. At the time, she was still enjoying the status of Vice-Chair of the C40 network supported by Michael Bloomberg, again revealing how Durban’s dangerous, gimmicky policies fool global elites.

Consistent dishonesty of this sort reflects the city’s (and elite allies’) desperation to have Durban appear to be a national and global climate leader at any cost. And revealingly, the host of the December 2023 United Nations climate summit in Dubai, Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, just tried the same trick as did Durban, with bogus Twitter accounts, but likewise was exposed earlier this month by Guardian journalists.

Meanwhile, most importantly, the inadequate climate-proofing of low-income areas of Durban was largely ignored. This was revealed in the increasing intensity of Rain Bombs that hit the city in October 2017, April 2019 and twice in 2022, resulting in rising human casualties and major infrastructure damage each time. The municipal officials’ lack of attention to vital stormwater drainage, to ensuring that decent housing construction occurs in safe areas (not shacks on steep hills or in flood-water zones), to building more durable roads and bridges, and to providing emergency relief services, all proved fatal.

Meanwhile, when it comes to global climate politics, the credibility of global elite managers is plummeting. The 2023 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) president, Al-Jaber, is also Abu Dhabi’s lead oil company boss. All indications are that he has every intention of keeping the fossil fuel era going as long as possible. His staff have been busy trying to detox his Wikipedia page, and Al-Jaber’s oil company took control of UNFCCC correspondence.

The most debilitating force within the UNFCCC continues to be the coalition of two dozen traditional Western polluters with the now super-pollut-

ing Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa BRICS economies – and soon, the so-called “BRICS+” carbon-addicted tyrannies. Their leaders’ common interests are in both not cutting emissions sufficiently, and in refusing to acknowledge their climate debt to victims of extreme-weather “loss & damage” and of the expensive new adaptation-infrastructure required (as well as the compensation poor countries deserve for not emitting in future, given the West+BRICS’ abuse of the atmospheric space).

The core of this force is to be found in the alliance initiated in December 2009 in Copenhagen, in the crucial U.S.-China-India-Brazil-SA side meeting. But the new BRICS+ members are likely to include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Algeria and Nigeria where there is little prospect for accountability and where advocates of environmental and social justice often risk prison terms, or worse.

Al-Jaber should be promoting rudimentary mitigation, such as halting Abu Dhabi’s planned fossil-fuel expansion, but the UNFCCC’s imperial and subimperial climate powers aren’t prepared to force him to do so, instead allowing “false solutions” – such as Carbon Capture and Storage and carbon offsets – to be spread from his presidency to such an extent that a former UNFCCC secretary recently spoke out against him.

Likewise, if Durban is given further bogus IPCC recognition through the appointment of a leading official to run the body at a time of both widespread climate-system and local-municipal collapses, it will reveal how out-of-touch international environmental managerialism is with reality – just as the IPCC is regularly criticized for its intrinsic conservatism when periodically offering climate-damage projections that are far too optimistic.

The climate activists of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa and the world deserve more respect, just as planetary survival requires an entirely new approach, consistent with the politics of climate justice, not Durban-type deceit.

Community #4Liberation

Alexandria Shaner

Prisoners of our own device

“The worst walls are never the ones you find in your way. The worst walls are the ones you put there.”

– Ursula K. Le Guin

In a recent email to a fellow organizer, I admitted that my biggest impression from this project, so far, is that I am now even more solidly convinced that the left (and many people in general) are so well conditioned by our society to have a “no, but” reaction, rather than a “yes, and” reaction, to positive formulations.

We aim to see what’s missing, reject-able, or just doesn’t reflect our own personal situation, and we use that as a stopping point rather than as an invitation to listen, add, apply, share, contextualize, etc. We have a reflex to oppose rather than propose – and not because we’re all just narrow minded assholes but because, for a long time, opposition has been understood as our only power.

My comrade advised me to share this observation publicly, and after some thought, I agree. Why pretend this problem doesn’t exist when we can name it, confront it, and maybe overcome it?

What is the lesson and the way forward from this pervasive ‘no, but...’ syndrome? The answer might lie in the question – in order to knock down the walls we’ve thrown up, we have to remember that even though we were pressured and conditioned to build walls, we did in fact build them. And we can let them fall.

The frustrations suffered while initiating, growing, and sustaining solidarity and building collective power should give us all the more reason not to stop. This initial wall shows us how seriously we need such efforts to keep trying to connect,

to open pathways for engagement. Behind each self-imprisoning wall are the cries of people who have nearly forgotten that we hold our own keys. In insolation, we will remain captive. In community, we are reminded that the power and potential of interdependence is greater than any wall.

Perhaps even this might sound wishful, vague, or even self-helpy. Again, I challenge your “no, but” with a YES, it has to do in part with collective and personal psychology and wellness, AND it can be strategically linked to systemic conditions. Within our problem lies an invitation: any ways in which to foster connectivity and a culture of ‘building up’ are urgently needed. We can’t expect to have any collective power or left unity without such a culture, let alone any appeal to wider groups or any skill at grassroots organizing.

An honest look within

“Without community, there is no liberation...but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”

– Audre Lorde

Refocusing on positive vision and strategy toward mutual aims does not imply that we abandon critique. Rather, it requires getting better at critique. Critique is one of those things where quantity can drown quality, washing away everything in its path.

Part of good critique is self-critique. I do not intend to steamroll the nuance out of millions of participants in diverse struggles. I highlight our “no, but” syndrome not to point a snide finger at “us” or “you”, but to confront some shared experiences honestly. I fully recognize that I am making generalizations, and I do so in an attempt to create space for an increased appetite for nuance.



Human Network Of Inclusion by Sandra Silberzweig

I recognize and celebrate examples that diverge from the problems I describe. They are not the exception that proves the rule, rather they are bastions of the true human spirit serving as guides if we will only follow their light.

Now for the self-flagellation...

