



MAGAZINE

MAY 2026

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Celebrating Labor on
Mayday

Forever Wars in the
Middle East

Climate Action

Change, Vision, Hope



*“...eliminating the
feminization of poverty...
is not merely about
improving living conditions;
it is about a fundamental
reconsideration of how
labor is organized and how
resources and power are
distributed within society.”*

- Bayan Saleh



MAY 2026

Decent Societies Must Recognize the Value of Care Work Nancy Folbre interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou	3
War is Never for the Working Class by Dominick Conidi	6
Labor Day 2026 in Germany by Thomas Klikauer	7
11,000 Missiles, \$2 Billion a Day, One Ceasefire No Power Could Avoid by Kurniawan Arif Maspul	10
Israel's War Obsession and the Urgency of Palestinian Leverage by Ramzy Baroud	13
Iran's 10-Point Plan Is Still a Workable Basis for Negotiations by Nicolas J.S. Davies	15
The Environmental and Social Impacts of Fish Farming and Industrial Aquaculture by Laura Lee Cascada	18
Three Tragedies, Three Alternatives by Vincent Emanuele	23
The Feminization of Poverty: A Socialist Feminist Perspective by Bayan Saleh	27
Big Scale But Plausible Activist Education by Michael Albert	30
Revolutionary Social Change That Lasts by Ted Glick	35
Progressive NGOs Will Enable Trump: A Warning — And A Way Out by Jim Driscoll	37
Death by a Thousand Cuts: The MAGA Supreme Court Destroys the Voting Right Act by Bill Fletcher Jr.	39

Decent Societies Must Recognize the Value of Care Work

Nancy Folbre interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou

Capitalism only cares about profits, so it is not surprising that care work is undervalued in capitalist societies. Yet care work is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the US economy, while “adults spend, on average, about as much time in unpaid work as they do on paid work,” as renowned socialist and feminist economist Nancy Folbre points out in the interview that follows. Subsequently, she makes an argument for structural reforms in the care economy and highlights strategies for organizing care workers. Folbre is professor emerita of economics and director of the Program on Gender and Care Work at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is the author of several books, including, most recently, *Making Care Work: Why Our Economy Should Put People First*.

Your new book, *Making Care Work*, has an anti-capitalist subtitle: *Why Our Economy Should Put People First*. Could you explain the connections you see between capitalism and the undervaluation of the work of caring for ourselves and others?

In many societies, capitalist institutions such as market exchange and wage employment were shaped by pre-existing patriarchal institutions, including laws barring women from property ownership, access to higher education and well-paying jobs. The dynamics varied across countries and were shaped by patterns of imperial power, but patriarchal institutions served the purpose of keeping the cost of producing and maintaining the labor force relatively low by creating a “reserve army” of wives and mothers who also worked to the advantage of men. The economists and national income accountants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries reinforced women’s subordination by insisting that their unpaid work was a moral obligation rather than a productive contribution that deserved economic recognition.

Echoes of this view are apparent today, in a perverse campaign to slash public care programs and impugn

the very concept of public service. The market-centric mania that has taken hold pretends to be “pro-family” but seems aimed primarily at sending women back to the home to help cut social spending. A crass, self-serving elite wants us to define economic success by the growth of stock market indices and cryptocurrency. They couldn’t care less about our health or the long-run sustainability of our national prosperity.

How should we define care work and is there a way to measure its true value? What does “undervaluation” really mean?

I define care work as the production, development and maintenance of human capabilities. This can take the form of self-care, of active care for others that involves personal interactions that generally involve some concern for the well-being of the care recipient, indirect care devoted to the care of the environment for direct care, and “on-call” care that involves being present and available to someone who might need active care.

Care for dependents such as children, people with disabilities, and the frail elderly is a particularly important aspect of care work, but as Bruce Springsteen puts it, “everybody’s got a hungry heart.” Most of us derive considerable satisfaction from caring for others as well as being cared for.

There’s no way to put a precise number on the value of unpaid care work. All we can do is provide lower-bound estimates by asking questions like, “What would it cost to hire someone to replace this activity?” For instance, a parent staying home to keep an eye on a sleeping child knows that they could, in principle, hire a babysitter to take their place. We can also ask, “If this person wasn’t engaged in care work, how much could they be earning on the job?” Willingness to sacrifice income is an indicator of the personal satisfaction a caregiver derives.

As I explain in *Making Care Work*, data from time-use surveys shows that in the US today, adults spend, on average, about as much time in unpaid work as they do on paid work. Partly this reflects the activities of students and retirees, who are less likely than others to be employed, but it also testifies to the hours that people devote to activities such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, yard work, household management, child care and elder care.

Surveys are not as effective at capturing the responsibilities of on-call care, which often restrict paid employment. However, because we have data on how much time people spend on various activities, and we also know what people are paid for different jobs, we can estimate the total value of unpaid work and even compare it to the value of all the goods and services bought and sold in the US — what's called (misleadingly) the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The US Bureau of Economic Analysis makes this calculation, and their estimate of the value of unpaid work is about 25% of GDP.

But this is an underestimate—and an “undervaluation” for several reasons. First, it doesn't count the on-call time that many parents provide for children under 13, and which often limits the time they can devote to paid work outside the home. Second, it sets a value on all unpaid work equal to a housekeeper's wage, which reflects the low bargaining power of a paid labor force consisting largely of immigrants and people of color. Third, and most importantly, it doesn't include any consideration at all of the social benefits generated by work that develops individual and social capabilities, which includes the value of increased mental and physical health, enhanced skills, and stronger families and communities.

As you point out, care work encompasses both paid as well as unpaid labor, and it is also one of the fastest-growing sectors of the US economy. Doesn't the fact that capitalist economies undervalue care work have ramifications for paid care workers? If so, what are those ramifications?

Have you ever wondered why investment bankers make more than college professors? They produce something that is easy to measure in dollar terms because...it is

mostly dollars. What I produce is far less tangible—human capabilities that may or may not pay off for my students in the labor market—and even if they do pay off, I'm not getting a share.

Capitalist logic tends to reward workers who make measurable contributions to profit. This pattern is evident even in one of the most highly-paid occupations in the US — physicians. Plastic surgeons, many of whom who cater to affluent customers who pay out of pocket (rather than through insurance) for cosmetic alterations, are at the top of the physician's pay scale. Their final “product” is generally easy to see. Public health physicians, who try to combat epidemics, contagious disease, and environmental threats, serve people who never even see them and often don't even realize who has saved their lives. They earn, on average, 40% as much as plastic surgeons.

Many employees in care occupations, such as child care and elder care workers, social workers, teachers, and nurses, as well as professionals and managers in care service industries (health, education and social services) are paid significantly less than their counterparts with similar educational credentials in other jobs, a pattern that has come to be termed a “care penalty.”

Numerous other factors, such as race/ethnicity, immigrant status, and gender affect relative wages, but the care penalty crosses all these boundaries. One big reason is that paid care work generates social benefits that employers can't directly measure or capture. Who knows what effects a good child care worker or teacher will have on a child's future? Who knows whether a nurse has made a decision that saved someone's life? Who knows whether a good elder care worker has kept someone alive and happy for additional years?

