



MAGAZINE

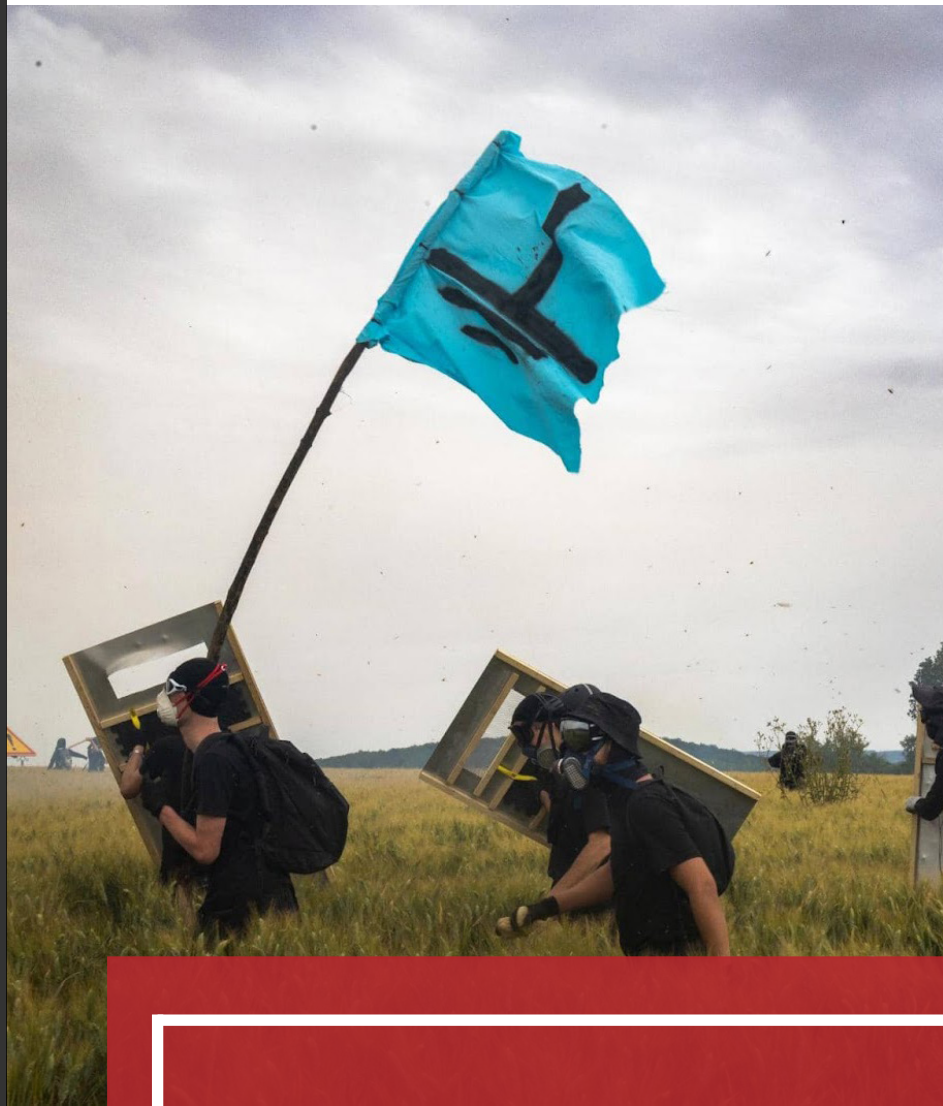
NOVEMBER 2024

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"I'm not just goin' to sit down and let this happen. I'm going out and help, even if it is my life. But I'm helping. This is my world too."

-Salaria Kea



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Title image: Toulouse, France: 6,000 opponents of the planned A69 motorway defy a ban on demonstrations to march along its route and block its construction. Image: XR

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What Happened, What's Next

Michael Albert

What Happened?

Got Up, got out of bed. Why? To start the next round. Why? Because the fight is not over.

Trump won a very big battle. Yes, he did. No denying it. Sickening. But it wasn't because he is stupid. It wasn't because he's an idiot. Is he the luckiest human ever to walk the planet? I don't think so. Did he have some luck? Absolutely. Is he God's emissary? Some huckster pastors, yes. But God? Come on. Did the media again go for the quick buck, what they exist for, again offering too much Donald all the time? Yes, of course, but only a fraction of it said he's our guy. And one of the things Trump knows is how to dominate the news cycle.

Did the Democrats fail to convince about the economy, in particular? Certainly. Could Bernie have won? I think he could have. So could Harris have tacked leftward instead of rightward and won? Maybe so. Are lots of people so fed up and alienated that saying that everything is crap and I will fix it all was good noise to make for Trump to win? Well, yes, it would seem that it was, and he knew it. Was another important factor that most of the electorate had little contact with truthful accounts, or really with any accounts at all? Yes, I believe it was.

Was there a rural versus urban divide? If you look at the maps and say that there wasn't, you can't see the difference between red and blue. About that divide the maps don't lie. But urban and



STOP PROJECT 2025 Rally across from Heritage Foundation in Washington DC (Image: Elvert Barnes)

rural people do not have different genes. And in any event why did Trump appeal to anyone outside his small circle of friends, much less appeal so powerfully across all rural districts and quite powerfully, indeed more powerfully than last time, in many urban districts? Indeed, why did trump do well enough in urban areas to make up for the relatively lesser population in those areas? Did Trump do as well as he did because of what we have a hard time even contemplating? That is, that Trump knew what he was doing. I pick door number three. He is a lying thug, rapist, fascist, of the most worst kind, but he isn't an idiot. At least not at selling things, including selling himself, and at reading the pulse of a room, even the biggest room.

So what the hell did Trump know? Or let's put it this way, how did he say the seemingly idiotically self destroying things he said and blather as incoherently as he did much of the rest of the time and yet wind up not destroying but instead elevating himself?

I know there are exit polls up the kazoo. And yes, I know they show that when answering questions about a list of concerns when coming out of the polling places voters put economy and democracy first and immigration and foreign policy last with gender in the middle. But just how much does that tell us? I think not too much. And since to find out what Trump knows by tunneling into Trump's mind seems impossible—does he really believe they eat the cats, they eat the dogs?—how about if we come at this question of what Trump knew from a different direction?

Draw a picture in your mind of what/who Trump is. Who is he to you? Draw what you see and feel him to be. Draw your take on him. Liar, rapist, racist. Bully, braggart, billionaire. Keep going with your characterization. Enabler of the rich. Disabler of the poor. Extoller of hate, ridiculer of compassion. And so on. Now imagine you are talking informally with a random Trump voter. You are getting along well. You are being honest and open with one another. You aren't directly

talking about Trump or the election. Neither of you is dismissing the other. After awhile you ask the Trump voter, other things being equal, would you trust/like/want to be led by a guy with the defining features that you then describe based on those that you see in Trump? How many such voters do you think would say yes, yes, can I have that, can I have someone with those features, please? Very few, right? Perhaps some Proud Boys. Who beyond them? You aren't sure. How about all or even most of Trump's voters? I don't believe it.

So when I imagine that kind of exchange, for me it raises a serious question. Why are there so many votes for what I find, what we find, and what I even think many of Trump's voters would find, in other circumstances, so odious? What did Trump offer that outweighed or (along with Fox) made invisible to others what we rejected? What did he offer that outweighed or (along with Fox) made invisible or entertaining but not real what a great many and I think even most of his voters would have ordinarily rejected? What's his attractive aspect that overcame and even made invisible or trivial his repulsive aspect? And if you think that cannot exist, consider Bill Clinton's voters ignoring his downside—or, honestly, consider every Presidential candidate's voters ignoring their choice's downside. Or if you think I have a naive view of Trump's voters, okay, maybe so, but look at a couple of dozen interviews with instances of Trump voters online. Or maybe see what those who you know would say, asked the above. And then tell me you still think crediting them with humanity is naive.

I think Trump's attraction has to be a quality, a promise, a pledge, not a specific policy. Did more than a handful of his voters read the 900 page program and say, oh man, that's what I want? I don't think actual explicit program was the attraction. Some promises, sure, maybe that was part of it. Like, I will fix the economy, for example. Or I will solve immigration. Or perhaps some poorly forged assumptions about what Trump would wind up, were part of it. Like, Trump likes people like me. Bombast, sure. But

specific programs? I think they played nearly no roll.

Some would say the attraction is a belief that Trump will keep non-whites down, as in make racism resurgent. There is certainly some of that, to be sure. Hate the other. Hurt the other. But Latino Trump voters didn't vote in significant numbers for keeping themselves down. Likewise for Black Trump voters. And while some whites likely did vote for explicitly hurting non whites, I think there was much more than racism, or maybe better to say there was much beyond racism, at work.

Some would say Trump's attraction is a belief that he will keep women down, as in make patriarchy resurgent. Same thing. There is certainly some of that, to be sure. Hate women. Hurt women. But women voters didn't vote for Trump in such large numbers to keep themselves down. Some men did vote for explicitly hurting women, yes, I believe so, but I think there was much more than sexism, or maybe better to say there was much beyond sexism, at work.

What about a belief that Trump will preserve some voters' familiar ways of living? A feeling that Trump cares about me. He will raise me back up. He will stop whites like me from falling. He will stop men like me from falling. He will make us men again. And, to boot, he will get me some dignity. He will get me some influence. I can be on a winning team, on our team, on my team, on a team where I matter—if I am on Trump's team.

Is all that just word play? Isn't to keep whites up the same as to keep those others down because they are inferior? Isn't to keep men up the same as to keep women down, trans down, gays down, because they are inferior? Yes, objectively it can be that, but might the essence of it for many and perhaps even for most Trump voters (though not for Trump), instead be that the other shouldn't be replacing us, the other shouldn't

be changing our ways of living, shouldn't be causing me to fall. Couldn't it often be, I don't want to hurt the other. I want to save and help myself?

I am already suffering incredibly. Trump will stop the replacement of my ways with other ways. I think maybe Trump's attraction could in considerable part be a feeling like that.

Is that formulation just a way to paper over vicious racism and vicious sexism? It could be, but what if at present, more often than not, it isn't? Then calling it viciousness could unintentionally help make it viciousness. Could push people who have aligned with Trump for other reasons to defensively maliciously pursue vicious racism and sexism to stay on the team. That is the tune that Nazism on the march struts to. That, and passivity from potential opponents. And at the core of what's coming, I think Trump wants to play that tune.

So what about I want to get me some dignity, get me some influence? I want to be on a winning team, our team, my team—not the elite's team where I am barely an afterthought, but Trump's team where I feel like the main thought? I think that feeling is big.

As college educated empowered professionals fled the Republican Party into the Democratic Party, and as non-college educated disempowered workers fled the Democratic Party into the Republican Party, could it be that the teams kept their members but switched hats? Okay, maybe, but in that case, why would the working class constituency that moved toward the Republican Party, with the economy still as its big focus, adhere to its new party's old ways much less to billionaire boss Trump? Perhaps it was because Trump knew to minimize their antagonism toward owners and to build on their antagonism toward their worsening plight and on what I call the coordinator class and every other scapegoat he could blame other than himself and his allies. And thus on workers' antagonism toward the Democrats. And perhaps

because Trump makes himself appear to be one of the boys albeit he puffs himself up as bigger, badder, and nastier to bring folks on his march.

So the knowable truth is that the election was impacted by a slew of multi-variable, intersecting factors. Did Trump emerge on top because he was lucky? Or God-backed? Or was it because he handled the many variables relatively effectively? Did Trump win because he knew how to appeal to multiple inclinations, even to opposite ones, all at the same time? And because the media let him do it? And the Dems did too? Is it because he knew how to attract justifiably angry, alienated people who ought to have been repulsed by his true self such that their repulsion faded into the background? Sort of like all candidates attract their supporters—when you think about it—but in Trump's case better and bigger and to pursue something of his own that is way more extreme than other candidates.

My own key take-away from the election itself is this. Many Trump voters disagree with you and me not so much about values (some of that, of course, but not intensely much) as about the facts of the matter and thus the consequences of their vote. They ask, who cares about my economic circumstances and who will make changes that may help me? Is it Trump who says the economy is in the toilet or Biden/Harris who say it is going great when I feel like it is in the toilet? Who threatens democracy and weaponizes the legal system? Is it Trump who is trying to release people like me from prison, or is it Biden/Harris who I see attacking their opponent mercilessly and ceaselessly from every angle? Who hears my pain at feeling replaced, demoted, dissed? Is it Trump who shrieks like me at what is all around, or is it Biden and Harris from another world who celebrates what is all around? Confused? Yes. Drowned by a narrow range of communications, yes. But if our disagreements with many Trump voters are very often about some facts of the matter and about the consequences of choices, then isn't that precisely what organizing is meant to

address, however impassioned and militant the opposed stances may be? And doesn't that tell us one big important thing about what is needed next? And for that matter doesn't Trump's voters outrage at what is tell us whither big important thing, but about what is possible?

What's Next?

People who want a better world always try to protect and improve the lot of suffering constituencies at the same time as they try to develop means and support to do still more. That is activist agenda. And that holds now, too. But people of course do that work in different settings, with different resources, and with different opponents. No one knows with any precision what our Trumpian situation and context for fighting to protect and improve the lot of various constituencies and to expand our means to win still more thereafter is about to become. Likely not even Trump knows in any detail, much less anyone else in what will be his administration, which will be subject to his will.

Nonetheless, I think we can reasonably assume that Trump is going to quickly begin to pursue what he has overtly and aggressively said that he will pursue. So there is, as the song said, a very bad moon rising. He will go after a first round of his enemies, and then more. He will fire a first round of government employees, ready to then fire more. He will make abhorrent appointments, in particular but not only Kennedy Jr. and Musk, and then more. He will trash environmental and labor protections and start looking at and making noises about shutting down the Department of Education, FDA, and CDC while he shuts some lesser agencies first, and then moves on to the bigger targets. He will begin to drill baby drill as fast as he can. He will close the border and begin to deport undocumented immigrants but will also keep them but reduce their status even further, starting day one. He gets media, so he will begin the process of step by step controlling it and eventually establishing state media. And he will appoint and

chat with Generals trying to get them to agree that if called upon, they will repress his enemies at home. All this Trump will quickly initiate but strategically pursue, taking easier steps first, not least to keep his most virulent support happy. He will keep whining about being mistreated and attacked, fight off his legal enemies, and try to get his thin support to become more committed. And on all these fronts he will seek some, and then if successful, seek some more, as long as he can get away with it. So our task is to not let him make progress. To fight against fascism will mean to fight all of his agendas. But let's consider somewhat more one area that may well come up first and be most visible, his immigration efforts, to think about the kinds of choices opposing Trump may include.