It has become normalized to focus solely on what we reject or oppose. We are not habituated to linger over the possibilities between the constructive versus the deconstructive. The space between these two types of critique is where many potential choices lie, and it is highly self-defeating to squander such opportunities. Sometimes, deconstructing is beneficial, as in deconstructing gender binaries to reveal that the binary itself is a mere construct. This has significant liberating potential. However, without constructive critique, a feedback method that offers specific, actionable recommendations for change and improvement, this potential cannot be built upon. While good constructive critique certainly exists in gender justice and in other realms of struggle, it must of-

ten fight to be heard and to thrive over the din of demolition. This does no favors to the movement.

The effect renders us into solitary homing missiles for what we each want to destroy, yet we have little skill in the work of constructing, repairing, rebuilding, and including. Our landscape is littered with the burnout and rubble of our own movements while the ecocidal-racist-cis-heteronormative-ablist-patriarchal-imperial-colonial-capital-authoritarian-corporate-war machine takes our uncoordinated hits in stride and chugs along.

In searching for the roots of this phenomenon, we can certainly point to our confidence having taken a beating. It's possible that "no, but" syndrome is caused by prolonged attacks on liberatory movements. Driven from a constructive focus to go underground, all that's left is deconstructive activity leading, over time, to a culture dominated by deconstructive thought. Eventually, our identity itself is based on being deconstructive. We might wear "no, but..." on a T-shirt. The key is in

recognizing that this is actually an individualistic perspective that limits our collectivism, and where we easily mistake extremism for radicalism.

The implications of this demolition-mode span all struggles. Deconstructive critique flourishes, and though important when holistic, careful, and nuanced, it is increasingly impotent as we have become so unskilled in seriously and collectively engaging with what we want to build and promote. It is the constructive component of critique that solves problems, that builds numbers and commitment, and that makes fundamental change happen.

Yet history is riddled with repression and suppression, and though our time is certainly troubled, we shouldn't be tempted to place all the blame on the past, conveniently out of reach. We cannot erase decades of repression, but we can confront the lack of hope that it has promoted. It is the mentality that fundamentally changing society is either not possible, or not important, that must now be confronted and debunked through practice. Frequently, we don't even know our own foundational values and norms clearly enough to be able to apply them to diverse contexts, and so we end up reflexively rejecting things that are actually examples of practice. It's time to come back above ground, re-root in a broadly shared framework, and connect positive vision to examples of prefigurative practice, giving each other something real to point to and aim for.

It's not me, its you

"Coalition-building is not easy. You don't make a coalition because you like those in the coalition. You make a coalition because none of us are going to triumph alone."

– Audre Lorde

Beyond transforming critique from bludgeon into wand, and perhaps more personal than reviving a commitment to elevate positive vision and strategy, there is another consistent pothole in the road

to sustaining healthy, powerful communities of struggle. And very commonly, it's not me, it's you.

Can I be brutally honest? You fellow progressives and proponents of radical liberation can suck to be around and work with. Tell me you've never had this thought cross your mind? Anyone who regularly engages in meetings, forums, projects, etc can attest that we are often lacking even in skills for conversation and deliberation itself, regardless of topic. It's draining.

Why is this? Are you actually awful, no fun, oversensitive, either totally lacking in confidence or possessing it in unjustified surplus, disconnected from reality, and generally ready to pounce on any perceived difference we might have in ideology or priorities? And am I just so enlightened, committed, and well-meaning that your failings couldn't possibly also reflect on me?

Unlikely. There's an obvious point here in that we are a group of people who all feel passionately about our activism, and so are predisposed to be extra sensitive and even volatile about that which we care for so deeply. Bunker mentality is real. It's also true that we tend to feel most hurt and let down by those to whom we feel closest — it's why you might feel less personally stung upon learning that Trump had committed sexual assault, than if a member of your coop made an unwanted sexual remark about a colleague's appearance, even though Trump's offense is more extreme. You're not surprised by Trump but you're disappointed and hurt by your coworker. The two offenses are also different in that your immediate power to directly oppose injustice is much more accessible the nearer the offense. All these personal dynamics play their parts.

However, there is something more going on — it's not just you, it's not just me, it's us. The good thing about this fact is that we can address movement culture both personally and systemically, together.

To start, many if not most of us, have at some

point been hurt deeply, even traumatized, which has led us to identify and become opponents of hegemonic systems of oppression. Joining in collective struggle is a valiant response to experiencing or witnessing suffering, but we must still recognize that we are largely a collection of misfit toys. The “successful, well-adjusted radical” mirage may occasionally present itself on TV or YouTube, but even our superstars have scars and even people who were born and raised into counter hegemonic perspectives still suffer under the same oppressive systems. However we got here, we are all “other” in relation to existing social norms by default of our resistance.

This can be both a blessing and curse depending on how our internal movement culture is developed. By striving to organize internally according to the values we seek for society, we are better able to unleash a full diversity of perspective, experience, thought, and practice, thereby enriching movements and empowering people. Through organizing, we have more than just the chance to analyze and critique the system. We have the chance to construct meaningful connections among people in extraordinary and impactful ways. Community is built more by means than ends. Without strong community, the ends are out of our hands.

In addition to organizing through liberatory practice, walking the rocky road of radicalization towards empowerment requires that instead of victimizing ourselves and each other, we must again let down our walls and practice regenerative, interdependent activism. To confuse adding our own suffering for alleviating the suffering of others is a recipe for burnout, and it is ineffective. If we oppress ourselves and each other inside while fighting oppression outside, only the masochists will remain. Our movements might not always be able to be “safe spaces” or fun spaces, but they should at least be regenerative spaces.