The undervaluation of paid care services hurts “consumers” as well as care workers, because it often leads to shortages—such as difficulty finding a primary health care provider—or high turnover, a serious problem in the childcare and elder care work force.

What strategies do you consider vital for organizing care workers and improving pay and working conditions in the care economy?

Unionization is a key strategy. National and regional nurses' unions such as National Nurses United have raised wages and improved working conditions, in addition to successfully pushing for mandatory staffing ratios, which improve patient safety. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has raised wages for nursing home and home care workers above federal/state minimums, expanded access to benefits, and formalized employment relationships for home care workers. Teachers' unions (including the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have improved teachers' pay in Republican-dominated "Red" states as well as others, and lobbied hard for increased commitments to public education.

Another key strategy is legislative setting of industry-level wage standards (as well as a higher national minimum wage). New York State's Home Care Worker Wage Parity Law requires a minimum total compensation level (wages + benefits) for Medicaid-funded home care workers. Advocates in many states are pushing for wage boards that can, as the Oregon Center for Public Policy puts it, do the "fact-finding and analysis needed to recommend workable solutions to the issues that harm the industry and people depending on long-term care services."

These are very complementary strategies, and they can both be enhanced by evidence showing how higher wages for care providers reduce turn-over, improve service quality and pay off in the long run by improving social well-being.

Is universal basic income (UBI) a necessary strategy for resolving the problem of unpaid care work?

Nancy Folbre: Yes, but most UBI proposals fail to account for the needs of caregiving families,—a better-designed approach bring children and other dependents into the story.

Andrew Yang's "Freedom Dividend," proposes \$1,000 a month to all adults 18 and older. Elon Musk's call for a "Universal High Income," leaves all details unspecified. Many of the small-scale pilot research experiments on UBI have structured payments to low-income individual per adult recipient. This obviously ignores the extra

needs of families that caring for those who can't care for themselves.

At the other extreme, the success of the expanded Child Tax Credit in 2021 in reducing child poverty has prompted some policy-makers to call for what is essentially a UBI for children—a universal child allowance that could go to their parents but would not benefit non-parents or those caring for a disabled or dependent adult. I see a need to reconcile these two approaches and think harder about the form that a UBI should take. This is an issue I've just begun to work on.

I will just add that a UBI for children, while a big improvement over current US policies, would not in itself resolve the care crisis facing parents. It would need to be combined with access to free universal high-quality child care services and paid family and medical leave from work. I am currently collaborating with colleagues to develop a better picture of such a "care package."

Care work is disproportionately carried out by working-class women, but it is also heavily racialized. Wouldn't this ultimately mean that a transformative politics of care must necessarily address the very structural oppressions that shape it?

Yes, a transformative politics of care needs to provide a very clear analysis of structural oppressions and ways of eliminating them. Contrary to liberal feminist approaches that focus almost entirely on gender, socialist feminists seek cross-race, cross-class, international coalitions—because care needs are genuinely universal. In practice, "structural" reform requires policies such as campaign finance reform, higher taxes on income from capital, workplace democracy, targeted investment in communities of color, and immigration reform.

I don't have magic potion that can speed such reform along, but my book tries to provide an antidote to the toxins that have infected political debate in the US — the loss of confidence in democratic governance, the every-man-for-himself cynicism, and the sneering dismissal of public commitment to the common good. I think many people are willing to challenge traditional measures of economic success in order to prioritize policies that put people first.

War is Never for the Working Class

Dominick Conidi

America and Israel's aggression in Iran is the latest reminder that violent, expansionist powers will never cease in their desires for warfare and plunder. This "might-makes-right" ideology being put into practice once again sees Israel playing the lead role, with full support from the Trump administration.

This current war, among many others the U.S has engaged in over the last several decades, is never for the benefit of the working class, nor does it serve the interests of the domestic population that is being attacked.

The United States is a war economy, propped up by the development and sale of armaments that end up used against foreign adversaries to ensure that the process of capital accumulation continues unabated. This arrogance – the cavalier use of force now seen in Iran with the indiscriminate killings of schoolchildren and strikes directed at oil facilities – is reminiscent of America flexing its military muscle to stamp out communism worldwide and punish sovereign nations who dared to nationalize a resource and cut into the profit margins of multinational corporations.

There is no existential threat or any country that will put the world into peril – besides the U.S of course – that necessitates such wanton military buildup at the heavy cost of both social services and our tax dollars as well as human lives. But there will always be more money for war. On top of the \$1 trillion wasted annually by the American government on 'defense' spending, this current war with Iran has already cost roughly \$65 billion of taxpayer money.

While not facing foreign intervention or clear threats to sovereignty, the situation inside the imperial core is precarious; fascism is on the rise, an affordability crisis is worsening, massive underemployment is rampant, and wages are stagnating. The billions of taxpayer dollars being wasted to murder civilians overseas and advance the objectives of an apart-

heid, genocidal state in Israel could have been better served domestically. We could be improving public infrastructure, providing universal healthcare, building affordable housing, or addressing any of the many social inadequacies that exist in this late-capitalist hellscape that is modern day America.

Wartime throws into sharp relief the shortcomings of a society structured around profit, rather than one which meets the people's needs first and foremost, with a participatory economic structure and truly democratic politics and labor.

In a socialist world, where decisions are made by the populace for their own sustained benefit, there would never be a need for military assaults like this one. As capital accumulation and private property would become a thing of the past, the need to annex regions or confiscate natural resources in new territories would cease to exist. War would no longer be a way of life or a force that has any meaning.

In harrowing times like these, where sadistic forces like the United States and Israel disregard human life and make the rest of the world their military playground, it is vital to maintain a compassionate perspective and avoid disregarding the plight of the victims in a show of trivial patriotism and jingoistic rhetoric.

All around the world, the enemy of the working class are not people who come from different countries or members of different ethnic and religious groups. The adversary of the people are those who seek to pillage, to profit off the backs of others' labor, and to destroy the planet for their financial gain.

Oftentimes the elite, along with the state and the media, will manufacture a sense of fear and outrage to get the common person on board. That is simply a purposeful distraction away from class struggle – away from our real, shared enemy.

Labor Day 2026 in Germany

Thomas Klikauer

One of the rituals repeated annually is the criticism of Germany's government by workers and trade unions during the Labour Day rallies held on 1 May. This year, Germany's trade unions, union apparatchiks and, at times, even union members celebrated big wins wherever trade unions concluded collective agreements.

This year, German trade unions had reasons to celebrate the day of work, albeit in the context of the – as usual – crisis of capitalism, made worse by Donald Trump's attack on Iran and the subsequent closing of the Strait of Hormuz.

This year's calls, such as “our jobs”, appeared amid substantial job losses caused by artificial intelligence, the transition to a sustainable economy, and Trump's war. For union officials, there was a very clear motto: corporate coffers are full. Workers will retain a “kind of existence” under capitalism – an exchangeable commodity.

Despite all the doom and gloom of Germany's corporate press, there is still economic growth. Germany's capital, Berlin, was even celebrated as a boomtown by the press. But it is not the workforce that is booming.

In many industries, thousands of jobs were lost, particularly in sectors under pressure. The majority of East Germany's provinces act as an extended workbench – low-cost manufacturing with few benefits for workers.