If we suppose Trumpism is going to pursue deporting millions of undocumented immigrants with families, we know Trump will not seek to do it in a day, week, or month. That would be impossible and in any event, very stupid. His administration will instead seek to do it a step at a time. Do a little that's easier. Normalize that. Then do some more that's harder. And complicating his agenda, he will also have to take account that business is not going to want rampant deportation. Some sure, but very far from all. So we can expect, I think, that Trump will see that light and accommodate it by weakening, dividing, legally intimidating and restraining immigrants who he must agree to let stay. For him the immigrant task will become to deport some to not least to help galvanize hostility toward and to isolate and especially scare immigrants who remain not only lest economic chaos ensues, but also to offset economic losses for owners of many deportations by rolling back all protections for immigrant workers who remain.

So, what comes first regarding immigration? Perhaps to deport undocumented immigrants who are in jail plus their families, as the easiest and thus best first target to vilify. Then, after that is normalized, perhaps to deport undocument-

ed immigrants who aren't in jail and who are not convicted of crimes, but who are claimed by police to be criminals even though not convicted, plus their families. Finally, if that isn't enough, if Trump really is not only vile but also a moron, which I don't anticipate, with all that normalized, he will move on to deport the rest, that is to deport every remaining undocumented immigrant and family. But, more likely, either seeing the need himself or educated/pressured by owners from various immigrant dependent industries to meet their needs, then both to avoid chaos but also of course enrich the rich, perhaps Trump doesn't deport all, or even most, but instead just a whole lot while he further reduces immigrants' ability to fight against their super exploitation by rolling back all defenses they may have and drumming up steadily more hate toward them. So if even some of all that is broadly correct, what would fighting fascism require regarding immigration?

If the envisioned steps begin and in response we don't resist or we even mount protest that is, however, overrun, then the immigration agenda will not only move forward at tremendous human and social cost, so will Trump's support. So what is needed is not just to protest deportations, but to stop them. This will be the logic regarding every pursuit Trump undertakes. The more he wins the harder it will be to stop him. So, we need to fight him from the beginning. And, for example, with our eyes on the whole immigrant agenda, our task will need to include strengthening remaining immigrants by diminishing hostility toward them and protecting them and indeed all workers against removal of rights and defenses, while also preparing to not just defend but enlarge their rights and powers.

Regarding immigration, I have heard, already, of principals of public schools meeting with area superintendents about what to do when ICE shows up at the door to take some of their students from their school. One thing would presumably be for the principals to decide to not cooperate but not to literally block the ICE agents. The

other riskier and scarier thing would be to decide to literally block the agents. After the superintendent meets with the principal, for example, or even without that step, a principal might meet with a school's teachers and staff and decide we will not be party to deporting our students. We will not only not help ICE, we will literally block ICE from entering our school. They might go on to decide, we will block them very visibly and openly, as creatively as we can conceive, not only to protect our students but also to inspire other schools and workplaces to do likewise. And then they might make plans to do so.

And if ICE is thwarted at its first appearance, but then comes back with more agents, what would be next? The school faculty and staff might decide essentially the same thing. We block entry again. ICE then says it will arrest us. What then? Perhaps we decide, okay, we will get arrested. You will have to carry off teachers to jail. But perhaps we will also seek to get lots of parents of students to stand with us. To keep ICE out. So then perhaps ICE says, okay, you are a pain in the ass so we will take your students off the street, or we will take them from their homes. And maybe the school staff then decides, no, not from our classes you won't, but also not elsewhere. Maybe school staff decides to establish a sanctuary to protect their students from ICE. Maybe then they even offer night classes and events for the community so the school always has lots of people present and has growing diversifying support. And suppose others decide we have to counter lies and denigration aimed at immigrants to justify their mistreatment. And campaigns to that effect arise as well. And if all that were to happen, or something equally effective and outwardly were to arise threatening schools' staffs, if schools happen to move first against Trump's immigration/deportation plans, what then?

Best case, maybe the teachers unions sign on. And the resistance spreads to many many more schools. And maybe some employers who hire undocumented workers day by day start to resist, and then many more related unions in industries

with immigrant workers follow suit. And then, all unions? Or perhaps earlier, maybe places of worship start offering sanctuary to block deportations. And then imagine something still bigger happens after weeks and months of this struggle that includes various confrontations that steadily arouse more involvement, more solidarity.

Perhaps in New York City, say, the NY Football Giants welcome immigrants to the stadium, set up a sanctuary for them, and tell the city that until ICE backs off, no more football. Or perhaps the artists who work at Lincoln Center do that. Or the NBA players do that. Or Columbia University, NYU, and others do that. Sanctuary cities are great and are lining up already to not aid Trump, but literal sanctuary "homes" to provide protection and also means to fight for better circumstances would make them sanctuary cities even greater. To fight against Trump seeking to isolate and super exploit all remaining immigrants essential to economic (read, Capitalist stability), would become part of opposing Trump's deportations too. And then?

This may all sound fanciful but isn't it what we will need? Isn't there now no alternative to having a real alternative? If a surge to the right, toward full blown fascism, can go step by step without major, serious, and successful opposition so that Trump's growing repression and violations pick off one target and then another, won't it do so? Isn't that what we are up against? The more steps it successfully takes, the more steps it acclimates people to, then the bigger the next steps will be, the faster they will follow, and the harder resistance will become. If that is right, and it is certainly a time-worn authoritarian pattern, then doesn't it follow that we have to resist effectively right at the outset of each Trump effort? Immigration being one front, but not the only one. Courageous committed teachers being one activist participant, but not the only one?

My point is that to ask what's next is not asking a familiar question about our usual situation. If Trump and whoever composes his administra-

tion are out to pursue their Project 2025 agenda, what we do to resist will not be movement activism in only the usual, familiar, settings that seeks desirable gains by only familiar methods. Instead, it will have to resist and stop Trumpian incursions on what will, if it is left to expand, eventually dismantle everything democratic and really everything civil other than corporate ownership and Trump-dominated government, and perhaps carefully monitored 12 step programs. Isn't the only thing that will stop that spreading reach of authoritarianism specific resistance and associated solidarity which cannot be overcome without Trump and his administration losing its support and finally losing its enforcement apparatus. Tell me that that kind of resistance, broadening and deepening with every step forward is impossible, and I will tell you that I fear we are in that case headed for Hell.

In short, Trump, with the support that he has and the mandate he can claim, albeit that I think his support and mandate is still rather thin and far from eager for Project 2025 type steps, will take what he thinks he can easily get and what he thinks he can easily get will then grow with each new success. To stop him therefore needs to start right away. We must prevent his agenda and the human harm it would impose, right at the outset so we don't face a much harder problem of dismantling full blown fascism after it is in place.

First, in various situations some people will talk together, plan, and act in their own chosen ways, like the hypothetical school staffs mentioned above. Such first actions will make it easier for others in other situations to then do likewise. And resistance will then spread. We must do it starting as early after inauguration as we can in ways that will not provide an excuse for violent repression but that will be effective and inspire others to do their best in more domains, and that will simultaneously start to earn wide respect and support, even from elements among Trump's voters.

Trump has a program. He is not just defending a horrible system. He is hell bent on making it worse. He is not hiding anything. And he will do what he wants unless he is stopped. It isn't going to be easy, and while large rallies and demonstrations to display and grow dissent can and likely should be part of it, my guess is that active, organized, carefully conceived and planned, determined and replicable as well as effective modes of resistance are going to be essential.

Election Day, they won a battle. But this war is not over. It will be difficult but certainly not hopeless.

I am saddened, horrified, enraged, sickened, outraged, and pummeled that the fascist but clever psychopath who will be President yet again in a couple in a couple of months. I am also scared and feeling weak over what happened. I suspect many who may read this are feeling more or less similarly. Muddled too. Even getting out of bed isn't easy. Comedies on Netflix beckon. But the truth is, we cannot surrender. A brief break to replenish, yes, but with a timeline and a constant eye to return. Some are without any doubt going to start fighting first. Sometimes it will be their situation that makes it easier for them or prods them harder, sometimes their more prepared personal inclination will move them. Whatever. But honestly, the really important group will be those who join next. You who read this or other formulations like it. With all your knowledge. With all your experience. Be in one of those two groups. If you are, Trump will go berserk but he will also lose because more will join and then more, and then even his voters will start to dissent. It may take a year or two, but it can be done. It must be done.

Trump is relying on, well, what in my past was called for me, the sounds of silence. Watch his agenda unfold, horrified but quiet. Angry but inactive. And silence will rule.

It is time to disturb the sounds of silence.

How to Stop Fascism

Roger Hallam

One word. Proximity. Let me explain.

In a now largely forgotten book published in 1989 called *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Polish-Jewish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman examined the overwhelming evidence for why the Holocaust happened. It required a gang of political adventurers who seized control of the German state, wielding its immense organisational and industrial capacity. But this still leaves the question of how they managed it. In a key section titled *Social Proximity and Moral Responsibility*, Bauman argues that the decisive factor wasn't ideology but the creation of psychological and physical distance between Jewish people and the rest of the population.

In 1933 the Nazis called for a boycott of Jewish businesses. It failed because too many non-Jewish Germans personally knew their local Jewish shop owners and felt a moral responsibility not to harm them. The Nazis learnt from this and, over the next decade, progressively reduced the proximity between Jews and other Germans. Jewish people were forced to wear identifying badges, then moved into camps, and ultimately, when they were murdered, the separation had become so vast that most people felt no moral responsibility to intervene.

To prevent fascism, we must do the opposite. A pro-social movement of political adventurers must take control of the state and progressively increase proximity. Proximity—not “economic growth”—is the key determinant of a flourishing civilisation. It's what people truly crave: to connect, to sit down in small groups and talk. We care about “politics” and “self-interest” only to the extent that they foster this connection. Love—mutual care and recognition—is humanity's foundational need. This truth spans the social sciences and is echoed in the wisdom traditions.

Let me give a few examples. In my award-winning research at King's College London I showed that if people sit in small circles to discuss a social issue (with biscuits on the table!) for most of a public meeting, 80% leave feeling empowered. In contrast, only 20% feel empowered after a conventional meeting with a series of speakers and no small group discussion. Research shows most people initially attend campaign meetings not for political reasons, but because a friend invited them or they seek human connection. A Harvard study on negotiation found the single biggest predictor of success is whether the other party personally likes you. The early Christian church, one of the most successful movements in history, didn't convert people through doctrinal persuasion but by fostering friendships. The evidence is overwhelming. “It's absolutely fantastic,” one trade union leader told me after restructuring his events around small group discussions.

Progressives and the Left fail repeatedly because they are wedded to an Enlightenment secular religion that assumes people respond to ideas over emotions and ideology over connection. They're embarrassingly mistaken. Fascist men, for instance, often abandon their views after forming personal relationships—such as getting a girlfriend. There are countless stories of individuals entering far-right spaces, listening, building personal connections, and subsequently helping others to leave those spaces. During the recent English riots a group of Muslims, faced with an angry crowd outside their mosque, offered food and listened to people's concerns. Conversations ensued, tensions eased, and constructive dialogue began.

I've given over 200 public talks on the climate crisis, often with right-wing conspiracy theorists turning up to disrupt. I never argue with them but thank them for sharing their views and invite



House of The People Gathering

them to discuss afterwards. I take them aside in a small group, summarise their questions as they speak, and they continue talking. It works wonders. One of the main right-wing conspiracy theorists in the UK even shook my hand afterwards. Proximity can build a connection in minutes.

Of course this doesn't work every time, and ideas have their place. But as Carl Rogers, one of the most influential psychologists of the last century discovered, listening with "unconditional positive regard" is the single most effective way to promote personal healing and growth. Rogers sparked a counselling revolution, transforming therapy. We need a similar revolution to transform politics. Change won't come through conventional politics but by circumventing it. We must create proximity directly—through door-knocking and local assemblies organised around small group listening.

This is the next political revolution. I'm convinced that new movement parties could rise from zero to winning local and national elections in six months with these methods. We've already seen similar success with new parties in recent years. But it needs perfecting. A national project would require around £1 million to get started. Anyone with money out there would see a far better return by investing in this method to counter the far-right threat, rather than wasting funds on conventional political strategies.

We can either build a new civilisation based on closeness and connection or let humanity destroy itself by ignoring how we actually function. Getting this right, right now, is of utmost importance. You know exactly what I mean.

If you want to join the social movement that will create this revolution, sign up at timetoassemble.org.

Directly Challenging the US Empire, Capitalism, and the Global Climate Crisis

Kim Scipes

Well, the Democrats failed to keep Donald Trump out of the presidency again. That's going to hurt a lot of people. I assume most of us would prefer that he was not in this position. However, I argue that if we carefully examine the situation, we can see that the situation is not as bleak as initially suggested—for example, Trump is an “attractor,” not a leader—and that if we on the left respond intelligently, we can have a major impact on this country and its role in the world.

The question now is how might the left—very broadly defined—understand and respond to the current political situation in the US? Assuming others will try to address this issue as well, I will share my analysis. (I don't think any one person has all of the answers, but I believe that we can each contribute our respective analyses to help develop a valuable collective understanding.) Since I have been researching and writing over the last 40-plus years, I evaluate where my analysis was right and where it was wrong. Then I suggest where I think we might move to shape the future.

My biggest failure regarding the 2024 presidential election was not in my analysis, but in my lack of imagination. I think my analysis was very prescient, especially the part of the seismic economic changes that have been taking place in the country over the last 40 years and the on-going failure of capitalism for working people. However, I failed ultimately because I could not imagine people in response rallying behind Donald Trump; by voting for him, they were endorsing a representative of all the forces and policies that had destroyed much of the domestic based economy and local communities

on which they had previously depended.

But who to turn to? Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and the large majority of the Democratic Party have also been complicit in this corporate-led internal suicide that has victimized tens of millions of the US's working people, and without having any real concrete proposals to address the social devastation of the last 40 years, they were at a serious disadvantage; at least Trump acted like he cared for those victimized, or at least he sympathized.

In short, I underestimated Trump and his ability to attract and hold on to followers. This, I argue, does not make Trump a leader; it argues he is an attractor; he attracts people. There is a big difference. What I'm saying here is that Trump has no real solutions to address social problems he and his campaign had identified. Therefore, we should recognize that there is a big difference between MAGA activists and pro-Trump voters: there is a space between them, and we need to blow this unity apart. Trump has an ability to unify those who think they have been mistreated, rightfully or wrongfully and, through his personality, get them to see commonality and follow him. I deem him “sniveler in chief”; no solutions but plenty of “I've been done wrong...!”

This is an important distinction that must be understood: this was an election against all our problems, not one that advanced solutions to address them.

What the Democrats got right in this election, in my opinion—pushed by core constituencies—is the understanding that we must include

everyone possible into the American “family,” and that we can no longer tolerate inequities in how different groups get treated; that we cannot go back to the days of excluding white women or people of color from the pie; that white and male supremacy is totally unacceptable. Period. And this has grown as more and more people have received college educations, where these understandings have been developed and pushed.

However, at the same time, the Democrats ignored poor and working Americans, of all ethnicities, those white and people of color.

(And, at the same time, the Dems refused to honor those—particularly younger activists—who have a global perspective, hate the US role in the world, and care about people outside of our borders; the most grievous “fuck you” came around a Palestinian speaker at the Democratic National Convention.)