Just a taste of community and collective power inspires hope and determination. Why then is it so often ephemeral? We can call for interdependence

and solidarity, but to work collectively takes trust, which takes time to build and is easily destroyed. Having the courage to believe in the possibility of change through collaborative efforts is foreign and enormously daunting for many people. It requires challenging the prevailing myths of our system, reshaping our habits and fears, and actively participating in collective endeavors. We will have to help each other in envisioning a world where mutual reliance is fostered, even if we don’t always agree or even always like each other. Overcoming the grand scale challenges we face will require a cultural shift towards believing in each other and believing that we can collectively create better alternatives.

Community #4Liberation

“Utopia lies at the horizon. When I draw nearer by two steps, it retreats two steps. If I proceed ten steps forward, it swiftly slips ten steps ahead. No matter how far I go, I can never reach it. So, what is utopia for? That’s what it’s for, it’s for walking.”

– Eduardo Galeano

To inspire massively and seriously, when asked, “what do you want?,” we have to have an answer — not a rigid blueprint, but a framework. This is one goal of the 20 Theses project. It does not make the leap from broadly shared vision and strategic norms to any specific program or policy. Instead, it aims to establish a communal gathering place from which diverse applications of a shared framework can be self-determined by people in many places over various timeframes.

The second goal of this project is simply to suggest that by sharing some roots, we might build interdependence and trust between movements. The 20 Theses is a living foundation, able to guide and be guided, without overstepping or overprescribing. The original authors made it explicit that engagement, critique, and adaptations are encouraged — in fact, collective engagement itself is the purpose, developing a culture of solidarity that enables desperately needed strategic organizing.



Mycelial Network

I do not claim that we shouldn't search the 20 Theses, or other proposals, for flaws or gaps. However, if that is our primary and final response to positive vision in general, we will not get anywhere. Instead, we must connect positive vision to today, to program and practice, each in our own ways and contexts. At the same time, we can identify immediate and medium-term struggle and let visionary frameworks guide strategy and program towards long-term goals in a positive, plausible arc.

Why does this simple logic for moving forward so often stall and fail? Perhaps we can't just walk towards Utopia – it is not a place to which one can arrive alone. Perhaps, we must take a step back, hold hands, and dance.

Building community, coalitions, and power blocs, and attracting mass participation along the way, can only be done with a “yes, and” culture. It also requires a look within to overcome defeatism and cynicism, to relearn how to behave with each other, to offer positive pathways that inspire mass involvement over a fixation with purity of ourselves, our identity and aesthetic, and our movements. We need to promote new forms of desire and practices that offer meaningful self-determination towards fulfillment that are not tied to oppressive systems. A large part of this work will be to develop as a hopeful community, interlinked in deep solidarity via unifying frameworks, and relevant through collective action for what is strategically necessary to make changes today and tomorrow towards a more utopian future.

When Corporate Media Fail, Independent Media Rise Up

Sonali Kolhatkar

Corporate media outlets have often furthered racist narratives, and do so even today. In contrast, independent media outlets have centered racial justice, offering platforms to marginalized communities.

Right-wing media outlets such as Fox News have long pushed racist narratives to further their goals. And, outlets like the New York Times—the so-called “liberal media”—do too little, too late, to push back; it falls to the ranks of independent media outlets to create and promote counternarratives based on racial justice.

This is not a new phenomenon. Pacifica Radio, where I spent nearly two decades as a radio programmer, houses in its archive a rich library of recordings of civil rights leaders who are considered iconic heroes today, but who, during their lifetimes, were generally ignored or even vilified by the establishment press.

From talks by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks to James Baldwin and Angela Davis, and almost everyone in between, Pacifica Radio’s journalists painstakingly recorded speeches and interviews featuring movement leaders and activists of color considered too controversial for the white-dominated press. Meanwhile, their mainstream counterparts only found the courage to do the same decades later, after society had concluded that the Black Freedom movement was on the right side of history.

That trend continues today.

Believing Black Accounts of Injustice

On December 22, 2014, I invited Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, for an interview

on my live morning drive-time radio show on 90.7 FM KPFK in Los Angeles (also televised on Free Speech TV). Together with her colleagues Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, Cullors had helped to coin and popularize the hashtag “#BlackLivesMatter” in summer 2013, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida.

Cullors, now a best-selling author and a sought-after speaker, at that time was not as well known to corporate media outlets and was rarely offered a platform to discuss ideas that corporate media outlets felt uncomfortable tackling.

She told me the origin story of the simple, but powerful phrase “Black Lives Matter” in the aftermath of Zimmerman’s acquittal:

“I just lost it, I was crying and disturbed. We have all this evidence that this young man was hunted by George Zimmerman, and yet George Zimmerman still gets off the hook. So, what do our lives mean?... For me, it was this intense amount of grief that came over me. But I’m also an organizer, and so I quickly moved my grief into action, and I just started going on social media and started writing [to] Black people and saying that I love them and checking on other Black people.”

“Myself and Alicia Garza got into a Facebook conversation and she said this thing—to Black folks in particular who were saying, ‘We should have known better, of course they were gonna treat us this way’—she started saying to folks, ‘You know, I’m always going to be surprised. I’m never going to let them numb me from saying that our lives don’t matter.’ And she said, ‘Our lives matter, Black lives matter.’”



“And then under the Facebook thread, I hashtagged ‘Black Lives Matter.’ And so, from there, literally in that moment, it was like a light bulb for so many Black people, and on social media at that point. And I started tagging Black folks saying, ‘Your life matters, Black Lives Matter.’ I started tagging all my Black friends. I got on the phone with [Alicia] that night. We said we wanted this to be a project. And so, a couple of days later on July 15, riKu Matsuda from ‘Flip the Script’ here [on KPFF] called me up to be on the show and I was going to talk about Black Lives Matter. It happened very organically.”

When I asked her if there was a link between the police killings of Black people and the history of Black people being lynched in America, Cullors said, “I think Black Lives Matter [activists]... are making those connections. And I think mainstream media is not talking about this.”