East Germany is home to none of Germany's major corporations. Corporate Germany maintains only “branches” – and these are presented in quotation marks, i.e. ready to be closed down. When it comes to shutting factories, East German branches, rather than West German factories, are the ones that close.

Corporate Germany still treats East Germany with disdain. Not much has changed since conservative

politician Helmut Kohl promised “blooming industrial landscapes” during the 1990s – an electoral lie.

Germany's chemical giant BASF illustrates this clearly. In February 2026, BASF announced a comprehensive “restructuring plan” – managerial code for job losses. Its works council and the trade union swung into action on the spot. For the East German state of Brandenburg, the management plan would mean production and services being outsourced or transferred.

In Berlin alone, management threatens the loss of 2,800 jobs. BASF's corporate apparatchiks want to “combine” – a conveniently vague word – its Berlin services with those in India. This means severe job losses are on the horizon. In other words, corporate bosses treat workers as a disposable human resource.

Despite the attacks of corporate management on workers, German trade unions also had reasons to celebrate. Trade unions managed to fend off attacks by Germany's government and its “private jet-flying” and neoliberal-worshipping chancellor on the eight-hour day.

Meanwhile, the very same multi-million-euro chancellor frustrated Berlin's inhabitants, the unemployed, and social welfare recipients with political attacks on what remains of the welfare state after Kohl, Schröder, and Merkel.

Not just on 1 May, Germany's peak union body, the DGB, issued a massive counterattack against Germany's conservative government. Unionists spoke of the largest assault on Germany's welfare state and public services since the 1990s.

Instead of neoliberal cuts, Germany's unions are calling for forward-looking policy, investment, and improved conditions so that companies can maintain operations.



Unionists from IG BCE (mining, energy, chemicals) said there is strong resistance inside companies to these government plans, and that this resistance is substantial. Yet, in upcoming collective bargaining rounds, employers are preparing to challenge workers.

In Germany's public transport system, unions have put forward a comprehensive wage claim. Unionists said it is about public transport as such. Yet employers in East Germany's Thuringia seek to increase working hours to 42 hours a week – an attack on the eight-hour day.

In other words, government policies and corporate bosses work hand in hand when attacking Germany's welfare state and workers' conditions. Regularly, German employers' associations – the direct counterparts of trade unions in collective bargaining – advocate loudly for far-reaching restrictions on collective bargaining. While employers seek to contest hard-fought agreements, collective bargaining provides security for workers.

Yet only 42% of all workers in Berlin and Brandenburg, for example, are covered by collective agreements – far too low. For only 16% of companies does a collective agreement apply. Taken together, the

DGB trade unions have lost ground in the context of industrial and demographic changes. Yet they have also gained members, as recent strike waves have been rather successful.

What German trade unions observe is that wherever unions enter disputes, wherever they engage in conflict and strike action, particularly young people are joining trade unions. This is a positive development. It also means that trade unions can slow their losses, halt them, or ideally reverse them.

Sadly, the once-revolutionary day – 1 May – has all too often degenerated into a commercialised street festival. Instead of “workers unite!”, today it is “revelers unite!”. This trend may be reinforced as a majority of young people connect through TikTok and Instagram.

Yet calls for union-organised rallies still dominate and remain visible. Rallies on 1 May also include queer, feminist, and “take back the night” demonstrations. At least one revolutionary rally countered this trend while trying to make up for the prevailing tendency. About 25,000 people took part. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands gathered to celebrate and attend large radical-progressive rallies across the country.

Many still agree that 1 May is, without a doubt, the most important holiday of the working-class movement. For the past 136 years, workers have celebrated it as one of the few secular holidays around the world. As the day of the working class, it became established in 1889 in Paris. On one 1 May, workers were shot and killed in Chicago by police officers while demonstrating for the eight-hour day.

For many workers, 1 May remains an important day. In 2026, this is also because of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's attacks on the basic rights of workers – an attack on the working class as a whole.

In mid-January 2026, the conservative, neoliberal, and rather zealous Merz (CDU) spoke in Halle in East Germany against Germany's long-standing Working Time Act. He called for its abolition. The act regulates, among other things, the right to the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week.

Merz's assault was an attack on workers' rights, but it was also offensive to those who once fought for the labour movement and the eight-hour day. So far, major protests against Merz's attacks have remained limited. Perhaps his insults against – in his view – workers will change after 1 May, at least for a few days.

As in many countries, there has been, at least since the 1960s, a well-engineered decay of a unified working-class movement. Corporate bosses, along with an ever-compliant business press, constantly question the usefulness of trade unions – every year.

It is, as the actor Sean Penn might say, “one battle after another” to defend workers against the sustained onslaught of corporate media, CEOs, right-wing politicians, pro-business think tanks, corporate lobbying, and the adjacent propaganda apparatus of capitalism.

Despite all this, people still take to the streets every year on 1 May across Germany. Even if workers are no longer as highly organised as they once were, union rallies are still held in almost all cities.

Some union rallies count more than 10,000 participants. In some cities, there were radical left-wing rallies. One rally included 800 anarchists – not a strong tradition in Germany – organised under the black-and-red flag. Around 3,000 people attended a Communist Revolutionary 1 May rally. The youth bloc at a DGB rally argued against compulsory military service, holding posters that read:

if hundreds of billions can be spent on arms,

why not on schools, universities, and healthcare systems,

where funding is lacking?

In other words, 1 May remains an important day. At some rallies, the powerful metalworkers' union IGM Metall (IGM) was accused of hypocrisy. On the one hand, IGM opposes arms manufacturing. On the other hand, it participates in it, for example at the Blohm + Voss shipyard. A similar contradiction is currently playing out at Volkswagen.

IGM knows that €1 million creates 6.9 jobs in arms manufacturing, compared to 10 in sustainable energy, 14.3 in healthcare, and a striking 19.2 in education – almost three times more. In other words, the critique of Germany's most powerful trade union, IGM, is not unfounded. Yet while job creation is minimal, profits in Germany's military-industrial complex are far from minimal.

In fact, 1 May is almost the only day of the year when workers, trade unions, and the labour movement rally against the injustices of corporate capitalism. On this day, people demonstrate that the social composition of Germany's working class still exists – despite claims by the pro-business media.

In spite of their best efforts, political workers have not vanished into thin air over recent decades. In other words, as long as there is capitalism, there are workers – and as long as there are workers, there are organised workers. These workers continue to rally on 1 May.

11,000 Missiles, \$2 Billion a Day, One Ceasefire No Power Could Avoid

Kurniawan Arif Maspul

A pause in war is rarely peace. It is something more fragile, more deceptive—like the brief stillness between crashing waves, when the sea seems to settle, yet the force beneath remains unresolved. The United States' sudden decision to extend its ceasefire with Iran in April 2026 carries precisely that uneasy tension. The language of diplomacy—mediation, dialogue, opportunity—floats on the surface. Beneath it, however, evidence from battlefields and defence assessments points to a far more disquieting truth: this is not restraint born of strategic clarity, but a halt imposed by the hard edge of limits—material, political, and increasingly, moral.