The problem is that enlargement of the American “family,” if you will, comes at a time when this family has been and remains under unrelenting attack by capitalism, and that this has been true for over 40 years, and capitalism’s ability to support working and poor people cannot expand; it can only continue to shrink. And nobody wants to address this reality: capitalism provides no long-term solution for the large majority of us!

So, with limited resources—as I argue below, for the elites, the Empire always comes first!—the elites of both parties have prioritized the needs of those in urban areas over those in rural areas. Supposedly, the cities were where the votes “lived,” but a lot of ones and twos spread over space out can come to a total a higher number.

This was an election where the rural United States rebelled against the urban US; I believe it was more of a “you’ve ignored us, and now we won’t let you do this anymore!” rather than the beginning of a rural-urban real war. And from

what I can tell, there’s a lot of truth to this; the elites have ignored rural folks throughout the country. (For a powerful yet succinct analysis of how Wisconsin, a largely rural state, has been screwed over since the 1970s, see Roger Bybee, “The Role of Corporations,” in *It Started in Wisconsin*, edited by Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, 2012, Verso: 127-143.)

In ZNet, during August 2023, trying to combine all I had learned as a scholar and primarily a labor activist over the years, I published an analysis of the last 40 years (1981-2023) of the US in the world. I argued that we had to take a global perspective to truly understand this situation. (It is a very lengthy article, published in five separate articles—both are on-line for free. Parts 3 & 4 are most relevant to this article.) I have seen nothing comparable to it, before or since. In this, I quickly reviewed how the social order emerged from World War II, how it developed until 1981 (the end of Jimmy Carter’s administration), and then went into detail of its “development” since 1981, when Ronald Reagan became president.

I’m not going to review this entire article—I recommend that everyone reading this read the original article—but want to draw your attention to one very crucial detail that was all but ignored in this recent election campaign: the US National Debt. Quickly, the National Debt is a collective representation of all the surpluses and deficits enjoyed by the country since its founding as an independent country in 1789; it includes expenditures for all of the many US wars, social projects (such as New Deal), and specific programs (space program, interstate highway system). From 1789-1981 (192 years) the US National Debt reached \$909 billion dollars or, more helpful for our purposes here, \$.9 trillion dollars. Ronald Reagan came into office after running as a “fiscal conservative” and, in eight years (1981-1989), doubled the National Debt from \$.9 to \$2.7 trillion! (You can’t include what you started with, so it’s doubled instead of tripled.) That has expanded since then, under



Image: Alisdare Hickson

both Democrats and Republicans, and today, the National Debt is almost \$36 trillion! (The annual deficit for 2024 alone was \$1.8 trillion—twice that of the entire National Debt in 1981!)

Why is this important? What does it mean? It means that the economy, as bad as it has been, has been this good not because of solid economic production, as “suggested” by the political-economic elites, but because of financial manipulation; our leaders have been spending money that they don’t have, they have been writing “hot” checks! It is this financial manipulation that has allowed the US to do as well as it has; it has not been based on solid economic growth!

Now that in and of itself should be alarming. If you go to the US National Debt clock, which

shows the national debt in real time, they also show how this compares to Gross Domestic Product or GDP, which is a measure of values of goods and services produced by this nation every year for the market (to be bought and sold). In 1960, the debt to GDP ratio was 52.21 percent; by 1980, it was down to 34.70 percent; by 2000, it had climbed to 54.48 percent, and as I write on November 9, 2024, it is 122.84 percent. And although they do not include a measure of the ratio of debt to GDP (which could be easily added to the chart), the St. Louis office of the Federal Reserve System publishes a visual representation of the growth of the National Debt since 1960 which is at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GFDEBTN>.

Now, this in and of itself is a disaster in the making. But it’s even worse: as the National

Debt continues to increase—and it is—the rate of interest on the debt increases. Going back to the National Debt clock, we are paying somewhere around \$5.5 trillion this year just on the interest alone! This does not include paying down any of the principle of the debt owed. This is money being paid to investors, including to governments of foreign countries, that must be paid to enable us to continue to sell US Treasury Bonds to them to help finance the National Debt; if investors refuse to buy our bonds, we become observably bankrupt. Think of it as similar to the minimum monthly payment on your credit card; it must be paid to maintain any kind of recognizable economic viability.

So, until forthrightly addressed by our “leaders,” our National Debt will continue to climb, it is over 100 percent of GDP—which means if everyone worked for a year and took no pay checks (stay with me!), no investors got paid money due them (please!), etc., etc., we still could not eradicate the debt within a single year. This will continue to worsen the longer it continues: the interest rate due on the debt will increase (which, in turn, will add to the National Debt, and our National Debt will increase to greater and greater extents (i.e., exponentially).

Now, despite being unknown by most Americans, this is not rocket science and it is recognized by Central Bankers around the world: the US is bankrupt; we can never pay back these debts in any foreseeable time, especially if we continue as we are doing.

Why have these bankers not shared this with the world? Because should the United States declare bankruptcy, it would cause the entire global economy to collapse with immense social and individual suffering; the global economy is dependent on the US serving as the market of last choice, as the country that will buy their own goods and services under any conditions which, in turn, allows their respective economies to work: without that US capability (or perhaps, more realistically today, China’s), it

would be catastrophe in probably every country in the world, and certainly all but the largest.

Part of this is by design; part of it is a natural outgrowth of the design. The design was the Bretton Woods agreements of 1944, when the US and the UK planned the post-World War II global economy under the conditions then existing: US domination of the world economy, as the only industrialized country to emerge all but unscathed from the death and destruction of the war and with the most modern and productive economy in the world, and with a dynamic labor movement that could force the largest corporations to share with their members. They designed the post-War economy to continue this status quo.

The natural outgrowth of this design was that it directly benefited those of us in the US as well as those who lived in other imperialist countries (often referred to as “developed” countries, but we were never told the basis of how they developed) at least until the late 1960s-early 1970s. Then, inter-capitalist competition—initially from corporations in imperialist countries and then, in the late 1970s, from a few corporations from a few formerly colonized countries—started changing the game, so that by 1980, major change had to come to the United States. (This is what Ron Cox’ work on global capitalist corporations—referenced in the original analysis—illuminates, while my work focuses more on the social ramifications of all of this.)

In any case, qualitative change occurs, beginning with the Reagan Administration and continuing until August last year (and continuing to date), which I documented in the original “40 years” article. My analysis has held up extremely well.

So, the current situation is the result of the United States seeking to dominate countries around the world, developing the US Empire and dismembering our domestic economy to do it: while destroying tens of millions of jobs,

the US has spent at least \$18.3 trillion on US war-making capability between 1981 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine (when the US started funding Ukraine after helping to instigate the Russian invasion in February 2022), and that doesn't include the cost of developing and maintaining the US nuclear arsenal, nor does it include the \$17.9 billion sent to Israel between October 7, 2023 and September 30, 2024. To put it another way, US elites of both political parties have sacrificed the well-being of all Americans for the elite's vastly overinflated desires to control the world.

Trump voters seem to have recognized that money being spent in Ukraine has come at their expense, and perhaps to pay for Israel's genocide since October 7, 2023; it's not as clear regarding Israel. However, in general, they have not recognized the larger situation; that it is the US Empire to which their well-being is being sacrificed. (I'm not being down on Trump voters here; most Harris voters don't recognize this either, and they don't even understand about the money going to Ukraine.)

In other words, we on the left—however defined—have ignored a big opportunity and I think it's time we address this problem: people can repudiate the US Empire, or we can take care of the American people by trying to create a domestic, non-capitalist economy that works for our people: we cannot do both! (While this sentiment is based on the work of Abraham Maslow, my experiences with mostly white, rural, working class students in Indiana over the last 20-plus years have shown they choose to take care of Americans almost anytime this choice is addressed and then presented to them! It doesn't come automatically, but when discussed intelligently, they prefer taking care of Americans.)

The elites of both mainstream parties have cowed us by their incessant fear mongering about the need for "defense," which is really money for maintaining if not expanding the

Empire and building on past fears of Russia and China. It's time we confidently take this on.

I think the elites are vulnerable here if we on the left will honestly go forth and challenge US militarism. There are two parts of this: one, neither China nor Russia is going to invade the United States. Period. If either tried, their forces would be decimated. And if the US thinks it can successfully invade either country, we will certainly lose; regarding Russia, just ask the Nazis! (Contrary to much of the US propaganda, at great cost—something like 27 million Russian and Eastern European people, men, women, and children—died defeating the Nazis, compared to the US losses of something like 400 thousand, mostly men in uniform, in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of war; while the US can claim victory over the Japanese, we cannot legitimately claim victory over the Nazis.) And the US Empire has been 0-3-1 in Asia, post-World War II, with the tie being against North Korea in the early 1950s.

The point I'm trying to make here is that our "defense" budget could be cut by about 90 percent and still provide necessary protection for the United States. That money could be used to address our National Debt, as well as do things that would help Americans.

The reality that must be faced is that the continuing arms race with Russia, China or whomever, cannot be won. We can spend until the cows come home—or Central Bankers get honest, which probably won't be anytime soon!—but there is no way we can gain military superiority over either, much less both, of these countries: we can never eradicate their threat with our current policies. (And they cannot gain military superiority over the United States.) Should anyone of these countries—and a few others—feel existentially threatened by an opponent, it's nuclear war time; and that means "lights out" for all of us.

In light of this, there is an alternative: now, it

would have to be much more elaborate than simply this, but the heart of the issue is to get the major countries to end any thought of dominating another. What I'm thinking of is some sort of a global treaty whereby each major power agrees to not threaten each other or any other political communities, and to do this, immobilize their militaries to the bare necessity. For example, I argue that the US military could adequately defend this country with five of our nuclear submarines. (I assume Russia and China could do the same with their submarine forces.)

Think about it. While I'm behind on the latest operational capability of the US Navy, I think I'm in the ballpark: each of these subs carries 10 missiles, each which carries 16 independently-targeted hydrogen bombs. What that means is that each US nuclear submarine can attack 160 separate targets, such as cities, with a nuclear explosive. How many times do you want to make the rubble bounce?

[If you think I'm being crazy, think about the report analyzing the impact of a successful nuclear attack by the US on the USSR in the early 1960s. According to the late Daniel Ellsberg, of Pentagon Papers fame, he participated in a study meant for the "President's Eyes Only," in which this estimated that 600,000 people would have been killed—in Western and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Soviet Union—and that was if the attack was a success, meaning the US had knocked out the Soviets! Ellsberg himself recognized that this was multiples of the numbers killed in the Holocaust!]

If there were a global "non-attack" treaty—and all of the other military weapons and troops needed to serve them were destroyed and/or demobilized—and there were heavy tax burdens placed on the extremely rich, then there would be billions and billions of dollars available to take care of one's peoples and perhaps others, especially over time. At the same time, this drastically reduced military capability would

still serve as a deterrent to an attack by anyone violating the treaty.

The point is that Empire=Death or at least national bankruptcy with increasingly widespread social disruption and economic distress. Capitalism has failed the large majority of people, both in this country and around the world, and threatens the extermination of all humans, animals, and most plants by the turn of the next century (the year 2100); see my talk at <https://znetwork.org/zvideo/the-climate-crisis-capitalism-or-human-animal-most-plants-survival>. We need to create a new economic system to surpass capitalism that will not destroy the environment nor the atmosphere surrounding the planet, and which will place the economic stability and security of all people at the forefront.

It's time we on the left quit half-stepping and go for the entire enchilada! We must repudiate the US Empire and all of its death and destruction, and seek alternatives to capitalism, both to provide economic support for all of our people and to keep from burning ourselves to death, and for ways to help people in formerly colonized countries! Anything less than a sweeping proposal such as this is, from the beginning, doomed to failure: we need hope, not doom.

And now that we have this complete analysis (which hopefully will continue to develop), it is time to develop a strategy to achieve it: how can we get from where we are today to ending the Empire and capitalism, while allowing humans, animals and most plants to survive? We need to build organizations to develop and implement our strategy, to educate our members, and to win people over to our side, repudiating the false choice between Democrats and Republicans; neither can provide solutions facing most of us. It will take time to do this—it will not happen within an election cycle or two—but we want to try to make decisions on all levels that will move us toward achieving our three-pronged goal.

Lest We Forget: The Destruction Of Gaza And What Followed Did Not Start On October 7

Oded Goldreich, Assaf Kfoury

An incendiary war has been raging for more than a year in the Middle East. It has been indescribably devastating on Gaza and has now extended to the West Bank, to northern Israel and Lebanon, with ominous signs of expanding further into a regional war. This is a war driven by an Israeli government bent on exacting vengeful retribution on all of its perceived enemies, unrestrained by its American benefactor and main purveyor of weapons. While this war has been extensively covered by the media, what is mostly understated or forgotten are the circumstances that led to it – a covert decades-long war waged by Israel on the Palestinian people.

For most Israelis, what prevailed in the years leading up to October 7, 2023, was a tolerable or even desirable status quo. A senior researcher (Tamar Hermann) at the Israel Democracy Institute was reported to have said “the issues of settlements or relations with Palestinians were off the table for years,” and went on to add that “Palestinians hardly caught the attention of Israeli Jews.” That there was a Palestinian problem in their midst or nearby was something mostly ignored, or else slowly receding into a background of collective amnesia.

In 2021 and 2022, various human rights organizations issued scathing reports describing Israel as an apartheid state (see reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Israeli B’Tselem). But Israeli officials would routinely dismiss them, with outraged accusations that they are antisemitic attempts to de-legitimize Israel.

Meanwhile, the Israeli economy was thriving, having weathered the pandemic better than most western countries, with Israel’s GDP growth rate

exceeding that of the U.S. and that of the E.U. in the three years preceding 2023. It had also become more popular as a tourist destination with 4.9 million visitors in 2019, and a post-pandemic recovery to 2.5 million visitors in the first nine months of 2023.

But that was not all. Once-hostile Arab governments seemed reconciled with – or even welcoming to – a strong Israeli state, largely perceived as a beachhead for the projection of American power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Apart from occasional performative criticism of Israel to placate widespread pro-Palestinian sympathies among their masses, autocratic Arab rulers were lining up to sign accords with Israel, with American guidance and blessing. One of the extraordinary developments of the Abraham Accords, negotiated under American auspices at the end of 2020, was the steady stream of Israeli tourists and entrepreneurs heading to the rich Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

To Israelis lulled into complacency, the days before October 7 probably gave a taste of an imagined world where all Palestinians are faceless or do not exist. Or, if they still worried about a Palestinian problem, they were probably comforting themselves with the fiction that it was permanently contained – a fiction promoted by Prime Minister Netanyahu who, among other things, in his many devious ways, had spent years strengthening Hamas in Gaza against the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, to keep them apart and prevent them from uniting.

Even when the “populist reform” launched by the Israeli government in January 2023 generated considerable opposition, which spanned the political spectrum of Israeli society from left to

much of the right, the mainstream of this opposition failed to acknowledge the connection between this reform and the oppression of Palestinians under Israeli rule.