Although most news media in 2020 temporarily and superficially embraced the idea behind Black Lives Matter—the simple notion that Black people are human—they largely ignored it for the first seven years. Luckily, in the meantime Cullors had a platform to speak about her crucial work: the independent press.

‘If It Bleeds, It Leads’

Cullors had brought with her to the 2014 interview a young woman named Jasmine Richards who had become newly politicized that summer when a white police officer named Darren Wilson killed a young Black teenager named Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Richards went on to lead a chapter of Black Lives Matter in Pasadena, California, where I live.

In what was one of her first live interviews, Richards made an astute observation about why pro-

testers had engaged in property damage during the racial justice uprisings in Ferguson: “They weren’t looting and messing up things to take them. They were burning things and messing things up so people could pay attention, so CNN could pay attention, ’cause that’s the only way a Black life would matter, is if you mess up some stuff and go crazy... What you see on TV is not really what it is.”

The idea that “if it bleeds, it leads” has long been a corporate media mantra, one that activists have taken note of. But independent journalists have generally refused to succumb to such pressures. Freed from the yoke of ratings and market valuations, independent journalists were able to explore and embrace the idea behind “Black Lives Matter” years before the corporate media caught on.

Similarly, independent media did not need to see videotaped proof of racist police brutality to understand that it was a systemic problem. In the era before smartphones, police claims (“he reached for his gun!”) countered those of Black survivors, and corporate media readily accepted law enforcement’s word. But independent media outlets, understanding the power dynamic between police and their victims, did not require proof of Black people’s word. If Black folks said they experienced racist police brutality, that was reason enough to investigate and report.

Although there are exceptions, the narratives at work in independent media spaces have generally questioned authority and been mindful of Black people’s humanity and truthfulness, whereas corporate media outlets have tended to reproduce an internalized narrative that police—and all other authorities—are almost always right.

Connecting the Dots to Build Racial Justice Narratives

Reluctant to connect dots and identify patterns in the public interest, corporate media outlets have often presented stories as if they are isolated

incidents unconnected from one another. Malkia Devich-Cyril, founding director of MediaJustice, noted, “In stories about people of color, about Black people, in particular, the [media] coverage ends up being episodic versus thematic. History and context are lost in these stories.” For consumers of this type of programming, the political landscape can appear bewildering and overwhelming, best left to the “experts” to make sense of.

But context matters, especially in the case of Black Lives Matter. When presented in isolation, the phrase can appear jarring to those who enjoy white racial privilege. It can suggest that Black people are asserting their sovereign right to live in a way that’s confrontational to notions of racial hierarchy. It should not have surprised us, then, that the defensive rejoinders of “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” emerged soon after #BlackLivesMatter was formulated.

When contextualized within the historical arc of racial violence facing Black America—tracing back to the barbarity of enslavement, the horrors of Jim Crow segregation, the systemic and institutional racist structures that persist—the meaning behind the phrase “Black Lives Matter” becomes crystal clear. Black Americans are demanding that the nation start valuing their lives, history, and rights, for it simply hasn’t done so.

It is common practice within independent media to invoke history, to link seemingly disparate phenomena via common threads, to see the patterns that emerge, and to be unafraid to craft narratives with long historical arcs. This is one aspect of what sets us apart from corporate media. And it is what helps readers and viewers of such media to make better sense of the world and its injustices.

In contrast, by reporting isolated stories with little background or historical framing, corporate media outlets rely on the internalized racist narratives promoted by right-wing media outlets to fill in the blanks for readers and viewers.

A Radical President?!

Michael Albert

Here comes election time, yet again. Consider the potential of certain progressives winning high office in the U.S. Beyond their being better than who they defeat, would they turn out to be allies of corporate continuity? Or would they turn out to be agents of change? We know the government is structured to serve power and wealth. We know the deck is stacked. But is there any room for maneuver? And if there is room for maneuver, and if there is sufficient support to push maneuver to go further and further toward radical change, might elected progressives aid that radical change?

Let's make the picture more specific. Suppose AOC were to run for and become President in 2024. Or Sanders. Or whoever else who is equally or still more progressive but whose name I don't even know. Suppose, while whoever is inaugurated, grassroots activism is widespread and deep. Might the program that a new President espoused pre-inauguration move from progressive to radical to revolutionary in office? Or might it move from progressive to liberal to reactionary despite public desires?

Well, imagine it is Inauguration Day. The new president gives her opening presidential speech. Innumerable phones are pocketed. The whole country, literally everyone, glues their attention to live TV coverage.

1. What words would indicate a forthcoming sell-out?
2. What words would indicate forthcoming ideal behavior?
3. What words would indicate behavior that someone like me or you would love to celebrate, but that would likely over-extend current reality and therefore not be ideal?

I think these are hard questions. The difficulty is that to sensibly consider the possibilities we would have to consider not just the new president's words, but also the national context and, in particular, the new president's support. So let's start with the first question, then the third, and only then try the second. And let's keep in mind we aren't thinking about this because we wonder what is inside the new President's heart, gut, or mind. We are not deciding whether to take a walk in the park together. We are not deciding whether to go on a date. We care about what the new President is going to do. We wonder how to gauge the new President's likely future impact.

So, what words would presage sell out? Sell-out would be for the new President to utilize her power to preserve existing economic, kinship, cultural, political, or other hierarchies. It would be to pursue daily life as usual, legislation as usual, adjudication as usual, holidays as usual, entertainment as usual, education as usual, health as usual, production and consumption as usual, and war as usual, each to benefit masters and deprive everyone else. Some change, but constrained to preserve as usual. It would be to act in accord with the structures and pressures of today, not with the structures and pressures of a better tomorrow. An opening speech that reveals future sell-out would say, "my fellow Americans, blah, blah, blah." You want exact words? Fine, go online and click on any inauguration speech. Biden, Trump, Obama...and from my youth, Kennedy too. Or you could even ask chatGPT to write you one. There is no need to dwell on what we have all endlessly heard. We know the stuff of system maintenance. It goes Blah blah blah. And we all slip-slide toward societal suicide.