Seven weeks of conflict have already carved deep scars across the region. Thousands of civilians have been killed, cities and infrastructure reduced to fragments, and the Strait of Hormuz—through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil flows—has been constricted, sending tremors through global markets. Yet the most revealing story is not only written in human suffering or economic shock. It is etched in the pace and scale of destruction itself. In just over two weeks, more than 11,000 high-end munitions were expended, at a cost nearing US\$26 billion.

This is not merely the expense of war; it is the exposure of a system straining against its own design—a model of warfare built on precision and superiority, now confronting the brutal arithmetic of depletion.

For decades, American military power has been defined by its ability to project force anywhere, at any time, with overwhelming technological advantage. That narrative is now beginning to fracture. The campaign against Iran has revealed

that dominance is no longer simply about how much force can be delivered, but how long it can be sustained. Roughly half of the US Patriot interceptor stocks have already been consumed. Advanced systems such as the Precision Strike Missile have reportedly been driven to the brink of exhaustion. Analysts warn that, at current rates, critical inventories could be depleted within weeks, not months. Even under optimistic projections, rebuilding these arsenals could take three to five years.

This is not a technical inconvenience—it is a strategic inflection point. Deterrence depends not only on capability, but on credibility: the belief that force can be applied when needed, and sustained if required. When stockpiles thin and replenishment lags, that belief begins to erode. Across the Indo-Pacific, allies are watching closely.

In Seoul, Tokyo, and Canberra, the question is no longer abstract. If American firepower can be so rapidly consumed in a single regional conflict, what remains available for the next crisis? For Beijing, the calculation is equally stark, though viewed from the opposite angle: a competitor revealing the outer limits of its endurance.

Against this backdrop, the ceasefire begins to look less like a diplomatic opening and more like a strategic necessity. Reports of internal Pentagon concerns over dwindling munitions lend weight to this interpretation. The abrupt shift—from threats of overwhelming escalation to an indefinite pause—feels less like a recalibration of objectives and more like a moment of enforced recognition. Power, even at its most formidable, is not infinite.

Yet to understand this pause solely through the lens of military constraint is to miss a deeper, more unsettling dimension. Beneath the calculations of stockpiles and supply chains lies another ledger entirely—one that measures not what has been destroyed, but what has been forsaken.

A Harvard Kennedy School analysis estimates that the United States has been spending close to US\$2 billion per day on the war with Iran, pushing total costs beyond US\$100 billion in a matter of weeks, with projections that could approach US\$1 trillion. These are numbers that strain comprehension. But their true weight emerges only in comparison. The United Nations estimates that rebuilding Gaza—where more than 80 per cent of infrastructure has been devastated—would require approximately US\$71 billion. In other words, the machinery of destruction has already consumed more than what it would take to reconstruct an entire shattered society.

The dissonance deepens further. According to the head of the UN's humanitarian agency, US\$2 billion a day could sustain life-saving assistance for 87 million people facing acute need. Ending world hunger, by comparison, would cost roughly US\$93 billion annually. These are not abstract figures; they are choices, rendered in stark numerical form. On one ledger: missiles, interceptors, and fuel for escalation. On the other: food, shelter, and the preservation of human life. The imbalance is not merely economic—it is existential.

Even the structure of the war reflects this distortion. Multi-million-dollar interceptors have been deployed against drones costing a fraction of that amount, a pattern repeated across modern conflicts from Ukraine to the Middle East. It is a contest not only of arms, but of economics—and one in which efficiency increasingly favours the less technologically sophisticated actor. At the same time, the broader global economy has begun to warp around the conflict. As oil flows tighten and uncertainty spreads, energy prices rise, delivering windfall profits to major producers.

In the first month of the war alone, the world's largest oil and gas companies reportedly generated around US\$30 million per hour. War, in this sense, redistributes more than power—it redistributes gain, often reinforcing the very dynamics that sustain instability.

What emerges from this convergence of factors is a portrait of a system under strain. The defence-industrial base that underpins modern military power is no longer geared for prolonged, high-intensity conflict. Precision weapons depend on intricate, globalised supply chains vulnerable to disruption at multiple points. Bottlenecks in critical components—microelectronics, specialised materials, propulsion systems—cannot be resolved with urgency.

The result is a paradox: an arsenal of extraordinary sophistication, yet limited resilience. Power, once defined by abundance, now reveals its fragility.

For the architects of modern deterrence, the implications extend far beyond the immediate theatre of conflict. This moment challenges long-held assumptions about escalation, endurance, and control. It raises fundamental questions about whether high-intensity warfare, as currently conceived, is sustainable in a world of interdependent economies and constrained industrial capacity. It also forces a confrontation with the legal and moral frameworks that govern the use of force.

The blockade of Iranian ports and threats against civilian infrastructure have drawn sharp criticism, highlighting the tension between strategic objectives and international norms. For a nation that has long positioned itself as a custodian of that order, the contradiction is increasingly difficult to reconcile.

The ceasefire, fragile and uncertain, offers a narrow window—not of resolution, but of reflection. Rebuilding depleted arsenals will take years. Repairing strained alliances will take longer. But the most difficult task lies elsewhere: reimagining

a path forward that does not default to cycles of coercion and attrition. A durable peace with Iran will require more than pressure; it will demand credible diplomacy, multilateral engagement, and a willingness to align power with purpose.

At its core, this moment is about choices. If power is ultimately a reflection of priorities, then the current trajectory poses a question that cannot be deferred. What does it mean for the international order when the resources required to end hunger, rebuild devastated societies, and stabilise fragile regions are not absent—but diverted? What kind of stability is being constructed when its foundations rest on depletion, both material and moral?

The sums burned in this conflict could rebuild entire cities, reopen schools and hospitals, and restore the basic dignity of life for millions — including in Gaza, where reconstruction demands far less than what war has already consumed. The imbalance is not simply fiscal. It is a measure of what the world chooses to value.

History offers no shortage of warnings. Conflicts launched with confidence in swift and decisive outcomes often drift into stalemate, their costs accumulating long after their purpose has blurred. The Iran war, with its rapid escalation and abrupt pause, carries the unmistakable contours of such a trajectory. It has not yet hardened into permanence, but the risk is no longer theoretical.

For much of the post-Cold War era, the architecture of global security rested on an implicit bargain: that power, concentrated in a handful of capitals in the Global North, would remain both available and dependable, underwriting stability far beyond its borders. That assumption now appears increasingly fragile. The unfolding strain revealed in the Iran conflict signals not merely a momentary disruption, but a deeper transformation in how power is generated, sustained, and perceived. Across the Global South and among the world's diverse middle powers, this shift is being read with growing clarity.

Strategic dependence is giving way to strategic recalibration. The question is no longer how to align within existing hierarchies, but how to navigate a landscape where resilience, industrial depth, and political coherence matter as much as, if not more than, raw military capability. In this emerging order, influence will not belong solely to those who can project force, but to those who can endure pressure, absorb shocks, and sustain agency over time.

This rebalancing carries both risk and possibility. For states long positioned between great power competition and systemic marginalisation, it opens space for a more plural, negotiated form of international order—one less rigidly defined by singular guarantors and more reflective of distributed responsibility. Yet such a transition is neither automatic nor benign. It demands deliberate investment in sovereign capacity, not only in defence, but in energy security, supply chains, and institutional credibility.