What about the Palestinians: What was in store for them in the years leading up to October 7, 2023? For them, what prevailed before October 7 was anything but a tolerable status quo: For those living in Israel, it meant continued discrimination, marginalization and exclusion. For those living in the West Bank, it meant continued subjection to arbitrary oppression, humiliation, and the danger of getting killed or wounded in the course of some IDF operation. For those living in Gaza, it meant a continued indefinite de-facto imprisonment with no hope of parole.

In Israel itself, Palestinians continued to suffer from increasing levels of direct and indirect institutional discrimination and faced rising racism. While some Palestinians managed to improve their living conditions against all odds, they were still marginalized in Israeli society, especially in the political sphere. The process of exclusion is reflected in the Nation-State Law of 2018, which states that “The State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination. The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.”

In the West Bank, the biggest plagues threatening Palestinian existence were the expanding settlements and the Wall that was built to protect them. The “security measures” imposed by the Israeli occupation were cruel, humiliating, and deliberately intended to make Palestinians’ daily routine miserable and unbearable: the curfews, the targeted assassinations and their “collateral” victims, the extra-judicial imprisonments, the checkpoints, the withholding of fuel and food supplies, the house demolitions, the land grabs, the Israeli-only “bypass” roads, and other regular atrocities. While those conditions had been in the making for years and decades, they became

all the more ominous and threatening with the latest Netanyahu government at the end of 2022, which included extremist far-right and openly racist ministers, people like Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

As for Gaza, it became, in the words of the late Hebrew University sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, the “largest concentration camp ever to exist.” It is worth noting that he made that statement back in 2003, when Gaza was not yet fully sealed off; it was only four years later, when Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, that a complete blockade was imposed on the enclave. In a fact sheet issued in 2018, the Norwegian Refugee Council called the narrow coastal strip “the world’s largest open-air prison.” The prison guard was Israel and its complicit trusty was Egypt; the two countries could act with impunity because their American enabler would always protect them from accountability at the UN and other international forums.

In March 2018, Palestinians in Gaza launched what they called the Great March of Return, an organized campaign of weekly protests near the fence enclosing Gaza. Hamas, the governing authority in Gaza since 2007, allowed it to take place without leading it; it was a civilian unarmed initiative, as made clear in a UN Human Rights Commission report at the time (March 18, 2019, pp. 68-69). The campaign’s demands were an end to Israel’s blockade and the right of return for the besieged Palestinian refugees to their villages and towns in what is now Israel. These unarmed protests were suppressed by Israel using unrestrained lethal force, as reflected by the casualties of this suppression: According to an Amnesty International report, dated March 2019, more than 195 Palestinians were killed and more than 28,939 injured, while on the Israeli side one soldier was killed and one was moderately injured.

The Great March of Return fizzled out by the end of 2019, with no relief in sight of any kind for the besieged Gazans and with one more failure

by the Palestinians at non-violent resistance. For older Palestinians, near and far, the Great March of Return was an echo from the First Intifada in the late 1980s and early 1990s – for its discipline and bravery, its organization and insistence on non-violent means – but also, bitterly, for its ultimate demise.

It was an accumulation of pent-up grievances, public indignities, and suppressed angers, over many years, which burst out on October 7, 2023. The foretold explosion occurred, though its shape and timing were unpredictable. Less an act of vengeance than an act of desperation, the Gazans broke out of their slow death strangulation. Chaotic beyond expectation to the Palestinians themselves, partly due to Israeli army units around Gaza collapsing in disarray, the events of that single day were abhorrent and horrific, spearheaded by Hamas and thereafter an assortment of other groups and individuals.

Three days after the October 7 attack, the ever-perceptive Israeli journalist Amira Hass wrote: “In a few days, Israelis went through what Palestinians have experienced as a matter of routine for decades, and are still experiencing,” including “military incursions, death, cruelty, slain children, bodies piled up in the road, siege, fear, anxiety over loved ones, captivity [...] and searing humiliation. [...] Ongoing oppression and injustice explode at unexpected times and places.”

Then the events on every single day since October 7, 2023, have been abhorrent and horrific, perpetrated by the Israeli military, methodically and deliberately on explicit instructions from Netanyahu and his ministers. This has been more than a year as of this writing (October 20, 2024) with no end in sight – an unchecked orgy of manic violence and destruction – with the total tonnage of bombs thrown on Gaza and its two million inhabitants already surpassing the combined total thrown on Dresden, Hamburg, and London during the entire duration of World War II.

This is the latest phase, more violent and devastating than all the preceding ones, in the century-long trajectory of ethnically transforming Palestine. For the Israeli public at large, Palestinians have been dehumanized to such an extreme over decades of indoctrination that the destruction of Gaza is viewed as just and the Palestinians are viewed as deserving it!

It is not possible to give an account of what prevailed in recent decades leading to this very day without mentioning that American policy in the Middle East had combined unquestioned support for Israel and patronizing neglect for the Palestinians. The total disconnect between American policy and the reality on the ground is reflected by the article that National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, submitted to Foreign Affairs magazine on October 2, 2023. In it, he claimed that the Middle East “is quieter than it has been for decades” and that “we have de-escalated crises in Gaza.” That article was submitted 5 days before October 7, and 17 days before its publication, coincidentally producing a written record and testimony of the utterly myopic and delusional views of the handful of people responsible for setting American foreign policy.

It is high time that the US changes its policy and forces Israel to stop its incendiary rampage in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, and enter a fast process aimed at freeing Palestinians from oppressive Israeli rule. May this be a first step towards a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and wider regional peace!

Oded Goldreich is a professor of computer science at the Weizmann Institute and an Israel Prize laureate (2021). He is a member of the Communist Party of Israel and advocates a political solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on the principle of full political equality among all people who reside between the river and the sea, regardless of the number of states that such a solution may involve.

‘Gaza Is Ours, Forever’ — Israel’s Extremists Have a Plan for the Day After the Genocide

Ramzy Baroud

Under the slogan ‘Gaza is Ours, Forever’, a large number of Israeli extremists and right-wing politicians met in the settlement of Be’eri, near the Gaza border region, on October 20-21.

The group represented the who’s who in the Israeli right, far right and ultranationalists. They included Israeli Ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir, May Golan and Bezalel Smotrich, as well as ten MKs of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party.

The event, entitled “Preparing to Resettle Gaza”, was organized by one of Israel’s most extreme settler movements, Nachala, led by the notorious Daniella Weiss.

To appreciate how extremist this 79-year-old settler is, consider this: on June 27, the Canadian government, though one of the most stalwart supporters of Netanyahu and his wars, imposed sanctions on her, due to her “role in facilitating (...) acts of violence by Israeli extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians.”

The hate-filled conference, however, was but a culmination of a year-long effort to build a case of why Israel should ethnically cleanse Palestinians in the Strip and re-establish illegal settlements.

The story, however, does not start on October 7. In 2005, Israel decided to redeploy its forces out of the tiny coastal region. That was the start of the hermetic Israeli siege on the Strip, which led to multiple wars and, ultimately, the October 7 events and the ongoing genocide.

Although the number of Jewish settlers who were evacuated from the dismantled 15 illegal settlements was fairly small – 8,500 – the sense of betrayal felt by the settlers created deep divisions throughout Israeli society.

Chaotic scenes of settlers being forcefully removed from the Gush Katif settlements bloc in Gaza created a national crisis in Israel, and was compared to the forceful evacuation of the illegal Sinai set-



tlement of Yamit, which Israel dismantled in April 1982 as part of a previous agreement with Egypt. But, why the crisis?

Israel is a settler-colonial society, which has linked its colonial expansion to religious diktats and prophecies. So the forced departure from Gaza, to most of these settlers, must have appeared to represent both national treason and a sacrilegious act.

This is why resettling Gaza became the immediate rallying cry for Israeli settlers. Compared to their limited political share of power during the redeployment of 2005, current extremists are now effectively the decision-makers.

While the army remains unclear regarding its strategic objectives in Gaza, the settlers have always been aware of the nature of their mission: the ethnic cleansing of all Palestinians from Gaza and the rebuilding of the settlements.

Thus, quickly, the likes of Weiss and many of her supporters began calling on Israelis to join the recolonization campaign. “Register, register, you’ll be in Gaza,” Weiss told an audience of supporters last March, joyfully declaring that 500 families had already signed up, according to a CNN report.

Weiss and Nachala are not acting independently from the overall objective of the country’s leading politicians. For example, on the first day of the war, October 7, 2023, Netanyahu made his intentions clear: “I say to the residents of Gaza: Leave now, because we will operate forcefully everywhere.”

On October 17, a position paper introduced by the Israeli Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy called for the “relocation and final settlement of the entire Gaza population.”

The report saw in the war “a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the whole Gaza Strip” into the Sinai desert. Later that same month, the Israeli intelligence ministry itself became involved, with the Israeli news outlet Calcalist publishing a document

“recommend(ing) the transfer of Gaza residents to Sinai.”

On November 14, far-right Minister Smotrich spoke of ‘voluntary migration’. In December, media reports said that Netanyahu himself had told Likud party members that Israel’s real challenge is finding “countries that are willing to absorb them”, meaning the people of Gaza.

Conferences began to be organized to gather support around the idea of ethnically cleansing Palestinians. The first major conference was held by a coalition of settler movements last December. “A house on the beach is not a dream”, an advertisement for the gathering proclaimed. The ‘beach’ here is a reference to the Gaza beach.

Even Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law, jumped on the opportunity. In March, he spoke of Gaza’s “very valuable ... waterfront property”, which required Israel to remove the civilians and “clean up the Strip”.

The ongoing so-called General’s Plan, aimed at the extermination and ethnic cleansing of northern Gaza, is but the military component of the settlers’ vision, that of ‘Gaza is ours, forever’.

But if Israel has failed to sustain its settlements in the rebellious Strip under more manageable circumstances in the past, will it succeed now?

The settlers are already aware of the challenge at hand. This is why they constantly link their colonization of Gaza with the ethnic cleansing of the Strip’s Palestinian inhabitants.

Israel’s success and failure, however, will ultimately be determined by this maxim: as long as the Palestinian people are fighting back, Weiss and her fellow extremists will not find safety in Gaza.

Indeed, the native population of Gaza has subsisted in that historical land for thousands of years. If genocide has not forced them off their land, nothing else will.

Unanimous Rejection of U.S. Economic Sanctions Against Cuba

Salim Lamrani

On October 30, 2024, at the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, and for the 32nd consecutive year, 187 countries demanded the lifting of unilateral U.S. economic sanctions that have been suffocating the Cuban population since 1960. As usual, only Israel aligned itself with Washington, opposing the resolution put forward by Havana. Moldova, for its part, chose to abstain.

Imposed by President Eisenhower with the aim of overthrowing Fidel Castro's revolutionary government, the sanctions have been maintained and reinforced by various U.S. governments. They have extraterritorial characteristics – the Torricelli Act of 1992, for example – which means they apply beyond national borders, affecting every country in the world. For instance, any foreign ship that docks in a Cuban port is banned from entering the United States for six months. The aim of this legislation is

to prevent the development of Cuba's international trade with the rest of the world.

Sanctions are also retroactive under the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, which penalizes foreign companies investing in property in Cuba that belonged to U.S. citizens in the 1960s. This is a legal aberration, as a law cannot normally be applied to facts that pre-date its adoption. The aim of this legislation – which undermines Cuba's sovereignty as well as that of countries wishing to maintain normal relations with Havana – is to deprive the island of foreign investment.

U.S. diplomatic rhetoric to justify the maintenance of a hostile policy towards Cuba has continued to evolve over time. In 1960, when Eisenhower imposed the first unilateral coercive measures, he justified his decision by referring to the nationalization

Voting Ended			10/30/2024		12:36:49 PM	
Item 38 - A/79/L.6						
Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the						
AFGHANISTAN	CAMEROON	FINLAND	KUWAIT	NEPAL	SAUDI ARABIA	UKRAINE
ALBANIA	CANADA	FRANCE	KYRGYZSTAN	NETHERLAN...	SENEGAL	UNITED ARA...
ALGERIA	CENTRAL AF...	GABON	LAO PDR	NEW ZEALAND	SERBIA	UNITED KING..
ANDORRA	CHAD	GAMBIA	LATVIA	NICARAGUA	SEYCHELLES	UNITED REP T.
ANGOLA	CHILE	GEORGIA	LEBANON	NIGER	SIERRA LEONE	UNITED STAT..
ANTIGUA-BA...	CHINA	GERMANY	LESOTHO	NIGERIA	SINGAPORE	URUGUAY
ARGENTINA	COLOMBIA	GHANA	LIBERIA	NORTH MAC...	SLOVAKIA	UZBEKISTAN
ARMENIA	COMOROS	GREECE	LIBYA	NORWAY	SLOVENIA	VANUATU
AUSTRALIA	CONGO	GRENADA	LIECHTENSTEIN	OMAN	SOLOMON IS...	VENEZUELA
AUSTRIA	COSTA RICA	GUATEMALA	LITHUANIA	PAKISTAN	SOMALIA	VIET NAM
AZERBAIJAN	COTE D'IVOIRE	GUINEA	LUXEMBOURG	PALAU	SOUTH AFRICA	YEMEN
BAHAMAS	CROATIA	GUINEA-BISS...	MADAGASCAR	PANAMA	SOUTH SUDAN	ZAMBIA
BAHRAIN	CUBA	GUYANA	MALAWI	PAPUA NEW ...	SPAIN	ZIMBABWE
BANGLADESH	CYPRUS	HAITI	MALAYSIA	PARAGUAY	SRI LANKA	
BARBADOS	CZECHIA	HONDURAS	MALDIVES	PERU	SUDAN	
BELARUS	DEM PR OF K...	HUNGARY	MALI	PHILIPPINES	SURINAME	
BELGIUM	DEM REP OF ...	ICELAND	MALTA	POLAND	SWEDEN	
BELIZE	DENMARK	INDIA	MARSHALL IS...	PORTUGAL	SWITZERLAND	
BENIN	DJIBOUTI	INDONESIA	MAURITANIA	QATAR	SYRIAN ARA...	
BHUTAN	DOMINICA	IRAN (ISLAMI...	MAURITIUS	REP OF KOREA	TAJIKISTAN	
BOLIVIA	DOMINICAN ...	IRAQ	MEXICO	REP OF MOL...	THAILAND	
BOSNIA-HER...	ECUADOR	IRELAND	MICRONESIA...	ROMANIA	TIMOR-LESTE	
BOTSWANA	EGYPT	ISRAEL	MONACO	RUSSIAN FED...	TOGO	
BRAZIL	EL SALVADOR	ITALY	MONGOLIA	RWANDA	TONGA	
BRUNEI DAR...	EQUATORIAL...	JAMAICA	MONTENEGRO	SAINT KITTS-...	TRINIDAD-TO...	
BULGARIA	ERITREA	JAPAN	MOROCCO	SAINT LUCIA	TUNISIA	
BURKINA FASO	ESTONIA	JORDAN	MOZAMBIQUE	SAINT VINCE...	TURKIYE	
BURUNDI	ESWATINI	KAZAKHSTAN	MYANMAR	SAMOA	TURKMENIST...	
CABO VERDE	ETHIOPIA	KENYA	NAMIBIA	SAN MARINO	TUVALU	
CAMBODIA	FIJI	KIRIBATI	NAURU	SAO TOME-P...	UGANDA	
+ IN FAVOUR: 187			- AGAINST: 2		X ABSTENTION: 1	



of U.S. property. In 1962, when his successor, John F. Kennedy, enacted total sanctions against the island, he invoked the alliance with the Soviet Union. In the 1970s and 1980s, Washington explained that Havana's support for revolutionary and independence movements around the world was an obstacle to policy change. Finally, since the collapse of the USSR, the United States has used the issue of democracy and human rights to prolong its economic war.