Okay, so regarding the third question, what would be music to our ears on Inauguration Day, but also beyond optimal for the new President because she needs to describe not what you or I or she would

most love to immediately do, but instead what public sentiments indicate to be the best that she can successfully immediately do. To make this exercise a little entertaining, stare at your TV and imagine the new President stares back and says to you the following, or, at any rate, something like the following. You and the whole world watch:

“Good Afternoon. I have a lot of ground to cover but I want to be succinct and to the point, so let’s settle down and begin. First, I have some apologies to make. Second, I have some promises to make. And third, I think a few moments of celebration are in order.

“In the name of my country I apologize for our military and fiscal role in international mayhem and injustice from Latin America to Asia and from Europe to Africa.

“I apologize to Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guyana, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Congo/Zaire, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba.

“I apologize to Chile, Greece, East Timor, Nicaragua, Grenada, El Salvador, Libya, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, Yugoslavia, Iran, Venezuela, Somalia, Syria, and Ukraine too.

“I apologize for our support of dictators, for our exploitative extractions, and for our arms shipments and use. For every provocation. For every violation.

“I apologize for threats, boycotts, and destruction, for massacring native Americans, for our slavery and racism, for our sexism and sexual predation, for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and for exploitative trade, extortion and more.

“But I know apologies are not enough.

“So I promise that in the next four years we will together reverse our history of exploitation and violence and in its place enact a new agenda of sharing and respect.

“I promise we will study war no more and instead

foster solidarity and mutual aid with the same energy and effort that we previously put to war-making and profit-seeking.

“To that end, in my first year, I will transfer to the auspices of their local hosts all our overseas military bases to henceforth be used for peacetime solidarity and socially beneficial work.

“I promise to evidence an entirely new and compassionate, internationalist

mindset. And to that end, also in my first year, I will reduce the U.S. war budget by half, then by half again, down to a fourth, in my second year. And proceed apace thereafter.

“I will recommission our domestic bases to socially beneficial pursuits such as developing public housing and aiding society-wide transition away from fossil fuel and toward sustainable energy. That will defend against real danger, not create manufactured danger.

“And what of the enormous savings of resources and energies gained by scaling military expenditures to sane levels? Isn’t it obvious? I have talked about it all campaign long.

“I will institute free enriched medical care for all. Free and greatly expanded education for all. Free solar panels for every dwelling, and affordable dwellings for all. And that is just the beginning of what our new government will do to advance social well-being and development.

“Together we will steadily transform our domestic institutions of polity, economy, culture, and kinship to remove hierarchies of wealth and power and to attain a just and liberating new beginning.

“Together we will transform our relation to the natural environment to make it not simply sustainable but properly reciprocal for us and for the world around us.

“And this isn’t a one-nation, one-constituency, one

government, much less a one-person program. This is humanity's path forward. And I promise to aid and learn from all those who have already or who will now take up similar aims by whatever means they deem suitable, throughout the United States and worldwide.

"Amidst our tremendous, sustaining, and enriching diversity, we need to embrace our shared universal humanity. We need to celebrate and apply our shared values of human liberation to provide solidarity, diversity, equity, self-management, international peace, and environmental balance to every home, playground, school, workplace, community, county, and country, each in mutual aid with all the rest.

"We must reject greed and profit-seeking. We must reject self-aggrandizement and power-brokering.

"We must embrace our natural home, our planet. We must replenish it, not despoil it.

"We must usher in a new era of human empathy, a new time of joyous exploration of humanity's collective capacities. We must all participate and none dominate. We must all participate and none be dominated.

"As an emissary and servant of the aroused and intent people of the United States and in accord with their emerging and evolving wishes and learning from their incredible grassroots endeavors in our workplaces and neighborhoods, I celebrate all people around the world who will do similarly.

"Forward together toward no more war. No more war-makers. No more war profiteers. Forward together toward no more environmental despoliation. No more bossing and no more bosses. No more oppressing and no more oppressors.

"We can't do all this overnight, but we can start tonight. And we can continue tomorrow. And on. And on. Day after day. Together. No surrender.

"I will do my best as a humble President who wishes to serve you. And you all, you now listening,

will do your best as the power and the glory of our shared revolutionary journey.

"I thank you for the opportunity I have to serve. And may we all be strong and blessed with wisdom and courage for the tasks ahead.

"We begin. (Mic drop)

I can't say for you, but if a new President did deliver anything like that speech, and if the population by a large majority reacted as I would react, to say it would be the happiest, most excited, most elated, most inspiring, most everything, best moment of my life and of most everyone else's life up to that moment, would understate that moment.

But that moment isn't yet real.

So now comes the hard part. Our second question. For this we assume new President would love more than anything to give a more eloquent version of the above speech, but also understands that the country isn't yet where she, (or, for that matter, you and I) are. More, she understands that in many cases people in the country may not only have reservations that need to be addressed but also insights that need to be heard and accounted for before even arriving at, much less fully implementing, a viable, worthy, and encompassing agenda.

She understands that there is therefore vast listening and organizing to be done before the above speech or any speech like it could become the agenda of the land. So her opening speech needs to kick off a new level of listening and organizing. It needs to inspire and discover. Here is what I would be ecstatic to hear in light of real current wants and possibilities.

"Good Afternoon.

"You have heard me repeatedly, endlessly throughout the campaign. But now the hour is getting late. Now it is action time, not more words time. So I am going to be brief.

“First, I want to sincerely thank all those who voted for the outcome you have enacted. This is your victory. And it is just a start. I and this new administration now have a responsibility not only to deliver on our campaign program, but also, with your support and guided by directions you deliver, to proceed beyond our campaign program toward the better world we seek.