It calls for diplomacy that is not reactive but anticipatory, capable of bridging divides between North and South while resisting the gravitational pull of binary alignments. Most critically, it requires a reimagining of cooperation itself—not as an extension of dependency, but as a network of mutual reinforcement among states navigating shared vulnerabilities.

In that sense, the lesson of this moment is not simply that old certainties are eroding, but that a more adaptive, more balanced equilibrium is struggling to be born—one that will be shaped as much by the strategic discipline of the many as by the ambitions of the few.

The quiet that now hangs over this ceasefire is not the sound of resolution. It is the sound of a system pausing under strain, uncertain of its next move. It carries a message that extends well beyond the Middle East.

This is not peace. It is a warning.

Israel's War Obsession and the Urgency of Palestinian Leverage

Ramzy Baroud

It is tempting to argue that Israel's new military doctrine is predicated on perpetual war—but the reality is more complex.

Not that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would object to such an arrangement. On the contrary, his relentless drive for military escalation suggests precisely that. After all, his openly declared quest for a “greater Israel” would require exactly this kind of permanent militarism—endless expansion and sustained regional destruction.

However, Israel cannot sustain an open-ended fight on multiple fronts indefinitely.

Israeli officials boast about fighting on “seven fronts,” but many of these are, in military terms, largely imaginary rather than sustained battlefields.

The real wars, however, are entirely of Israel's making: from the genocide in Gaza to its unprovoked regional wars.

Still, that fact should not blind us to another reality: in the lead-up to the war on Iran, and in the escalation against Lebanon, there was near-total consensus among Jewish Israelis. An Israel Democracy Institute survey conducted on March 2–3 found that 93% of Jewish Israelis supported the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran. Support cut across all political camps.

The same enthusiasm for war accompanied the Gaza genocide and the various wars and escalations in Lebanon.

Even Yair Lapid—so often and so falsely marketed abroad as a “dove”—fully backed these wars, admitting after the Iran ceasefire that Israel had entered them

with “rare consensus” and that he supported them “from the very first moment.”

His repeated criticisms, like those of other Israeli politicians, are not of the war but of Netanyahu's failure to deliver a strategic outcome.

And this is the crucial distinction. Israelis mostly support the wars, but many no longer trust Netanyahu to translate destruction into strategic victory. By mid-April, 92% of Jewish Israelis gave the army high marks for its management of the Iran war, but only 38% gave high ratings to the government.

In other words, the public still believes in war but increasingly doubts the leadership waging it.

That distinction may not matter much to us, since the outcome remains mass death, devastation, and colonial violence. But in Israel's own military and strategic calculations, it matters enormously. Its wars have historically followed a familiar model: crush resistance, impose military and political domination, and translate battlefield violence into colonial expansion.

Netanyahu delivered none of that.

This is why the uproar in Israel over the April 16 Lebanon ceasefire has been so fierce, and why the fears surrounding a possible stalemate with Iran run even deeper.

The Lebanon ceasefire clearly did not secure one of Israel's central declared aims: the disarmament of Hezbollah. Israel kept troops in southern Lebanon, but the agreement halted offensive operations and fell far short of the promised “total victory.”



Photo: Montecruz

For many in Israel, any outcome that falls short of total victory is immediately read as defeat. One northern Israeli regional leader, Eyal Shtern, captured that mood with brutal clarity when he reacted to the Lebanon ceasefire by asking how Israel had gone “from absolute victory to total surrender,” in remarks reported by CNN.

That is the real crisis now confronting Israel: not that it has discovered the limits of permanent war, but that it has once again discovered that exterminatory violence does not automatically produce political victory.

While Iran possesses political leverage that could allow for a long-term, or even permanent, truce, Lebanon and Syria remain in a far more vulnerable position. However, no one is in a more precarious condition than the Palestinians, particularly those in Gaza.

Unlike others who retain some political margin and space to maneuver, Palestinians live under Israeli occupation, apartheid, and siege. Gaza, in particular, has been reduced to a sealed enclave of devastation.

Its hermetic siege has produced one of the most horrific humanitarian catastrophes in modern history: an entire population surviving on polluted water, with infrastructure destroyed, food critically scarce, and thousands still buried beneath the rubble.

Aside from their legendary steadfastness—*sumud*—Palestinians operate under severe constraints in their ability to impose conditions on Israel, particularly as it continues to receive unconditional support from the United States and its Western allies. Yet their resilience, collective action, and enduring presence remain powerful forms of leverage that cannot be easily contained.

Netanyahu—and those who will come after him—will always find in Palestine a space in which war can be waged continuously and at relatively low cost to Israel itself. Unlike other battlefields, where war becomes politically, militarily, and economically unsustainable, Israel has turned its occupation of Palestine into a permanent battlefield.

Even if Netanyahu, now politically diminished and aging, exits the political scene, the underlying paradigm will remain intact. Future Israeli leaders will continue to wage war on Palestine, not despite its costs, but because of its perceived benefits: it is financially subsidized, colonially advantageous, and politically sustainable within Israel’s current structure.

To break this paradigm, Palestinians must generate leverage—real leverage. This cannot come from futile negotiations or appeals to long-ignored international law. It can only emerge from sustained collective resistance to colonialism, reinforced by meaningful support from Arab and Muslim states and genuine international allies, and amplified by global solidarity capable of exerting real pressure on Israel and, crucially, on its principal benefactors.

For now, Netanyahu continues his wars because he has no answer to his own strategic failures. Here, escalation is not a strength; it is the last refuge of a leadership that cannot deliver victory.

This, however, also reveals something else: Israel is entering a moment of unprecedented vulnerability.

That vulnerability must be exposed—clearly, consistently, and urgently—by all those who seek an end to these senseless wars, an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and a path toward justice that has been denied for far too long.

Iran's 10-Point Plan Is Still a Workable Basis for Negotiations

Nicolas J.S. Davies

The US government under Donald Trump has twice used disingenuous negotiations with Iran to provide cover for attacking it, in June 2025 and again before launching the current war in February. Now it is trying to do so for a third time.

On April 8, the US and Iran began a two week ceasefire, after Trump accepted a ten point peace plan drawn up by Iran as “a workable basis on which to negotiate.” But Vice President Vance and US negotiators rejected Iran’s plan out of hand at talks in Pakistan on April 11, and instead demanded that Iran must give up its right as a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (or NPT) to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. The talks ended with no agreement.

As the end of the ceasefire on April 22 drew near, Trump claimed that Iran had agreed to US demands on enriched uranium and other matters. But Iran announced to the world on April 18 that it had not agreed to any of the terms Trump claimed, and that his lies and threats provided no basis for further negotiations. Iran then responded to US and Israeli ceasefire violations by once again closing the Strait of Hormuz to all vessels linked to hostile countries.

In other words, Iran called Trump’s bluff, holding the US to the terms of the two-week ceasefire. But Trump didn’t give up on his false claims, and instead insisted that Iran had agreed to another round of talks in Pakistan on April 21st, which Iran immediately denied.

As the April 22 deadline approaches with no agreement, many analysts now expect the end of the ceasefire to be followed, within hours or days, by a US escalation of the war and a proportionate military response from Iran, with no clear off-ramp from further escalation.