While a truce was observed during Barack Obama's second term, the arrival of Donald Trump marked an upsurge in sanctions against the island. Over the course of his presidency, Trump imposed no fewer than 243 new coercive measures, including 50 during the Covid-19 pandemic – an average of one additional sanction per week for four years. Joe Biden, instead of returning to a more constructive approach, as in the 2014-2016 period when he was Vice President, chose to maintain the measures implemented by his predecessor.

More than 80% of the Cuban population was born under the sanctions imposed by Washington. These have cost the island a total of \$164 billion, a sum that would cover the food basket for every Cuban family for 100 years! Under the Biden administration, economic sanctions have cost Cuba an average of \$15 million a day, or almost \$10,000 a minute. Each

year, they represent a loss of more than \$5 billion for the island.

Just days before the end of his term, Trump placed Cuba on the list of countries supporting terrorism. Since then, more than 1,000 international banks have refused to collaborate with the island, which is in crucial need of credit and foreign investment, for fear of reprisals.

According to the UN, “fundamental human rights, including the right to food, health, education, economic and social rights, the right to life, and development, are suffering the consequences” of the anachronistic, cruel and illegal state of siege imposed by Washington on 10 million Cubans. The widespread blackout that hit the island in October 2024 is a direct consequence of U.S. coercive measures, which contravene the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter.

Economic sanctions illustrate the United States' inability to recognize Cuba's independence and accept that the island has chosen a different political system and socio-economic model. There is only one way out of this asymmetrical conflict between Washington and Havana: a respectful dialogue based on sovereign equality, reciprocity, and non-interference in internal affairs.

Montana's First Worker Cooperative Is in It for the Long Haul

Damon Orion

Worker cooperatives—businesses owned and democratically managed by their employees—have shown high rates of economic stability, employee retention, and productivity.

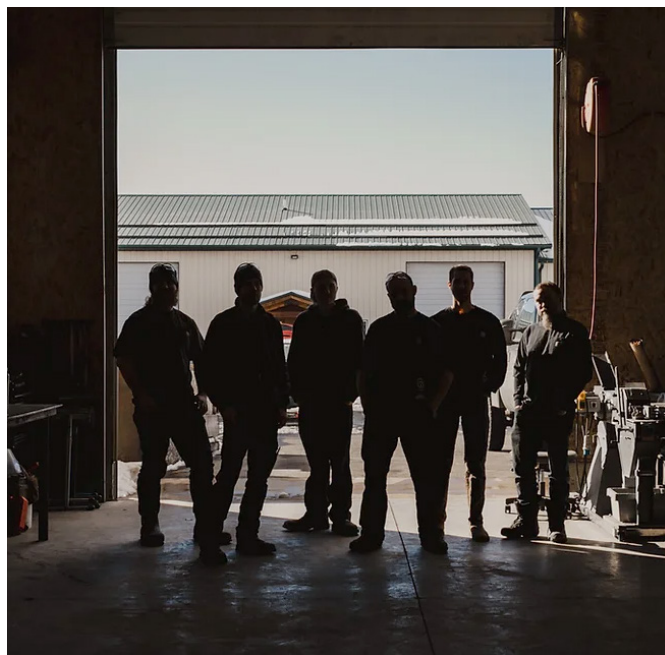
A 2019 report from the Democracy at Work Institute (DAWI) and the United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) noted that “mature worker cooperatives” that were operational for six to 10 years in the U.S. had a 25.6 percent success rate, while the success rate for other small businesses in the country which had been functioning for the same amount of time, was 18.7 percent. Data analyzed by economics professor Virginie Pérotin also shows that worker co-ops have more stable employment and “are more productive than conventional businesses, with staff working ‘better and smarter.’”

Cooperatives also play an important role in building more equitable communities by bridging the wealth gap. “Cooperatively-owned businesses have the potential to unlock ownership and wealth generation for so many traditionally excluded individuals and communities,” states the Start.Coop website.

Despite these advantages, worker cooperatives are relatively scarce in the U.S. The DAWI and the USFWC found only 612 worker co-ops nationwide in 2021. This, however, marked a 30 percent growth since 2019.

In contrast, the National Institute of Statistics counted 29,414 worker co-ops in Italy in 2019, and a 2024 piece by Grassroots Economic Organizing mentioned that there were more than 23,000 cooperatives in Argentina.

A 2020 article by the executive director of Start.



Coop, Greg Brodsky, attributed the small number of worker-owned cooperatives to many factors, including funding hurdles, preference for traditional business models, and unsupportive legal and regulatory structures. The article also states that a lack of awareness and education around this model makes co-ops an unpopular choice.

The members of Montana's first worker co-op, Crucible, are no strangers to this phenomenon. Philip Munson, the company's vice president, says that although “Montana understands an electric cooperative, a consumer cooperative like a grocery store, or a communication cooperative,” the concept of a worker collective is foreign to many residents of the area.

Crucible's president, Tyson Holland, states, “I can't tell you how many times we've been asked, ‘What's your ownership in the company?’ and have tried to explain, ‘Well, it's equally shared.’”

Situated in the southwestern Montana city of Bozeman, Crucible specializes in custom steel fabrication and design. Its impressive interior and exterior structures and furnishings can be seen in local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and diners.

Holland and Munson met in “about 2014” while working at a structural steel fabrication company. They quickly found that they had similar, if not identical, thoughts and feelings about working for another company.

“Before we even made the first steps toward the formation of Crucible, Tyson and I had many conversations about how the traditional way of conducting business left the best talent and strongest assets of a company unsupported, unrecognized, and ultimately in a hostile or generally adversarial situation with management,” Munson notes. “This was a common situation from our experience, and the only way to address the issue came down to a foundational cultural shift in how business should be done.”

This led Munson and Holland to explore alternative avenues of business ownership. That search led them to the co-op model, which “hit all the points we had discussed in terms of really being able to edify and empower the people working with you rather than for you,” Holland states. He adds that this model paired well with his and Munson’s view that team synergy “doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with the company owner or the management.”

“It has more to do with culture,” Munson says. “Fundamentally, what it comes down to is the people you work with.” He adds that good relationships are the foundation of good business, as summarized by Crucible’s slogan, “United by Design.”

The Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) was instrumental in helping Holland and Munson establish a worker cooperative in an area where none existed. Holland recalls that after Crucible was officially incorporated in 2017, the new

team “went around the state and did workshops with the MCDC, talking about worker cooperatives when we really didn’t have any experience whatsoever.”

Now significantly more experienced, Crucible is playing the long game. “A common way startups go about business now is to build a company that specifies what the service is, systematize it until it’s dialed, and sell it off to a multinational corporation,” Munson says. “That’s the exit strategy. That’s how the owners make their money. With a cooperative, success is the only exit strategy.”

Holland adds that whereas “a lot of businesses make it because they focus on a niche and become very good at it,” Crucible “would like to have a lot of niches.”

Munson explains that one of Crucible’s hopes is to “assemble a consultation team that can advise on building design.” He feels this service will remain useful even as automation and AI gain prevalence. “Even if you have robots doing the physical labor, you’re still going to need the blue-collar information.”

Worker co-ops like the Spruce Design Cooperative and the Organic Integrity Cooperative Guild have appeared in Bozeman since Crucible’s inception. Twelve miles southwest of Bozeman, Big Timberworks offers timber design and framing, custom metalwork, box beams, and a reclaimed lumber sawmill.

Crucible seems to have helped pave the way for the worker cooperative model in Montana, but according to Munson, “It’s not a paving. It’s a gravel road.”

“It might be a dirt road at times, too,” Holland jokes.

“It’s a rough cut on the side of a mountain,” Munson says. “It might be a little steep, and if you go up one side or the other, you might be in serious trouble.”

Alienation or Repression?

Sinan Eden

Sinan Eden, an activist involved with the Legal Support Team of Climáximo in Portugal, shares data from the climate justice movement in Europe that addresses the “alienation” discussion and repression tactics related to public disruption actions.

§1. We are told that certain tactics by the European climate justice movement “alienate” the public. For all practical purposes, this discourse could be a pseudo-argument by the “opinion-making” elites who want to see their comfort untouched and can be summarized as “It’s not that bad, leave me alone.” What is most interesting is that so far there is no evidence supporting this claim but it’s being

repeated over and over acritically. What is actually happening here?

§2. All groups who experimented with public disruption actions report an increase in visibility, an increase in popular support and an increase in recruitment. These all, in comparison to several baselines: in comparison to the year prior to experimentation, in comparison to other groups in the same movement landscape, in comparison to other countries where those tactics were not experimented. We know this, because these groups have explicit and detailed mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their strategic tests.



French riot police fire tear gas at climate protesters outside TotalEnergies shareholder meeting. Activists from campaign groups including 350.org, Friends of the Earth France and Scientists Rebellion had pledged to try to stop the AGM from taking place to denounce TotalEnergies' fossil fuel expansion. (Image: 350.org)



Adrian Johnson, a 58 year-old former Deputy Headteacher, stood in a publicly accessible lounge of Scotland's Glasgow Airport for less than one hour before he was arrested by a group of six officers. He acted in support of Oil Kills – an International Uprising to end oil, gas, and coal by 2030. They are calling for their Governments to achieve this by creating a Fossil Fuel treaty. (Image: OilKills)

They all report, also, a high level of repression and criminalization, comparable with “anti-terrorism” and “anti-mafia” procedures. These two are not acritical concepts and were regularly used as façade for racist, xenophobic and simple classist policies, with the objective of marginalizing certain sectors in the society and take their political content away in public opinion.

These climate justice groups have hundreds up to thousands of cases in court, potentially (or factually) hundreds of millions of euros in fines, tens of people in jail (either on remand or imprisoned) and face hundreds of police raids in their home where all electronic devices were confiscated. The groups report that this repression indeed reduces recruitment. So, from the state's perspective, it seems to work as smart repression.

Repression framework

§3. While repression becomes more tangible in court and in the hands of the police, it actually starts much earlier. Televisions, newspapers, politicians and public officers all join the choir and persuade the general public that it's okay to criminalize these activists. There are several methods to reach this goal.

First is to represent them as “activist” rather than how they represent themselves (doctors, mothers, scientists, students, plumbers, etc.).

Second is to obscure their motivations and the reasons they are taking action, focusing on technicalities in a sort of whataboutism (What if an ambulance would need to pass in an action? What about emissions in China? What about the plastic in your mobile phone? Etc.).

While these two tell the general public that these are not ordinary people and they are doing actions for no actual reason, they would now be ready for an offensive third step: repression by police force and in courts. We know this strategy, because it is the same strategy used in islamophobic and racist policies against grassroots anticolonial and anti-imperialist groups.

§4. We are, however, not only the objects of the strategy of the ruling class. We are also subjects, and we can question their discourse. One way to do it is to pay attention to evidence when it appears. Some such evidence appeared in the Legal in Action conference in Amsterdam in October 2024, which deserves to be highlighted and registered.

Repression strategies and counter-strategies

§5. Letzte Generation in Germany reports that the courts imposed on them abbreviated cases resulting in quick trials. These would by definition be focused on the “facts”, ignoring the motives and intentions. These quick trials would not allow defendants to talk about the climate crisis at all. Evaluating an act or any behavior without any reference to the context in which it took place and then calling it a crime is, of course, absurd. So Letzte Generation boycotted the trials. These boycotts implied a fine on the defendants, but it also turned the abbreviated cases into regular cases. Letzte Generation also has a couple of complaints in the Constitutional Court about this attitude of the courts that exemplify the second step of smart repression.

§6. In France, however, Dernière Rénovation reports that the judges have recognized the courtrooms as public platforms. As public platforms, the courtrooms are thus subject to the same constitutional rights that citizens have, and therefore the defendants have freedom of expression. Climate justice groups were not only allowed to talk about the climate crisis in court, but also invited climate scientists to give expert opinions. This then allowed them to give enough context for their strategy, proving that their actions were indeed proportional

in comparison to the societal risk they aimed to avoid.

§7. In the United Kingdom, the situation is quite different, not only because the legal system is different but also because there are juries. The best example so far is probably the Whole Truth Five, who participated in an online webinar mobilizing for a road blockade and therefore received 4 to 5 years prison sentences just for talking. The high sentence is not the most interesting part. The judge specifically prohibited the defendants from talking about the climate crisis, the Whole Truth Five consistently insisted on talking about the climate crisis, the judge got them arrested and taken out of the courtroom, and the trial continued without the defendants. This repeated a few times.

Why would that be? What would a judge have to lose if the defendants talked about the climate emergency? The answer might be surprising if you thought the public was alienated by road blockades. A few months ago, Trudi Warner, a 69-year-old retired social worker, went in front of a courthouse before a hearing and held a sign that said “Jurors! You have an absolute right to acquit a defendant according to your conscience.” The jurors do not have to justify their decisions by referring to penal code. The law states clearly that the jury is expected to pay attention to the court hearing and then decide whatever it finds appropriate. Trudi Warner was herself arrested and put on trial. However, the High Court affirmed her right to remind the law to the jurors. So the juries can now decide whatever they want, and the Defend Our Juries campaign has made an enormous effort to make sure that was the case.

If we were to believe in the alienation hypothesis, we would expect all activists to be found guilty. Right? The expected outcome would be that even if the Slow March disrupted the road for less than ten seconds, they would be found guilty. Systematically and consistently.

What we saw instead was an increase in high profile acquittals by jury. For instance, in Bristol,



Trudi Warner, a 69-year-old retired social worker, held up a placard in silence outside a court. It reminded jurors that they had the legal right to find people not guilty. The following day, the judge had her handcuffed, locked up, and investigated by a team of government lawyers for contempt of court. After nearly a year, and hundreds of activists holding similar signs in solidarity, the case was thrown out of court and Trudi is free. (Image: Defend our Juries)

a group of activists destroyed the public statue of a slave owner, explained their motives based on the colonial past of England, and were acquitted. There are quite some examples, but this next one deserves our attention.

Three supporters of Just Stop Oil participated in a road blockade and also “decommissioned the petrol pumps by breaking the display glass and covering it with spray paint.” The jury acquitted them. There was unquestionable factual evidence of criminal damage. They didn’t deny the action, instead they told the jury about the climate emergency and oil. The jury thought that their action was reasonable.

This explains why judges wouldn’t let people talk about their motives and intentions. But it also provides evidence against the alienation hypothesis. The jury knew that they were Just Stop Oil activists. The jury knew that they broke the display glass in the petrol station. And the jury sided with climate justice.