“You know our program: end the electoral college, institute ranked-choice voting, institute community oversight of police; expand free health care for all including preschool childcare; build needed housing/schools/clinics, institute major gun reform, institute free higher education for all, cancel student debt; raise the minimum wage to \$20 an hour, shorten the work week to 35 hours with double hourly pay for overtime; aggressively tax the rich via their profits, property, and luxury consumption; institute national workplace health, safety, and union organizing reforms; slash the military budget, and again, and again; end fossil fuel consumption, greatly expand solar, wind, and other sustainable energy sources; and much more all as we have agitated for throughout our campaign.

“Do you remember the town halls, the meetings in towns and cities where we called on you to say what you need, what you want? Where we called on you to present your stories and even more, to present your ideas for positively altering those stories?

We told you we want our administration to be your government. We told you we intend to serve you, the people who endure injustices. To serve you the people who bravely navigate countless, needless, unjust, alienating, oppressive affronts, the people who daily suffer obstacles and deprivations that have for so long stood in the way of your fullest human well-being and development.

“Well, now is the time for us to deliver. But how? Here, right now, I am talking at millions upon millions of you. But that is not the way. The way is to have you talk at me. It is to have you govern our new administration.

“How can we do that? I don’t have all the answers to all the good and worthy questions that face us. But I perhaps have a few ideas about how to hear from you so that we can form, test, and refine our service as we go.

“So, along with pursuing the earlier summarized program you voted for, in the first few weeks of our administration I intend to:

“Develop and implement mechanisms to hold national plebiscites on important issues.

“Develop and implement mechanisms for public participation in determining local and federal government budgets. That is called participatory budgeting. It will be a step towards politics by and for the people.

“Mandate the nighttime use of public school buildings for adult night school classes, for reading groups and social and interest group clubs for citizens, and in particular for twice a month meetings by area residents to discuss local problems and needs and positive programs.

“Provide federal aid to residents who seek to create assemblies to begin to guide and hold accountable local government.

“Provide federal aid to employees who seek to create councils in their workplaces to discover and air grievances and to develop positive ways to implement corrections and institute new relations.

“Establish and staff a Department of Peace, a Department of Ecology, a Department of Governmental Participation, and a Department of Economic Democracy, as well as reconsider, re-conceive, and then restart existing Departments all in accord with popular grassroots democracy and participation.

“All that and more to involve our population in providing aims that will promote solidarity, diversity, self-management, equity, participation, peace, and environmentally responsible sustainability.

“As I promised, that’s it for today. Just enough words to kick off actions that we will undertake together. I know you all know my love for certain popular music.

“So, together, it is time for us to ring the chimes of freedom, and to do it again, and again, and again, until all are free, all are nourished, all are lovers and thinkers and doers, traveling together into a liberated and liberating future.

“We are not just going to fight a good fight. We are going to win our fight.

“Thank you again for trusting me to serve – and now, on to acts. Good night.”

Would the above be great to hear if “our she” had won 51 to 49? If our she had won 55 to 45? What would it take? That? More? Whatever it would take, maybe looking forward to 2024 that ought to be our agenda. Not to stop Trump again. Not to stop Santos. Not to stop fucking fascism to only re-establish decrepit, rotten, soul-destroying, slip-sliding to societal suicide continuity. But to have our she win against their he while we organize a public that agitates for the likes of the above pragmatic, ecstatic leap forward.

But wait a minute. A she who wins. Is that not already a ridiculous delusion? The campaign is “our she” against their Trump, or their Santos, or their whoever the fuck else they come up with, plus against the mass media, against Wall Street, against the mainstream of the Democratic Party, against every odds maker. Clyde the AI? And we imagine she wins? Delusion?

As a partial possible answer let’s imagine one last foray before the TV. The election has been a wild affair. Our she has been honest, humorous, informative, and very very aggressive throughout. Their he has been a lying, manipulative, slug throughout. Our she has been part of a steadily growing, steadily deepening, grassroots movement. Their he has been a point man for steadily withering reaction. And now you sit. Not in motion but just contem-

plative for the first time in months. You stare at the TV. The concluding debate is down to its concluding remarks. Here they are. Your fingers cross. Your gut clenches. Who wins?

Their He: “How can you possibly have the audacity to stand before the American people and say they should elect you, make you the Commander in Chief, make you the President? You, a woman who anarchistically aims to overthrow our government, a woman who socialistically wants to obliterate our property rights, a woman who feminazi-like threatens to topple society’s family fabric?

You, a woman who would cravenly reduce our armaments, armed forces, and police to passivity, a woman who would make our country pitifully weak, not even a paper tiger. You, a woman who denies religion, attacks individual creativity, promotes soul-destroying collectivism, and denigrates our foundational white roots.

“It will be a pleasure to ship you and your movement’s pathetic power-envy, psychotic animalistic anger back to the fringe communities that spawned it. I happily cede to you my remaining time. Take as long as you like to reply. Your words will only deepen the horror our audience already feels at your vile intentions.”

Our She: “You have no more to say? No more vague, wild assertions? Nothing positive to offer? Okay, I will gladly use your remaining time.

“You wonder at my wanting to anarchistically overthrow our current government. I plead guilty.

“Unlike you, I don’t want to preserve elitist, centralizing, mind-numbingly antidemocratic bureaucratic structures against participation by the American people just to preserve the power of centralizing sycophants like yourself who unaccountably control the destiny of millions. I prefer popular self-management. I prefer political arrangements that empower and serve the public, not institutions that serve only you and your rich buddies.

“You decry my socialistically opposing few hands holding productive property, and I again plead guilty.

“Unlike you, I am not enamored of enriching property holders beyond the wildest dreams of past kings. I do not think being born with a deed in your hand is the highest form of human achievement. In fact, I do not think it is any achievement at all. I think it is obscene. I reject that people like yourself should own society’s rivers, lakes, resources, machinery, and places of production. I reject that you or anyone should rule over them like tin-pot dictators.