But this could be averted by a belated but genuine US reappraisal of its position, based on Iran’s ten point proposal that Trump accepted as “a workable basis on which to negotiate.”

If the United States government really wants an exit strategy from this self-imposed, ever-escalating war, it should take a fresh look at Iran’s ten point peace plan, and seriously consider how it can engage with this framework to turn over a new leaf in its relations with Iran and the region.

These are the ten points, as reported by Gulf News:

- A guarantee that Iran will not be attacked again
- A permanent end to the war, not just a ceasefire
- An end to Israeli strikes in Lebanon and against Iranian allies
- The lifting of all US sanctions on Iran
- Iran agreeing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz
- Introduction of a \$2 million fee per ship transiting Hormuz
- Revenue from shipping fees to be shared with Oman
- Funds to be used for reconstruction of war-damaged infrastructure
- Establishment of safe passage protocols through Hormuz

A broader framework to end regional hostilities Since the United States has failed to use the two-week ceasefire to negotiate on this “workable basis,” it will be up to Iran to decide whether to agree to extend the ceasefire so that the US and Iran can finally start real negotiations.



Photo: Diane Krauthamer

This would require the US to begin acting in good faith, an inherently tall order, to convince Iran that it would not just use an extension of the ceasefire to prepare an even more deadly and catastrophic attack. It should immediately lift its naval blockade of Iran, stop transporting more armed forces into the region, and do whatever it takes to end Israel's ceasefire violations in Lebanon and Palestine, including by halting the transfer of weapons that Israel uses to violate those ceasefires, as US law requires.

Without such confidence-building measures, it is hard to see why Iran would agree to an extension of the ceasefire. As Professor Mostafa Khoshcheshm in Tehran explained to Al Jazeera, Trump's lies convinced Tehran it would not find "a trustworthy partner for any kind of deal," and, as long as the US acts this way, "Iran will continue the war."

"Iran believes it has the upper hand and that this must be established in any future confrontation," he said, noting that millions of people are still taking to the streets in Iran every night to call for continued resistance.

The first (#1), and maybe the most vital, of Iran's ten points is a guarantee that Iran will not be attacked again, by the United States or Israel. Trump's war crimes, his undermining of US credibility and his connivance at Israel's ceasefire violations make such a guarantee elusive, although it is only what international law requires of all countries, that they resolve their disputes peacefully and refrain from threatening or using military force against each other.

What form of guarantee could Iran possibly accept from a country that systematically violates treaties and agreements? Engaging in

good faith negotiations over the rest of Iran's 10-point agenda, especially the lifting of US sanctions, while also moving to restore diplomatic relations, might be good first steps.

The reversal in US policy that it would take to resolve this crisis would not be unprecedented. Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan all forced US forces to withdraw from their countries. But those were much longer wars, involving many years of US occupation that went on until popular resistance movements made continued occupation untenable.

How long must the US war on Iran go on, and how badly must the US be defeated, before it will agree to a permanent peace? This crisis can be as long or as short, and as bloody or bloodless, as US leaders choose, and as the American people will tolerate.

The lifting of illegal US sanctions against Iran (#4 on the list) would be a vital part of any solution to this crisis. This would surely be good for both countries, and the United States would be less likely to attack Iran again if the US and Iran have reestablished mutually profitable trade relations.

Ending Israel's attacks on Iran's allies (#3), and a broader framework to end regional hostilities (#10) are both steps that most Americans would support. The failure of the US-Israeli war on Iran could be the desperately needed catalyst for the US to transform a US-Israeli military alliance that is committing genocide in Palestine and aggression throughout the region into a new and different relationship bounded by the rules of international law.

A US military withdrawal from its bases around the Persian Gulf could prevent the countries that host them from again becoming targets in US-Israeli wars on Iran, so it is interesting that Iran doesn't mention them in its ten points. Perhaps Iran sees the value of these US bases as vulnerable targets in this

and future wars as outweighing any threat they might pose, but that would be one more reason for the United States to withdraw from them before they cost more American lives.

The other five items in the ten-point agenda are all related to the Strait of Hormuz. The strait is within Iran's and Oman's territorial waters, although charging ships to pass through it is unprecedented and legally questionable. It is really the US and Israel that should pay reparations to Iran for the death and destruction they have wreaked, not the owners of international merchant ships. But if the US will not agree to pay reparations, Iran's tollbooths may be a compromise that all sides can live with in order to reopen the strait, as Iran itself calls for in item # 5.

There is a simple way to avoid one of the most destructive elements in recent failed negotiations with Iran, and that would be to remove Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner from the US negotiating team. Discussing prior negotiations, a diplomat from one of the Gulf countries told *The Guardian*, "We regarded Witkoff and Kushner as Israeli assets that dragged a president into a war he wants to get out of."

Given Witkoff and Kushner's foreign loyalties, Trump's lies and corruption, Rubio's subservience to Israel, and Hegseth's bloodlust, the United States can surely find more professional officials to represent it in these difficult negotiations, which have only been made more difficult by the flood of threats, lies and deception from the US side.

But since the United States has not really tried to make peace with Iran since abandoning the JCPOA in 2018, a new team of qualified, experienced US diplomats charged with turning over a new leaf in US-Iran relations could start with a clean slate, and they would have the support of the whole world behind their efforts to resolve this global crisis.

The Environmental and Social Impacts of Fish Farming and Industrial Aquaculture

Laura Lee Cascada

Fish farming, a form of aquaculture, is now the fastest-growing form of factory farming worldwide. This rapid expansion can be attributed to the industry's emphasis on buzzwords such as "climate," "conservation," and "sustainability." While discussions about land-based farmed animals, such as cattle, pigs, and poultry, are dominated by their impact on emissions and the environment, aquaculture has been positioned as a sustainable alternative, allowing it to quietly transform coastlines into industrial zones while affecting marine ecosystems and communities in ways that are often invisible to the public. Addressing the flaws of fish farming is crucial to preventing the entrenchment of a global industrial system in oceans and climate agendas.

Industrial fish farms, particularly open-net salmon pens, concentrate thousands of animals in confined spaces, producing waste and requiring significant inputs of feed, antibiotics, and chemicals to maintain productivity. While these systems are promoted as a solution to unsustainable industrial fishing, the reality is far more complex. The expansion of industrial aquaculture comes at ecological, social, and climate costs that are often overlooked when evaluating its benefits.

Why Fish Matter

Fish are essential to healthy ocean ecosystems, but almost 90 percent of the world's fisheries are considered "fully exploited" or "overfished" by the United Nations, and many species are in rapid decline due to industrial fishing and aquaculture. Research increasingly shows that fish are sentient and capable of learning, problem-solving, and exhibiting complex behaviors. Cleaner wrasse, a small reef-dwelling species, have passed

a version of the mirror test, a classic indicator of self-recognition. Tuskfish have been observed using rocks as tools to open clams. Salmon can respond to pharmaceuticals in water, demonstrating behavioral complexity and sentience.

Caring about fish means safeguarding ocean ecosystems, maintaining biodiversity, and protecting the planet's climate and ecological stability for future generations.