Distinguishing Repression and Alienation

§8. We don’t know whether a particular slogan, a specific tactic or a campaign will work in achieving its objectives, before trying it.

Past experience can be useful in guessing the impacts and adjusting our practice. However, the “past” is not an objective, universal reality. If today the climate justice movement fails to mobilize millions (be it due to inertia in other organizations, smart repression demobilizing the movement, or some other political reason), then tomorrow the “alienation” hypothesis will be presented as fact by the ruling class even though it is not based on evidence.

It is important to register that in this case (as in so many historical examples, from anti-communism in Indonesia to racism-dressed-as-war-on-drugs in the USA), repression will cause alienation, not the other way around.

The U.S. Southwest Offers Blueprints for the Future of Wastewater Reuse

Freddie Clayton

No country is immune from water scarcity issues—not even wealthy countries like the United States.

Population growth and climate change are stretching America's water supplies to the limit, and tapping new sources is becoming more difficult each year—in some cases, even impossible.

The Southwestern states, in particular, have faced “intense” droughts during the 21st century, and traditional water supplies are failing. As groundwater supplies in the region have depleted substantially, rainfall has decreased, and water import costs have risen substantially. According to a September 2022 *Nature* article about the water situation in the Southwest, there is a “very low chance for regional mega-reservoirs to regain full-capacity levels assuming current demand.”

The region looks to the Colorado River as its plumbing system, which currently provides drinking water to 1 in 10 Americans—all while irrigating nearly 5.5 million acres of land. But it's also being stretched to its limits: Population growth and expansive development are increasing agricultural demands. Meanwhile, the pressure to ensure sufficient water is left in the environment to support ecosystems has accelerated. According to a December 2012 study by the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, the demands on the Colorado River are expected to exceed supply by 2040.

On top of this, each state has vastly different needs. For example, Nevada's needs are largely urban, but Arizona and California require water for huge agricultural and urban sectors. Each year, states argue over who has the superior right

to water supplies. And once they have their allocation, districts frequently end up in litigation over their allotment. There is always a shortage of water, raising questions about who is responsible and how best to mitigate the water crisis.

In 2023, the depleting water levels in the river created a “crisis after decades of overuse.” The seven states that depend on the Colorado River for water and power had to agree to reduce their water usage to ensure the river was still flowing. “Three states—Arizona, California, and Nevada—have agreed on a plan to conserve at least 3 million acre-feet of water by 2026—roughly the equivalent to the amount of water it would take to fill 6 million Olympic-sized swimming pools,” reported NBC in May 2023.

While demand is increasing, climate change has damaged supply—and the impact is twofold: As less water comes down the Colorado River, people are using more water due to increased temperatures.

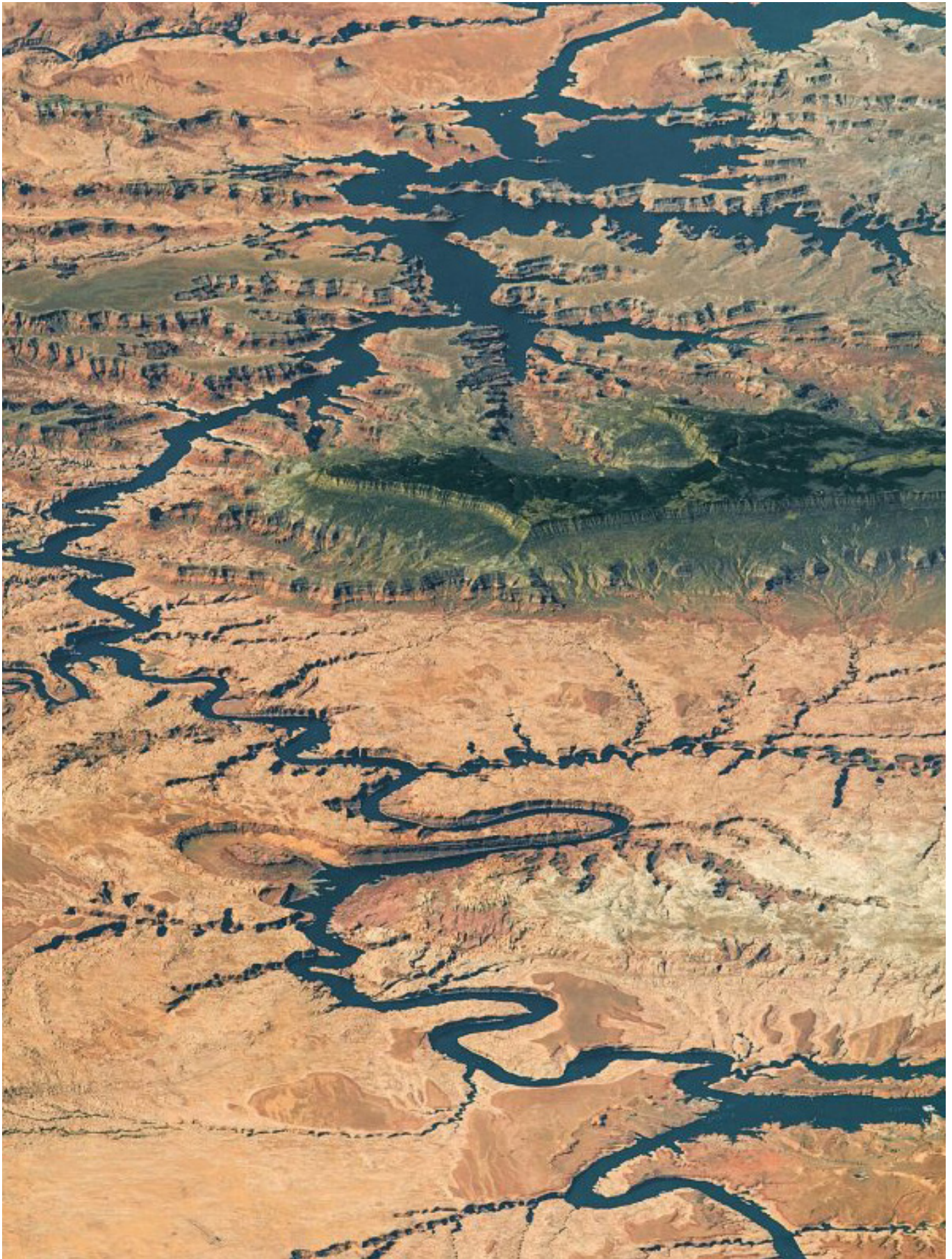
Simply put, there is only so much water.

“When you can't make the pie bigger, and you're fighting over a finite supply, it's a misery index, just an allocation pain for all parties,” says Brad Herrema, a lawyer specializing in water law and natural resources.

“But if you can make the pie bigger, there's less fighting.”

Turning Wastewater Into a Resource

Our existing water supplies must be expanded, and the technology exists to do this by turning



wastewater into drinking water. This is not a new science, but the practice has evolved significantly in the past 50 years.

In the 1960s, water availability became problematic in rapidly growing areas in the U.S., and water managers began to consider using wastewater to augment supplies. Several water reuse projects were built in the following decades in California, Virginia, Texas, and Georgia, but larger developments in the 1990s were met with opposition. “Toilet to tap” narratives in the media fed misperceptions regarding the treatment process, which helped to dismantle public support for these projects. What “toilet to tap” misses is membrane filtration, as of 2024, is membrane desalination, ozone, and advanced oxidation, to name a few treatment options that make the purified water entirely safe to drink.

However, advances in these technologies associated with water reuse helped boost confidence in and acceptance of the practice among water professionals in the early 2000s. Now, water reuse is entering the mainstream.

Almost half of all the potable reuse projects built in California since the first in 1962 were installed between 2009 and 2023, with several more on the horizon. With more potable reuse projects than any other state, California plans to use 2.5 million acre-feet of water per year (AFY) by 2030.

According to a document by the Environmental Protection Agency and CDM Smith Inc., potable reuse also makes up “a significant portion” of the nation’s water supply once de facto reuse is factored in.

What’s clear is that some major U.S. cities are already delivering recycled wastewater to consumers on a massive scale and expanding the pie. However, how a municipality can recycle wastewater depends largely on the area’s geography, financial resources, and, perhaps most importantly, the public’s attitude.

Las Vegas

Las Vegas recycles nearly all of its water used indoors, giving it a virtually inexhaustible supply of water for domestic consumption. The city benefits from its unique geography. Almost 90 percent of southern Nevada’s water is taken from Lake Mead, which lies on the Colorado River. It is then treated and run through the city’s system. After it’s flushed or drained, the water makes its way to a wastewater treatment plant before it’s discharged into the Las Vegas Wash. From there it makes its way to Lake Mead where it is either drawn back out or stays in the river, ensuring there’s enough water for cities downstream of Vegas.

One key element that makes Vegas’s reuse system so effective is “the Wash,” a 12-mile-long channel that acts “as the ‘natural kidneys,’ cleaning the water that runs through them by filtering out [any] harmful contaminants” on its way back to Lake Mead. Thanks to the Wash, when the water is withdrawn again, it does not need to undergo a costly process of advanced treatment; instead, it undergoes basic drinking water treatment.

Another critical factor in Vegas’s success is that for every gallon of water the city puts into Lake Mead, it can take a gallon back out—meaning the city is essentially recycling its indoor water in a closed loop. This is known as de facto water reuse.

Nevada is allocated 300,000 AFY of water from the Colorado River each year. Bronson Mack, public information officer with the SNWA, says that in 2019, the city actually diverted 490,000 AFY of water from the Colorado River but only consumed 234,000 AFY. About 256,000 AFY was returned to the lake.

“Our return flow credits system is unique,” says Colby Pellegrino, deputy general manager of resources for SNWA. “Once we return the water to Lake Mead, we’re not charged for that water. We’re only charged for the total we depleted.”

Mack adds that local water utilities were paying \$313 for treatment and delivery of 1 acre-foot of water as of 2020, and passing that cost on to the consumer. If Vegas could not return such a large proportion of its water, that cost would rise dramatically.

De facto reuse is also vital for a city that can't afford to gamble on the weather—Las Vegas is the driest city in the U.S. When the Colorado River produced only 25 percent of its usual supply in 2002, the city was struck by drought, but its citizens still had unlimited access to indoor water.

“Vegas couldn't exist without [the] return flow credits approach,” says Daniel Gerrity, principal research scientist at SNWA. “Without that, we'd have already maxed out.”

Despite a wet winter in 2023 and an improvement in the water levels in lakes, “Southern Nevada's water supplies from the Colorado River at Lake Mead remain under shortage reductions,” points out Southern Nevada Water Authority, warning that “The risk of shortage remains high in future years.”

Meanwhile, not every city has a Lake Mead or a Wash. For places without Vegas's luck, there are other ways to ensure water reuse.

Orange County, California

Orange County Water District (OCWD) is a world leader in water reuse. Since 2008, it has provided drinking water to 2.5 million people—in a region with no more than 15 inches of annual rainfall—through its Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) project. This project has helped highlight the effectiveness of IPR, giving other providers a model to emulate and providing the full-scale data that was previously missing to evaluate the viability of the process.

The water reused through GWRS would have otherwise been discharged into the Pacific

Ocean. By keeping it in the system, there is less reliance on the Colorado River, easing the strain on its supplies.

The city utilizes a process called indirect potable reuse (IPR). In the absence of an environmental filtration process like the Las Vegas Wash, Orange County's wastewater has to undergo advanced treatment before it is pumped to a groundwater basin. From there, it is pumped to the consumer via a standard drinking water treatment train, making it safe to consume and completing the cycle. The process not only turns wastewater back into a resource but also saves massively on the cost of pumping Colorado River water from hundreds of miles away.

GWRS, which is a joint project of OCWD and the Orange County Sanitation District (OCSD) “accounts for approximately 35 percent of water demands,” according to OCWD, and its wastewater treatment capacity was further expanded in 2023 from 100 to 130 million gallons per day. This is “enough to fill nearly 200 Olympic-sized pools and enough for a million people,” according to a 2023 article by the Daily Pilot.

“Orange County is the benchmark [for] water reuse system,” says Gerrity. Water managers from around the world visit OCWD to learn how they've managed such success.

Like so many regions innovating in water reuse, drought forced their hand. In 1975, “[a]s imported water supplies became less available, another source of water was needed to fight seawater intrusion. In April 1975, OCWD unveiled... [a facility that] took treated wastewater from the... OCSD, blended it with deep well water and injected it into... [a basin]. In 1977, [OCWD became]... the first in the world to use reverse osmosis to purify wastewater to drinking water standards.”

The project was expanded in line with the demand in the '90s, and the GWRS, which has been operational since 2008, is now the world's largest

advanced water purification system for potable use. “The largest reuse facility in the world can now treat nearly 500 million liters of secondary wastewater a day,” points out the nonprofit Water Reuse Europe.

And through it all, OCWD managed to swerve the “toilet to tap” attacks that had ruined public support for such projects in other areas of California.

How?

“People expect to find out that our success is grounded in some secret technology, but they find out it’s all about education, education, education,” says Rob Thompson, general manager at OCSD, which treats the water before sending it to the basin managed by OCWD. “Bringing the public on board with drinking [recycled] wastewater takes a lot of outreach. Getting over the ‘yuck factor’ is everything. We had to speak with NGOs, governors, the authorities, politicians—you name it—we spoke to them. Once you have enough people on board, everyone starts to think it must be okay.”

“People have high expectations about the quality of their water and have a lot of questions,” adds Megan Plumlee, who heads OCWD’s research and development department. “We explain to the public what we’re doing and how it’ll benefit the district, retailers, and community.”

Following OCWD’s lead, San Diego embarked on a massive multi-year potable reuse project that planners say will provide nearly 50 percent of the city’s water supply locally by the end of 2035. Indeed, sometimes a new process takes hold only because of a leader in the field who shows the way and proves something can be done safely on a large scale.

“We weren’t the first to try it, but we were the first to succeed on such a massive scale. That’s because we were the first to really embrace education. Now others are doing the same,” says Thompson.

Now, 16 states have developed regulations that allow for IPR, with several more IPR projects on the horizon that will help bolster water supplies—all without putting additional pressure on the Colorado River.

Another more efficient water reuse method has yet to take hold in the U.S., though it may soon find its leader.

San Diego

Direct potable reuse (DPR) was labeled the final frontier of water reuse by G. Tracy Mehan, the executive director for government affairs at the American Water Works Association (AWWA), in a November 2019 Opinion piece published in the *Scientific American*. The process does away with an environmental buffer and pumps wastewater directly through an advanced treatment train before it is purified and put straight back into the system in a matter of hours.

Given this reality, DPR can deliver water more efficiently and cost-effectively by using existing infrastructure and without needing to build expensive and energy-intensive pipelines to a reservoir or groundwater basin. DPR can also allow for more water to be recycled than IPR as there are no limitations on the reservoir or groundwater basin.

Additionally, DPR avoids regulations on putting water back into the environment by eliminating the buffer. And finally, DPR can be more reliable and efficient. Jeff Mosher, vice president and principal technologist at Carollo Engineers, a leading firm in engineering water reuse systems, explains that DPR can turn wastewater into drinking water in a matter of hours, faster than IPR or any other reuse method.