“You ought to be aware, however, that you missed a further target to ridicule. I also oppose a relatively small sector of the population monopolizing empowering work. I want to share work more equally so everyone is prepared by their work to participate in social decisions. Unlike you, I want equitable incomes for all. I want empowering dignified work for all.

“I want people able to decide their own working lives. I would say it is a wonder that you don’t want these gains for all humanity, but your attitude isn’t a wonder. It is unmitigated, self-seeking, anti-social greed.

“You say I want to feminazi-like topple the familial fabric of civilization. Why do you say that? Is it because I want young and old people to have a say in their own lives? Because I want families and all living units to freely nurture the next generation without imposing preordained definitions of what boys and girls have to become? Because I want parents and children and extended families to have optimal health care, empowering work, and shared responsibility for their own and for all social life? Because I want women respected and empowered, because I want sexual preference to be whatever free people do and prefer. Because I reject turning back the gender clock a century?

“Well you are right, I do want all that. Why don’t you? Is it because you are a misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, narcissistic brute?

“The human, nurturing fabric of society is already at risk. People like you don’t see its deep scars despite your own broken homes and the bedlam so visibly endured by so many all around you. You can’t see the truth of our times because your heart is a cash register and your paranoid eyes perceive only profit potentials.

“I want to restore and enrich society’s fabric. You want to rape and plunder society.

“I see all families as able to be repositories of love and sources of wise, confident participation. You see most families as sources of cheap, obedient labor.

“I see society’s countless communities as allied and equal centers of creative diversity. You see all but your own community as fringe targets to ridicule, restrain, and repress.

“You say I would disarm the country and leave us helpless because I reject siphoning society’s wealth into useless and pointless weapons that, were they used, would destroy all humanity.

“You say I would neuter the police because I want properly paid and empowered justice workers that serve the public and not power, and because I want our children’s and our children’s children’s human potentials to develop free from war, pestilence, coercion, and restriction in a world of shared peace and plenty.

“I am guilty again. You are absolutely right I want all that.

“You call it making our country weak and defenseless. I call it making our country worth defending.

“You say I deny religion and sublimate the individual to the collective. Why? Because I want all religions, races, ethnicities, and nationalities to be free of fear of imposition and negation from without and because I want individuals and collectives prepared and in position to self-manage

their destinies without having to submit to the whims of the rich and domineering elites you serve.

“You are right again. I do reject your racism, your sexism, your homophobia. I am guilty as charged.

“You say that it was a pleasure to have run against me, and that it will be a pleasure to ship me and my pathetic envy and psychotic animalistic anger back to the fringe dwellings that spawned it. Well, I have some news for you. Those fringe dwellings are the soup kitchens, apartment buildings, private homes, schools, hospitals, ball fields, churches, and workplaces of America.

“They are fringe to your gilded billionaire lifestyle, yes they are. But we will see soon enough what goes away, and what goes forward.

“Will the American people vote against the movement I come from and their own futures? Or will the American people elect a very new type of President and continue their steadily escalating popular participation in revolutionizing all sides of all of our lives?

“After your display here tonight, I too feel ready to predict the outcome. I predict that some folks will vote for you due to fearing the make-believe demons that you and your media moguls have manufactured. And I predict some will vote for you to defend their elite interests with no concern for society. But I predict most people will see past the confusions and prejudices that have historically allowed the likes of you to win office.

“Your ignorant posturing, your bullying, your pathetically hypocritical life and your self-serving views, all admittedly more eloquently expressed than some others of your ilk who came before you could manage, have lost too much of their deceiving power for you to push anything aside, much less to push aside the most grassroots, democratic, participatory, multi-focused movement this country has ever seen. Good luck with that.

“I wish I could be a gentlewoman and say it was a pleasure to run against you. But I can’t. It would be a lie. And I won’t lie. It has been a bore to run against you because you are an empty vessel of hate. It has been depressing, because even in one lonely body, such an amalgamation of narcissistic evil as you embrace is seriously depressing to behold.

“We will soon see what this country decides. Will it opt for you and your hate and fear? Will it opt for the billionaires who pray that you will prevail to help them amass still more millions and billions?

“Or will the country opt for the hopes and thoughts that have risen, rallied, marched, and most of all organized all across the country? Will the country opt for the women and men, boys and girls, and movements and activists who have worked tirelessly for our campaign to prevail so that we can aid their efforts to build a vastly better future?

“Time is on our side. Your day is slip-sliding away. Good riddance.

Pandemonium...

I admit I had “our she” go all out. I couldn’t restrain myself. Too much? Beyond possibility? I don’t know. Maybe looking forward to 2024 and beyond our agenda should not be to stop Trump. Nor to stop Santos. Nor to stop fucking fascism to only re-establish decrepit, rotten, soul-destroying, slip-sliding to societal suicide continuity. Maybe that sets the bar too low. Maybe our agenda should be to have “our she” win against “their he” plus to organize a public that not only votes for “our she” but agitates and assembles for the likes of an ecstatic leap forward.

Maybe we should start to ring them chimes now. If not now, when? After the deluge?

A Brutal Colonial Legacy Is Tinder For The Fires That Are Sweeping Across France

Vijay Prashad

On Saturday, July 1, 2023, a large crowd gathered inside and around the Ibn Badis Mosque in Nanterre, France, where a 17-year-old boy, Nahel M, was mourned and then later buried. Nahel M, of Algerian and Tunisian heritage, was shot dead by a police officer during a traffic stop. It was clear that the police officer had not acted in self-defense but had shot the young man in cold blood. A wave of outrage swept through the country, with protests and riots breaking out across France. French President Emmanuel Macron sent out security forces to stem the protests, which inflamed the protestors whose anger at the police is at very high levels. Antipathy toward the police was confirmed by the language of the police unions (Alliance Police Nationale and UNSA), who called the protestors “vermin” and “savage hordes” and said that “it’s no longer enough to call for calm; it must be imposed.”