The Myth of Relieving Pressure on Wild Fish

One of the most common misconceptions about aquaculture is that it reduces pressure on wild fish populations. In reality, fish farming often entrenches it. Many farmed species considered high-value in rich countries, such as Atlantic salmon, require large amounts of wild-caught fish for their feed. This includes small pelagic fish such as sardines, anchovies, and menhaden, which are critical sources of protein for local communities in regions like West Africa and South America.

Norway's salmon industry is an example of how fish farms are exacerbating food insecurity in poor countries where people are already experiencing high rates of hunger. Research by Foodrise (previously known as Feedback Global) shows that "in 2020, nearly 2 million tonnes of wild fish were required to produce the fish oil supplied to the Norwegian farmed salmon industry, and that throughout this feeding process, one-quarter of the wild fish ground up is lost. Furthermore, the amount of fish sourced off the West African coast... to supply fish oil to the Norwegian salmon farming industry in 2020



could have provided between 2.5 million and 4 million people in the region with a year's supply of fish."

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), while aquaculture production "surpassed" capture fisheries in 2022, this was because capture fisheries have reached their ecological limits, and not because aquaculture is displacing the extraction of wild fish. Instead, aquaculture creates additional demand for them. Research published in *Science Advances* in 2024 found that millions of tons of wild fish are caught each year to feed farmed species, showing their heavy dependence on wild fisheries. This undermines claims that fish farming conserves marine ecosystems.

Moreover, referring to the FAO report, a Mongabay article highlighted how, despite the surge in aquaculture production, overfishing remains a big issue, which is "worsening" over time. "[M]ore fish are being harvested at an unsustainable rate, which can reduce future productivity. For communities reliant on fishing, stock collapses can be devastating. Overfishing is also a concern for the wild marine environment as it is one of the major causes of the loss of ocean biodiversity," stated the article.

Industrial aquaculture has long used greenwashing tactics to present itself as a conservation-friendly enterprise. Marketing and lobbying efforts falsely present fish farms as solutions to overfishing, yet the primary motive has always been profit. This gap between narrative

and reality contributes to public misunderstanding about the environmental impacts of aquaculture.

Impacts on Global Food Security

Aquaculture is frequently framed as a means of feeding a growing global population. Yet producing fish for human consumption is highly inefficient. Many of the most widely farmed and consumed species in high-income countries, such as salmon, are carnivorous and require feed derived from other fish or plant-based inputs. This means that producing one kilogram of edible fish can require multiple kilograms of feed. The inefficiency mirrors criticisms of terrestrial factory farms, where energy is lost at each step up the food chain, reducing the overall yield available for human consumption. Research has found that across multiple farmed aquatic species, only about 19 percent of the protein and 10 percent of the calories in feed inputs are ultimately retained for human consumption. While these retention rates are comparable to those of farmed terrestrial animals, they remain far lower than those of plant-based food systems, underscoring the inefficiency of feed-intensive animal production.

The diversion of resources from food-insecure regions in West Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, not to feed local populations but to serve as feed for high-value species exported to wealthier countries, has been described as a form of “food colonialism.”

By contrast, plant-based proteins offer a far more efficient, just, and sustainable way to feed the world. Reducing reliance on industrially farmed fish could lessen pressure on wild fish populations and make global food systems more equitable.

Fish Farming and Overconsumption

Rather than addressing hunger, industrial aquaculture has historically stimulated con-

sumption in wealthy markets. Since the 1960s, global per-capita consumption of aquatic animal foods has more than doubled, rising from about 9 kilograms per person in 1961 to more than 20 kilograms in 2022, increasing at nearly twice the rate of population growth, according to the FAO. This surge has been driven by marketing campaigns more than necessity, and has led to sea animal products, such as salmon and shrimp, being rebranded from luxuries to everyday staples.

By flooding the market with inexpensive farmed seafood, the industry has entrenched overconsumption. This demand, in turn, perpetuates pressure on wild fish to supply feed, creating a cycle that undermines both ecological sustainability and global food equity.

Effects on Small-Scale and Indigenous Communities

Industrial aquaculture often imposes severe environmental and social costs on small-scale and Indigenous fishing communities. Open-net salmon farms release waste, chemicals, and disease into shared waters, compromising the health of wild species and traditional fishing grounds.

In British Columbia, Canada, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has called for a “zero tolerance” approach to fish farms, citing threats to wild salmon and marine ecosystems. Similarly, a coalition of First Nations leaders in the province has repeatedly demanded the end of open-net salmon farming.

In Chile, the 2016 “red tide” crisis—a harmful algal bloom that devastated coastal fish populations—was exacerbated by the dumping of thousands of tons of dead salmon by aquaculture operations, which added nutrient loads to the water and intensified the die-offs.

Chile is the second-largest salmon producer in the world, and as the industry grows, it has

led to devastating environmental, social, and cultural impacts for the local and Indigenous communities whose lands have been polluted in the process. Dozens of divers have died working on salmoneras (salmon farming facilities), with a 2024 report by a United Nations special rapporteur stating that “salmoneras are ‘one of the main threats to the environment in Patagonia,’ warning that the large amounts of chemicals and pesticides they use are damaging the marine ecosystem, creating vast ‘dead zones’ in the Patagonian sea.”

The Indigenous communities have been fighting to protect their lands and have been facing an uphill battle to prevent further damage to their sacred spaces. “It is not just pollution: it is cultural interference, the destruction of memory that salmon companies are carrying out,” Leticia Caro, leader of a nomadic Kawésqar community, told Open Democracy.

Reducing demand for farmed fish can help protect coastal ecosystems while supporting the rights, livelihoods, and cultural traditions of these communities.

Climate and Environmental Impacts

Despite marketing as “climate-smart” proteins, many farmed fish emit greenhouse gases comparable to, or exceeding, those of pork and chicken. Life cycle assessments show that farmed salmon’s emissions profile is in a similar range as pork, depending on feed and production practices, while farmed shrimp ranks among the most greenhouse gas-intensive aquatic animal products due to energy use and inefficient feed conversion. The bulk of emissions comes from feed production, which for salmon accounts for around three-quarters of total emissions. Meanwhile, shrimp farming adds energy-intensive aeration and pumping, further increasing its carbon burden.

Animal aquaculture also contributes to the destruction of critical carbon sinks. Small

pelagic fish harvested for feed play a vital role in sequestering carbon in deep oceans. Soy production for fish feed drives deforestation of carbon-rich rainforests, and shrimp farming has been a leading cause of mangrove destruction, which can capture four times as much carbon per capita as the Amazon. These impacts reduce the planet’s capacity to store carbon and exacerbate climate change.

Structural Limitations and Design Flaws in Seafood Certification Systems

Eco-certifications and sustainability labels are widely used to market aquacultural products to consumers, but their governance structures raise fundamental questions about independence and accountability. Leading schemes have been developed in close partnership with industry trade associations, and standard-setting bodies generate revenue from certification activities.

This arrangement creates financial incentives to maintain standards that are acceptable to major producers. For example, major certification schemes allow the use of medically important antibiotics, place no limits on mortality, and permit open-net pens to discharge hazardous waste into the environment.