As of early 2023, only one facility in the U.S. is currently equipped to operate DPR. Big Spring in West Texas identified DPR as the most feasible way to address an urgent need to diversify the city’s water portfolio and increase its supply

reliability for when rains fail to fill the city's reservoirs—the project serves around 135,000 people, according to a 2019 article published in the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*.

The Colorado River Municipal Water District (CRMWD) in Big Spring began operating this plant in 2013. It could treat up to 2 million gallons per day of wastewater effluent to drinking water standards, providing a much-needed water supply amid punishing droughts.

However, DPR has yet to become a mainstream and trusted water supply system, and it remains unused beyond times of crisis and for larger communities.

Arizona and Florida are in the process of developing their DPR regulations while California and Colorado already have these regulations in place. However, most states have yet to consider implementing this technology, mainly due to a lack of public acceptance. The speed at which DPR recycles wastewater makes it particularly vulnerable to “toilet to tap” attacks, and this has consumers concerned, who worry over the small room for error and the “yuck factor.”

An attempt to introduce potable reuse in San Diego in the 1990s failed after fears of “drinking sewage” diminished trust in the project and fostered uncertainty about the safety of the water. Fast-forward 12 years to 2011, a rebranded project, Pure Water San Diego, did things differently.

A 2012 survey carried out by the San Diego County Water Authority found that 73 percent of the respondents either strongly or somewhat favored “advanced treated recycled water as an addition to the supply of drinking water.” This figure was an improvement from the 2011 survey.

San Diego has changed its mind, and now it may one day do what OCWD has done for IPR and pave the way for DPR use on a broader scale.

With lessons learned from OCWD, outreach

helped bring the community on board in San Diego. “We had to educate the community on the concept [of potable reuse],” Amy Dorman, assistant director at San Diego’s Pure Water program, says. “We ran focus groups with the community, made ourselves flexible moving forward, and recognized the importance of listening to the community. In the ’90s, there was not the right amount of education. Now it’s comprehensive. We do tours, presentations, websites, mailers and [identify] all stakeholders—[ensuring] diligent and constant outreach.”

Dorman explains that 18,665 San Diegans have visited the demonstration facility as of 2021, while the team at Pure Water has spoken to almost 30,000 children in schools. They explain that 50,000 lab tests have been carried out on the water supply as of 2020, each meeting every regulatory standard and producing exceptional water quality—typical tap water is actually less highly treated than DPR tap water.

However, the key statistic is that 85 to 90 percent of San Diego’s water is already imported from the Colorado River and Northern California Bay-Delta. In fact, because the city is downstream, Dorman says the water has already been recycled 49 times by other water districts before reaching San Diego. She says this usually quells fears that drinking recycled water is unsanitary since, as it turns out, this has been happening for years.

“What we know now is that it’s possible to convince people,” adds Mosher. “We have proven that every community you go into that has concerns, you can overcome.”

San Diego hopes that by 2035, a third of the city’s water supply will come from locally supplied, recycled wastewater instead of importing the majority of it.

For phase one, the Pure Water San Diego program—funded by the San Diego government—will use IPR to provide the city with 30 million gallons of water per day, utilizing the nearby Miramar

Reservoir as an environmental buffer in a similar way to how Orange County uses its groundwater basin. “San Diego’s Pure Water treatment system will be operational and providing 7 million gallons of water a day to residents by 2026,” says a January 2024 KPBS article.

Phases two and three will target an additional 53 million gallons of water per day by 2035. In the absence of a groundwater basin and large enough reservoirs, Pure Water San Diego plans to employ DPR to realize the project’s full scale.

Mosher says that cities with plans to do DPR one day don’t want the attention to be the ones to take the plunge into doing it on a large scale. But with projects on the horizon in San Diego and El Paso, Texas, Mosher expects greater faith in the process by 2030. A 2011 public opinion poll shows that citizens are 50 percent more likely to accept recycled water when they learn that other communities have done so already.

Without a leader in the field, cities interested in doing DPR may hesitate, but Gerrity is positive about the impact San Diego can have countrywide.

“It’s a good platform to go forward,” he says. “We have more options for facing water scarcity, another tool in the toolbox to tap into. Conservation, potable reuse [and] innovative technologies all extend supply and give high-quality drinking water to the public.”

Mainstreaming Potable Reuse

While water reuse is breaking into the mainstream, there are still challenges going forward.

It is not simply a matter of copying Las Vegas, Orange County, or San Diego. A region’s geography and finances often dictate a city’s water supply, which significantly impacts what kind of reuse that city can attempt. De facto reuse, as in Las Vegas, is incredibly site-specific and requires the geography of an area to substitute for advanced treatment, while the most successful IPR

projects rely on large groundwater basins and nearby reservoirs.

Both types of potable reuse are also incredibly expensive. While they may save money in the long term, they require a huge initial investment.

The federal government needs to step in to support water recycling projects. Taking a step in this direction, the Biden administration provided almost \$100 million for the Pure Water Southern California facility. “Water recycling is an innovative and cost-effective tool that can help make our water supplies more reliable, helping communities find new sources to meet their needs today, but most importantly to meet our needs in the future,” said Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton in May 2024.

Working out what works best for one community is half the battle. Thanks to the geographical nuances that help potable reuse or de facto reuse work, there is no one-size-fits-all.

“You could take what Orange County does, and it’s going to work, but the question is whether that is the best approach for that location. So, the challenge is, now that we feel comfortable with one approach, can we do it a different way?” says Gerrity.

Mosher is trying to compile all the information on water reuse into an easy-to-read guidance document that cities considering the process can use to decide which approach may be best for them.

“It’s about getting to a point where communities who want to try DPR don’t feel overwhelmed,” says Mosher.

What’s clear is that the Colorado River can no longer be relied upon to meet the water needs of an increasing population. If we continue asking so much of it, we have to start easing those pressures. Water reuse is imperative if the driest parts of the world continue growing without destroying the environment that relies as much on water as we do.

Activist Diary: First Aid Drop to Western North Carolina

Mika Murphy

Hurricane Helene killed at least 230 people across six states in the southeastern United States. Western North Carolina was especially devastated, with 95 people reported killed at the time of this writing. The city of Asheville, and particularly its outer limits, has suffered loss of life and collapse of infrastructure.

Chapters of the Democratic Socialists of America have been organizing mutual aid and support to address the impact and fallout of the Hurricane. NC chapters are currently involved in fundraising, coordinating, logistics, and developing communications to coordinate broader statewide relief. You can donate directly to NC DSA's coordinated Disaster Relief Mutual Aid Fund [here](#).

*The following is an on-the-ground accounting of NC Triangle DSA member Mika Murphy's experience delivering support and aid to Asheville and its surrounding regions. Originally written as a dispatch to the membership of NC Triangle DSA to inform their continuing mutual aid organizing, we've published it here as part of our ongoing series, *Activist Diaries*.*

First Aid Drop to Western North Carolina

I began my day at 8am by checking my packed bag and figuring out transportation to the U-Haul facility to pick up the truck I had reserved. A comrade in the neighborhood agreed to give me a ride.

I had planned several days in advance to make a drop of water, diapers, and buckets to Klondyke Homes, a predominantly Black public housing complex, where Asheville DSA would manage distribution. In addition, I offered to make a delivery to wherever Mutual Aid Disaster Relief asked me

to because they had met my request for water.

In planning conversations days prior to this delivery, one thing kept coming up: concerns over safety. I want to state clearly that my experience going into Asheville from the South by way of I-26 and exiting by way of I-40 was very easy and safe. Planning ahead, I made sure my route was passable by the 20 foot rented truck and received confirmation that the main roads were clear. That confirmation matched my experience – this route is clear.

It was easy to get to where local comrades had indicated I should be. I will say I made a wrong turn and traveled down a one-way road that was blocked at the end. I am, however, quite a good driver, as that is what I did for work through the pandemic. Future aid drops should make sure folks who are heading up are capable drivers, but overall the roads between the mountain cities of Asheville and Fletcher were very easy to navigate. Roads in rural areas were in worse shape.

Returning to the events of the day, it was quite easy to rent a U-Haul. But, as I would soon learn, U-Hauls can be inefficient in transporting some goods, specifically water. U-Hauls have quite a low weight rating, so carrying significant amounts of water with any kind of box truck will pose an issue to our organizing efforts overall. In the future, this means we need to identify either (a) a delivery vessel for specifically and only water or (b) an apparatus to purify and clean water up in the mountains, eliminating the need for a long supply chain.

I arrived at the Mutual Aid Disaster Relief (MADR) warehouse in Hillsborough, North Carolina at 9:50am. Though I planned the pick-



up time several days in advance, upon arrival I learned that they had little stock left. There was another driver onsite ready to set out on delivery, but we reached an agreement to load the truck that I had brought because my timeline was a bit shorter and because I had specific destinations for specific goods. I want to emphasize that again, I had specific destinations for specific goods which provided strong justification for my delivery when engaging with our mutual aid partners.

After loading up water, diapers, buckets, detergent, brooms, pet supplies, detergent and blankets, I left around 11am (roughly one hour needed for large pickups). I departed to Fletcher, my first stop, by way of the 85-74-26 highway route. The ride was smooth and easy; gas was actually cheaper than where I live. There were no checkpoints anywhere.

Strangely, there was nothing amiss until just outside of Fletcher, save for some washed out river banks. The town itself seemed to sustain some damage along their main thoroughfare. Cell service was spotty so I began to use the physical maps that I had printed out to navigate through the town. Soon, I arrived at my destination, a church, Calvary Episcopal Church, that had an enormous community kitchen about the size of Raleigh United Mutual Aid Hub (RUMAH).

They were a little confused but extremely excited when I told them that I was there with an aid delivery from Mutual Aid Disaster Relief and that I was a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. (It seems the information for where the aid should go made it all the way through, but the information that aid would be arriving had not.) They were beyond happy at the assortment of necessary supplies I brought and so thankful that folks from Durham cared about them. One person gave me a huge hug, and another remarked “Oh, Durham? That’s the city of angels, saved my life more than once.”

I really enjoyed meeting these folk, even though it was brief, and received the church pastor’s number in case we’d like to work with them more in the future. Some parts of my aid was turned away with directions to take it further North, “where they need it”. So, one thing I learned is that anyone we meet will have valuable information about where needs are. After departing, I began my trek up to Asheville where I met up with Clarke, the Asheville DSA chair, to deliver requested items to Klondyke Homes. The items they requested were the bare necessities: water, diapers and buckets. Delivering was awesome! When Clarke told the residents he had an aid delivery coming, they thought it would just be a small truck delivering

a bit of water and diapers... Instead, we loaded them up until they couldn't take any more of those donations afterwards. A worker from the Asheville Housing Authority was happy to accept the remainder of the aid.

In the process, I learned the difference between distilled and purified water. (Distilled water, very much not for drinking, is used to flush toilets and boil things.) I also met Asheville DSA endorsed city councilor Kim Roney, who was quite the character. Kim had actually been in touch with two city councilors in our neck of the woods from Durham, Javiera Caballero (current) and Jillian Johnson (previous), who were able to hook her up with a phone number to get faster engagement with their water rebuild effort. I also learned that the Food and Beverage Union of Asheville, which is chaired by a DSA member, is helping in communities throughout the city.

As I made these drops, met these kind folk and wandered the beautiful mountains, it became clear that Asheville would be alright. Indeed, Asheville was already alright. Though the city is without water and regular life is in some disarray, the people of North Carolina had brought abundance to the region through mutual aid.

It is not Asheville that will need our help. Rather, Asheville is a staging area to assist and make inroads with some of the most rural and isolated communities in our country, our kinfolk in the hollers. That is what we must be aiming for, to build relationships with a beating heart of historical American resistance, the people of Appalachia.

And so, the day went on. Clarke brought me back to his place where his friends were gathering in community, playing music and preparing to share a vegetarian dinner. Many of the folks in Asheville were doing the same. The disaster had done the opposite of COVID. Instead of forcing people apart, it forced them together in the spontaneous protection and connection that only circumstance can provide. Like flowers, I was hearing from folks that these gatherings sprang up wherever



Aid drop at the Calvary Episcopal Church in Fletcher, NC. The Church operates a large communal kitchen for the community. (Image courtesy of Mika Murphy/NC Triangle DSA)

you were. In community together, caring for one another, sharing in space over meals to support one another, people were finding solace in one another.

I left, chile relleno in hand, for one last task – to evacuate a friend of a friend back to Durham for a warm shower. We had a long time to talk in the car, four hours long to be exact. Over the course of that drive it was reiterated again, that in the darkness, community provided a light. My car-mrade, N, had met, for the first time, their neighbor over a shared meal, over an offer of kindness. It turns out their neighbor was a brother of their long-time high school frenemy which they bonded over! Later, N would tell me that they worked at a local grocery store that stayed open to help folks out and that they had been attending regular community meetings at Firestorm Co-op. Again it pops up! Democracy in action! Spontaneous assemblies to organize their people.

I hope beyond hope that the communal seeds sown by this disaster continue to blossom and provide abundance. There is much to be done, but I left feeling that the world may blow apart and still we'll have each other.

Expanding the Possible, From Below

Alexandria Shaner

The Green New Deal has been largely blocked at the national level, but it is thriving in communities, cities, and states. Jeremy Brecher's new book is both an urgent call to action and proof of concept.

Starting where we're at

Less than one week after a self-proclaimed dictator, climate change denier, and big oil-funded billionaire (among other equally impressive accolades) took the single most powerful political office in the world, it seems like a horrible time to release a book about the Green New Deal.

Thinking back to 2018, not so long ago in time but perhaps much longer in space, to when the Green New Deal was launched into public attention as a bold proposal for transformative national legislation, is frankly, beyond depressing. Loss, grief and rage compete with numbness and shock, easily overwhelming any effort to fathom where we were then, and where we find ourselves now.

But this is not a depressing story. We have no time for that now.

This is a story, a true story, about expanding the sense of what is possible and thereby expanding the actual limits of the possible. It is about shifting the balance of power and expanding democracy - what could be more right, right now? This story weaves once strange and wary bedfellows into a surprising sort of magical fabric, capable of keeping us safe as we pull the rug from under kings. This is the view from below.

What makes a Green New Dealer?

Jeremy Brecher's new book, *The Green New Deal from Below: How Ordinary People Are Building a Just and Climate-Safe Economy*, is a timely and

important contribution for organizers and anyone thinking about rebuilding the world from the bottom up.

Drawing on decades of hands-on experience at the intersections of environmental, labor, and justice movements, Brecher offers an overview of Green New Deal from Below initiatives across various sectors and locations, highlighting a diverse array of programs already in progress or under development. The initiatives shared by Green New Dealers are intended to inspire countless more projects, which can serve as the foundation for local, national, and even global mobilization and reconstruction - even, and perhaps especially in times when national legislation cannot be relied upon.