This is an act of war by the French police against the French population who come from France’s former colonies. President Macron called the killing of Nahel M “inexplicable,” but this is hardly a credible response. Racism against people of Arab and African descent in France has become almost banal, something that takes place and no longer raises an eyebrow. When France’s Ministry of the Interior released the numbers of racist attacks and killings from 2021, the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) said that the situation was “alarming.” Sophie Elizéon, chief of the inter-ministerial delegation for the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-LGBT hate (DILCRAH) said, “What is being reported from the ground is the exacerbation of unabashed [behavior].” The killing of Nahel M, in this context, was absolutely explicable—it was the result of a general social toxicity towards minori-

ties and one that is given expression through the police force. No wonder the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said, “This is a moment for the country to seriously address the deep issues of racism and discrimination in law enforcement.”

Deep Issues of Colonialism

France never really came to terms with its colonial heritage or its colonial mindset. French colonizers went to the Americas in the 16th century, and a hundred years later set up a number of plantations in the Caribbean that operated a slave-based economy. At the heart of the French colonial enterprise was the island of Hispaniola, half of which is today’s Haiti, and from where the French Empire derived an enormous volume of its considerable wealth. France’s attitude to its colonies and to their urge for freedom is encapsulated in the story of Haiti. When the Afro-descendent population of Haiti rose up in a major rebellion in 1791, France—bubbling with its own Revolution of 1789—nonetheless denied the Haitians of their freedom and fought till 1804 to deprive Haiti of its independence. Even after Haiti defeated the French planters, the French state—with the full backing of the United States—forced the Haitian government in 1825 to pay an enormous indemnity of 150 million French francs, which Haiti only paid off in 1947 to Citibank (which bought the debt after 1888).

The reticence of France to allow its own universal pretensions (Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité—the phrase from the revolution that was the center of the 1958 Constitution of the Third Republic) to be heard in the colonies ran from 1804 in Haiti to the wars against national liberation by the French



from Algeria to Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s. So ugly is that history that French students are not taught it in an unvarnished manner. If a French student is asked how many Algerians died due to the brutality of the French regime during the liberation war (1954-1962), they would be hard-pressed to come up with the real number, which is over a million; nor would those students know that when thirty thousand Algerians marched in Paris on October 17, 1961, the French police killed at least a hundred of them and threw their bodies into the River Seine, while arresting at least fourteen thousand people. This is an unacknowledged history, and an unacknowledged colonial history confounds the French public who are therefore unprepared for the colonial structures that assert themselves through the police force and through France's continued colonial adventures.

Over the course of the past six months, the gov-

ernments of Burkina Faso and Mali have ejected French troops. They have argued that the 2013 French intervention, purportedly against al-Qaeda, in fact intensified the instability in the region and that France actually consorted with secessionist groups against the national states. A growing feeling of anti-French and anti-Western sentiment runs from these countries in Africa's Sahel northwards to Algeria and Morocco, where President Macron has been heckled during recent visits. Confidence is growing in the northern Africa region, where people are now quite clear that the French interventions are not for the sake of the African people but are for the narrow interests of France. For instance, the French continue to garrison the town of Arlit, Niger, not for reasons of Mission civilisatrice, but to power the French nuclear reactors; a third of all lightbulbs in France are powered by the uranium from Arlit. There is a general swell of anti-French feeling in the coun-



try's former colonies, now inflamed by the murder of a boy of Tunisian and Algerian heritage.

Debt and the French Burden

Just a few days before the murder of Nahel M, President Macron hosted the Paris Summit for a New Global Financial Pact. The idea for this summit originated with Barbados's Prime Minister Mia Mottley, who suggested that countries that were especially climate-vulnerable—mainly low-lying island states—needed to get

easier access to financing to offset the dangers of rising sea waters. Mottley had argued that the cost of mitigation—building sea walls—and the costs of disasters as well as the high cost of borrowing for green energy, made it impossible for countries such as Barbados to protect themselves or to undertake the kind of transition necessary as climate disasters increased. “What is required of us,” Mottley said, “is absolute transformation, and not reform, of our institutions.”

Macron's summit on the Financial Pact was as hollow as the promises to reform the French police or France's colonial attitudes to the African states.

Akinwumi Adesina, the head of the African Development Bank, said that “Africa alone loses \$7 to \$15 billion a year because of climate change, and that's going to rise to... almost \$50 billion a year by 2040. So, the world has to meet its commitment, the developed countries, of the \$100 billion” pledge that they have made. Treaty obligations and promises made since at least 2009, Adesina said, have been broken. “I mean, it's a very small amount of money compared to the scale of the problem, but by not meeting it, it has created a crisis of trust in the developing countries.”

Macron and the incoming World Bank president Ajay Banga gave speeches that sounded as if they could have been given over a decade ago. Same language, same tired promises. “Hope and optimism,” said Banga, to an audience that was not feeling hopeful or optimistic. At least Macron put some tangible suggestions on the table such as a global tax on shipping, on aviation, and on the wealthy to raise \$5 billion for a loss and damage fund. It is unlikely that the corporate sector, which has influence in the International Maritime Organization (who will see about the shipping taxes), will allow increased taxation in this sector.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed his finger at the residue of the colonial mindset and the neocolonial structure when it comes to financing. The International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) are available to ameliorate the negative impact of the permanent debt crisis and to bring much-needed emergency finances to poorer countries. But even here, Guterres said, the European Union—with a total population of 447 million people—received \$160 billion in SDRs, while the continent of Africa—with a total population of 1.2 billion people—received only \$34 billion in SDRs. “A European citizen received on average almost 13 times more than an African citizen,” Guterres pointed out.

“All this was done according to the rules. But let's face it: these rules have become profoundly immoral.” He could have been speaking about the French police code.