Brecher begins with questions, "Is [the Green New Deal from Below] a brilliant flame that may simply burn out? Will it continue as a force, but not a decisive element in a society and world hurtling toward midnight? Or will it prove to be the start of a turn away from catastrophe and toward security and justice? The answer will largely depend on what people decide to do with the possibilities [it] opens up" (10).

The Green New Deal is a visionary program designed to protect the earth's climate while creating good jobs, reducing injustice, and eliminating poverty. Like The New Deal of the 1930s, the Green New Deal is not a single program or piece of legislation - rather, according to Brecher, it exhibits many of the traits of a social movement. "[The New Deal] was a whole era of turmoil in which contesting forces tried to address a devastating crisis and shape the future of American society. In addition to its famous "alphabet soup" of federal agencies, the New Deal was part of a broader process of social change that included experimentation at the state, regional, and local levels; organization among labor, the unemployed, urban residents, the elderly, and



Make Detroit the Engine of the Green New Deal! (Image: Becker)

other grassroots constituencies; and lively debate on future possibilities that went far beyond the policies actually adopted” (12). While the New Deal certainly had its limitations in terms of racial and gender justice, it was this unifying and expansive vision that set it apart as a cohesive and immensely transformative program.

From its outset, the core principle of the Green New Deal has been and remains, “to unite the necessity for climate protection with the goals of full employment and social justice” (11). In other words, not only does the GND provide a unifying vision that aligns environmental, labor, and justice movements together in the pursuit of mutual aims, it weaves constituencies and communities into transformative power blocs, greater than the sum of their parts.

Though the GND has so far been consistently blocked and largely coopted at the national level by the fossil fuel lobby, and by corporate interests antagonistic to its inherent socialist implications, a lesser-known wave of initiatives has also emerged. Driven by community groups, unions, city and state

governments, tribes, students, and other nonfederal actors, all aimed at advancing the climate protection, economic and social justice objectives of the Green New Deal, this grassroots movement can be recognized as “a Green New Deal from Below.”

“So far, these forces have managed to block the Green New Deal at a national level. The strategy of the Green New Deal from Below is to outflank them” (174). Brecher warns against mistaking the Green New Deal from Below movement for an unrelated collection of isolated or even of loosely related interventions – that would be to miss the forest for the trees, or as Brecher describes it, that would be like describing a collection of lecture halls, library, stadium, cafeteria, and dorms but failing to recognize the university.

The type of vision fueled and integrative coalition building exemplified by diverse Green New Dealers has major potential for mass member organizing, shifting power, expanding democracy, and could provide the way forward from our current predicament, shoved between a neoliberal heat-rock and a cold, hard fascist place.

How to Green New Deal from Below

Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez, who has introduced a motion to create a new city office to support workers transitioning out of jobs affected by new technology, including those in the oil and gas industry, summed it up well: the city cannot “correct the sins of environmental racism” by “taking away jobs from working-class communities” (108).

The core idea behind Green New Deal from Below initiatives is to address the urgent need for climate protection while also meeting the needs of working people and marginalized communities, an approach that moves beyond fragmented policies to a comprehensive set of strategies for social change. It integrates climate protection with the creation of good jobs and tackles the disproportionate concentration of carbon pollution, such as from fossil fuel plants, in low-income communities of color. This policy integration is reflected in the collaboration of previously separate or opposing constituencies. “When once-divided groups reach out to each other, explore common needs and interests, and start cooperating for common objectives they thereby create new forms of social action. That is the process that [Brecher has] called the emergence of “common preservation”” (180).

The initiatives described by Brecher are largely driven by such coalitions of diverse groups working toward shared goals, often including neighborhood organizations, unions, racial and ethnic justice groups, political leaders, government officials, youth and senior organizations, religious congregations, and climate justice advocates. Chapters 1-4 provide detailed but highly accessible examples of such initiatives, including candid debriefs that don’t shy away from exploring lessons learned from mistakes, at the community, municipal, and state levels.

One particularly potent lesson, gleaned through numerous campaigns, relates to tensions that can arise between environmental and labor protections. Historically and now, climate protection policies have often been viewed as a threat to workers and

communities reliant on the fossil fuel economy. This perception generates opposition to climate action, with certain communities and worker groups highlighted as “poster children” for the negative impacts of such policies, leading to the widely framed “environment vs. jobs” debate, fueling conflict between environmentalists and organized labor, often amplified by fossil fuel interests.

Brecher lays out three key shifts in mindset that are beginning to offer an alternative to this polarization (147). First, many trade unionists have come to recognize that the transition to cleaner energy is inevitable, and that their members will be vulnerable unless policies are put in place to protect them. Second, climate advocates are realizing that their policies will face significant resistance unless they also address the needs of workers and communities that could be negatively impacted by these changes. Third, the core idea of the Green New Deal, that climate protection can be an opportunity to address inequality and injustice, opens up a broader vision for social change that transcends narrow interest group politics.

This “new thinking” often begins with specific interests but is increasingly fostering a broader awareness. Unions are recognizing the necessity of climate protection; environmentalists are acknowledging the importance of community well-being; and justice advocates see the potential for new coalitions to tackle long-standing inequities. “The result has been the development of coalitions among groups that had previously been at odds, lobbing virtual projectiles at each other from separate silos” (148).

Green New Deal from Below initiatives contrast sharply with dominant neoliberal public policies that prioritize private enterprise as the primary vehicle for achieving social goals and restrict government action to facilitating private wealth accumulation – or more simply, they intentionally break from the profit over people and planet model of business as usual. Green New Deal from Below programs emphasize public planning, investment, and strict criteria for achieving public objectives.

Their implementation involves not just private corporations but also government-run programs, public banks, cooperatives, and other alternatives to profit-driven enterprises. Resources are often raised through strategies like pollution fees, taxes on large corporations, and uber-wealthy individual incomes.

The climate policies of Green New Deals from Below aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the pace required by climate science with a focus on proven strategies: expanding renewable energy, phasing out fossil fuels, decreasing energy demand by increasing energy efficiency and doing more with less through programs focused on public abundance, while rejecting more costly, risky and green-washed approaches like carbon capture, hydrogen blends with fossil fuels, and nuclear energy.

Brecher gets into detail via diverse examples of campaigns, direct actions, community and public projects, as well as overarching and particular strategies in chapters 5-11: Climate-Safe Energy Production, Negawatts (Efficiency and Managed Contractions), Fossil Fuel Phaseout, Transforming Transportation, Protecting Workers and Communities on the Ground, Just Transition in the States, and New Deal Jobs for the Future. This is a wealth of information in a highly accessible and actionable presentation – from the nitty gritty of organizing meetings and local bicycle lanes to very large-scale campaigns like public jobs guarantees.

Strategy from below

The Green New Deal from Below does not provide a strategy for total social transformation. “That would require transformation of the basic structures of the national and world order, including capitalism and the nation-state system. The Green New Deal from Below can be part of that more extensive process of change, but it cannot subsume it” (174).

The Green New Deal from Below is a hybrid movement that operates both inside and outside the dominant political system, including elected officials, party leaders, government bureaucrats, and

electoral activists, as well as communities, ethnic groups, labor organizations, and other civil society groups. It pursues its goals through a mix of conventional political tactics, such as supporting candidates, lobbying for legislation, and public education, alongside direct-action methods, including occupying political offices, blocking fossil fuel pipelines, and supporting strikes aimed at a just transition to a climate-safe economy.

These initiatives strategically function both within, alongside, and in opposition to existing political institutions. Actions focus on tangible changes that directly improve people’s lives. Whether it’s shutting down a polluting coal plant in an asthma-ridden community or providing free transit or bicycles to young people, these initiatives aim to make a real difference. They also educate and inspire: free transit and bicycles not only reduce vehicle pollution but also allow young people to explore alternatives to car-dependent lifestyles.

Additionally, participation and justice are centered in practice. Actions are also almost always led by coalitions of diverse groups. For example, the Green New Deal for Education brings together teachers, school staff, students, parents, unions, and racial justice advocates to fight for investment in healthy schools free from fossil fuel pollution. Sate coalitions have united unions, climate-impacted communities, racial and ethnic justice groups, and climate advocates to push for legislation that phases out fossil fuels in ways that create good jobs, support community development, reduce environmental injustices, and build climate-friendly housing and transit.

Historical sociologist Michael Mann argues that new solutions to societal problems often arise from the overlooked spaces within existing power structures - what he calls the “interstices.” These gaps, often hidden from the mainstream, provide fertile ground for marginalized or seemingly powerless groups to propose alternatives to the status quo. This process is sometimes called the “Lilliput strategy,” where small, isolated efforts are linked to create larger systemic change. However, Brecher points



Our Green New Deal campaigns are all about saying 'yes' to the healthy climate future we need. We build power for solutions like green affordable housing, upgrading buildings for clean energy, climate resilience hubs, solar-powered schools, walkable neighborhoods and more. (Image: 350 Seattle)

out that this strategy is not without tension (169). It requires balancing the need for identity and independence within each group with the necessity of broader cooperation. The resulting tension can either lead to fragmentation or domination, but it can also spark a process of collaboration where the distinct needs and concerns of each group are incorporated into a larger, unified vision.

This dynamic is key to the development of the Green New Deal from Below. While recognizing the unique needs of different constituencies, advocates of the Green New Deal have worked to forge connections between diverse groups that have historically been at odds. A notable example mentioned previously is the collaboration between organized labor and environmentalists - two groups that have often been in conflict. Rather than forcing these groups to give up their individual identities, the Green New Deal offers a shared identity centered on common goals. The success of these coalitions depends on ensuring that all participants benefit from cooperation through policies that combine labor protections, environmental justice, and greenhouse gas reductions. However, Brecher

warns that these coalitions are fragile and can falter if the priorities of key constituencies are not given adequate attention.

Ultimately, Green New Deal from Below actions seek to shift the balance of power away from fossil fuel polluters, exploitative corporations, and the wealthy elite, toward exploited workers, marginalized communities, and non-elite groups. At their heart, they aim to expand democracy, challenge the rise of autocracy and plutocracy, and ensure power is more equally distributed and accessible to all.

By helping to build organized constituencies and coalitions that serve as political foundations for broader Green New Deal campaigns, these projects also create institutional building blocks, from energy systems to transportation networks, that can become integral parts of the economic and social infrastructure of a larger Green New Deal. By engaging people in projects that reflect common interests and a shared vision, these initiatives help overcome divisions and contradictions that weaken popular movements. They also reduce the influence of anti-Green New Deal forces by dividing them,



North Charleston mayor R. Keith Summey visits with the Sustainability Institute's Energy Conservation Corps at their Green House on East Montague. (Image: Ryan Johnson)

disorienting them, undermining their support base, and, at times, even winning them over.

Brecher's presentation reveals that the fight for the Green New Deal is closely tied to the fight for democracy. These initiatives offer models for, and demonstrate the benefits of, popular democracy. Green New Deal from Below projects show that people can achieve tangible gains that improve their lives, building a base for the protection and expansion of democratic governance at every level, embodying local participatory democracy while also reinforcing representative democracy against the threat of fascism at the national level.

Local and state-level Green New Deal initiatives are therefore crucial for achieving both climate and justice goals. They help build momentum and power for a national Green New Deal and serve as testing grounds, offering a "proof of concept." These building blocks, when linked, form a more effective Green New Deal with deep local roots. Programs "from below" can then connect with each other and align with national planning and investment. Some

national proposals even outline policies to facilitate this coordination. While federal and global action are needed to fully realize Green New Deal goals, the movement is already taking shape at the local level.

Going further

Brecher cautions, that while the Green New Deal program is crucial and beneficial, it is not sufficient on its own to address the deeper structural issues of an unjust and self-destructive global order. There are also critiques outside the scope of this book which assert that even if the Green New Deal was adopted at the national level today, on its own, it doesn't go far enough, fast enough on climate protection to avert devastating outcomes.

One of its strategic objectives must therefore be to pave the way for more radical and far-reaching forms of change. Indeed, an internationalist Global Green New Deal has begun to materialize - both "from below" and championed to various degrees by a few government and multinational formations.

The key will be to continue to build and connect participatory, justice centered activity around the world in ever widening and deepening solidarity.

Today, we are living with a profound sense of urgency - the urgency of the climate crisis, as well as the urgency of those suffering and dying due to injustice. The original Green New Deal proposal responded to this by calling for a ten-year mobilization aimed at transforming American society and economy as dramatically as the New Deal and the wartime mobilization during World War II. “The Green New Deal arose in a sea of hopelessness and despair. It pointed the way toward viable alternatives to the realities that evoked that hopelessness and despair. The Green New Deal from Below provides people with a way to start building those alternatives day by day, where they live and work” (180).

Seven years later, a recent headline from New Scientist reads: “The 1.5°C target is dead, but climate action needn’t be”. For the first time, climate scientists have explicitly said it will be impossible to limit peak warming to 1.5°C. Our focus must be on taking real action, like the initiatives Brecher has laid out and like many others around the world, not on meaningless platitudes and slogans like “Keep 1.5°C alive” or vague promises of “net-zero”.

At the outset of the book, Brecher cites the world historian Arnold Toynbee on how great civilizational changes occur. The existing leadership of existing institutions face new challenges and fail to change to meet them. But a “creative minority” may arise that proposes and begins to implement new solutions. “Those building the Green New Deal are creating such new solutions, from below” (180).

Therefore, perhaps the greatest success, as well as the greatest potential, of the Green New Deal from Below is its ability to expand the boundaries of what is possible, bringing together and empowering people to fight for the things they need but have long considered out of reach.

Workin’ on a world

We may never know if these solutions will be sufficient or come in time. But Brecher offers us the chance to resonate with the feelings expressed by songwriter Iris Dement in her song “Workin’ on a World.” She recalls waking each day “filled with sadness, fear, and dread,” as the world she once knew seemed to be “crashing to the ground.”

Looking around where we find ourselves this November of 2024, in the shadow of so much loss but with so much yet to lose, it wouldn’t be crazy to admit to feeling the same. Yet, as Iris “reflected on the struggles of those who came before her, the sacrifices they made, she realized those sacrifices had opened doors for her that they never lived to see” (180).

*“Now I’m working on a world I may never see,
I’m joining forces with the warriors of love
Who came before and will follow you and me.
I get up in the morning knowing I’m privileged just to be
Working on a world I may never see.”*

Brecher concludes, “whether we will see the world of the Green New Deal fully realized, in the Green New Deal from Below, we can see that right now we are making a part of that world” (180).

I’d only add that in so doing, we are also each reaffirming our own and one another’s right to be here, to reclaim our world here and now with a place for us all in it, to choose to live and to help live, to occupy our lives. We’re not just doing it for the future, we’re doing it for the now. In the words of a different movement ancestor, Salaria Kea, an American nurse, desegregation activist, and the only black nurse who worked in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, fighting against fascism on the frontlines:

*“I’m not just goin’ to sit down and let this happen.
I’m going out and help, even if it is my life. But I’m helping. This is my world too.”*

Through action, especially through our collective action, we are our vision come to life. We are the embodiment of that world we’re busy working on. Through us, it already does exist.