Enforcement is often limited, with many farms not being audited by a third party annually. Even audited farms fall short: a 2018 SeaChoice.org report found that only a small percentage of farms met the required standards, yet those that did not remained certified by the leading aquaculture certification body, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council. Meanwhile, the Outlaw Ocean Project found evidence that shrimp certified under Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) are associated with human rights abuses and the use of banned antibiotics. The Corporate Accountability Lab further documented forced labor, child labor, and unsafe working conditions at BAP-certified Indian shrimp processing facilities.

Certifications garner consumer trust while concealing the realities of industrial farming, effectively functioning as a reputational buffer for an industry facing significant environmental and social criticism.

Health and Welfare Concerns

Crowded conditions in industrial fish pens foster parasites, disease, and frequent mass die-offs. Antibiotics and chemical treatments are widely used to maintain production, with antimicrobial use in aquaculture projected to increase significantly and, in some analyses, expected to exceed other food-animal sectors in intensity per kilogram of output by 2030.

Many of these drugs are banned in marine animal products in the United States, yet regulators test only a small fraction of imports, allowing contaminated products to reach consumers. According to Food and Water Watch, “The FDA inspects only 2 percent of imported seafood; more than 5.3 billion pounds of seafood entered the U.S. food supply without even a cursory examination in 2015.”

Moreover, studies have found residues of prohibited antibiotics, such as nitrofurantoin, in shrimp sold in grocery stores. This widespread use—and limited oversight—contributes to the growing global threat of antimicrobial resistance.

Farmed marine animal products also pose direct risks to consumers. Shrimp has been linked to salmonella outbreaks, while listeria in smoked salmon has caused serious illness and deaths. Parasites such as sea lice can escape into wild populations, further threatening ecosystem health. While welfare reforms may improve conditions for farmed fish, they cannot address systemic problems like overconsumption, reliance on wild-caught feed, and environmental degradation.

Reducing Demand for Fish: An Upstream Approach

Sustainable alternatives in plant-based aquaculture include seaweed and kelp farming. These systems require no feed, freshwater, or antibiotics and can improve water quality, sequester carbon, and enhance biodiversity. By producing nutritious food without depleting wild fish stocks, plant-based aquaculture offers a scalable, ocean-friendly solution to aquatic animal products.

The most effective way to curb industrial aquaculture’s harms is to reduce overall sea animal consumption. Universities, corporations, and NGOs can play a pivotal role by adopting plant-forward menus, refusing to endorse weak certifications, and reducing the sale of fish and shrimp. These measures demonstrate leadership in climate and ocean protection, while also supporting global food equity.

Upstream interventions complement welfare improvements, helping to prevent billions of fish from being subjected to crowded, chemically intensive conditions in the first place.

Industrial fish farming is often marketed as a sustainable solution to overfishing and global hunger, yet it perpetuates ecological destruction, social inequities, and climate impacts. By addressing unsustainable fish consumption, supporting ecologically beneficial alternatives, holding the aquaculture industry and its certification systems accountable, and helping institutions shift toward more sustainable procurement, it is possible to chart a path toward a more resilient and equitable food system.

Protecting oceans, supporting local and Indigenous communities, and reducing reliance on aquatic animal products are essential steps to ensure a healthy planet for both humans and the diverse marine life that sustains it.

Three Tragedies, Three Alternatives

Vincent Emanuele

Recently, three events unfolded in the state of California: a foreclosure that led to the shooting death of a sheriff and the shooter; a Molotov cocktail was thrown at Sam Altman's house; and a disgruntled worker torched a Kimberly-Clark warehouse. In each case, a clear alternative existed if only people were organized. Instead, individuals took it upon themselves to lash out at a system that has ignored and discarded workers, and seeks to develop advanced technologies that create more alienation, destroy the environment, and potentially threaten the future of both the planet and the human species.

Indeed, the United States is infamous for cultivating violent loners. We showcase them in films such as *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Joker* (2019). Figures such as Luigi Mangione, the man convicted of assassinating UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, are celebrated on social media. Their images and messages are amplified by hordes of isolated and disempowered men. In the case of Mangione, "an Emerson College poll found that 41% of voters under 30 found the killing 'acceptable,' far more than any other age group." Another poll showed that roughly 50% of college students "believe the crime was justified."

While it's unsurprising that so many young people sympathize or even support violent acts against corporate CEOs, it also raises questions about the lack of imagination among the youth. The political horizon for so many young (and old) Americans is quite low. These days, it's difficult to find people who genuinely believe the system can change to benefit humanity as a whole and the planet. As a result, nihilistic and reactionary acts of violence become the only response to overwhelming economic inequality and a sense that those in power have sold our collective future to the highest bidder.

Those feelings, no doubt, are understandable. I read each of the three stories mentioned above

with great care and interest. In one sense, you could make the argument that at least some people haven't completely surrendered to the system that exploits and abuses them. Instead of going home and binge-watching Netflix, those three individuals took it upon themselves to lash out at a system that doesn't care about them. But in doing so, they also reveal the extreme isolation and disempowerment felt by millions of Americans. They put their fellow workers at risk. And make nonviolent actions against those same entities far more dangerous and difficult.

Workplace Organizing Instead of Arson

Chamel Abdulkarim, the 29-year-old who set fire to a 1.2 million square foot warehouse in Ontario, California, specifically cited Luigi Mangione as an inspiration. According to the U.S. attorney in charge of the case, Abdulkarim sent a text to a fellow coworker following the arson that read, "All you had to do was pay us enough to live. Pay us more of the value WE bring. Not corporate. Didn't see the shareholders picking up a shift." Abdulkarim faces up to 20 years in prison for his actions. His life is ruined. If he gets the maximum possible sentence, he'll exit prison as a 49-year-old.

As a result of Abdulkarim's actions, Kimberly-Clark's policies have not changed. The corporation will not radically alter its relationship with the workers who toil in its manufacturing or storage facilities. In fact, one can assume that Kimberly-Clark will implement additional security measures to monitor workers and their actions on the shop floor. Dozens of Abdulkarim's fellow workers are now unemployed. The corporate bosses won't face any consequences, but Abdulkarim's coworkers' families will suffer as a result of the fire. And all of this at a time when the global economy is on the verge of a major recession.

Instead of setting fire to the warehouse, Abdulkarim, rightly incensed by the horrors and alienation of capitalism, could've undertaken the difficult but more worthwhile process of organizing a union at his warehouse. A challenging and long-term project, no doubt, unionization efforts provide an opportunity to connect with fellow workers, develop social bonds, build solidarity, and provide mutual aid to struggling comrades unable to make ends meet. Destruction is easy. Building powerful political organizations, however, is a tedious project.

Community Organizing to Protect Our Neighbors Instead of Shooting Sheriffs

On Thursday, April 9th, David Morales opened fire on the Tulare County Sheriff's Department during a foreclosure procedure. Consequently, Detective Randy Hoppert, 35 years old, was shot and killed. Morales also died after being run over by a BearCat armored vehicle employed by the sheriff's department. Two lives ruined. Home turned over the bank. According to reports, Morales has endured decades of financial troubles, including previous foreclosures and bankruptcy filings. He had no previous criminal record, and little is known about his political affiliations or motivations.

As General Corman said to Captain Willard in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), "Every man has got a breaking point. You and I have." Obviously, Morales had reached his. Unlike the context surrounding Abdulkarim, the situation with Morales is more complex. There's no clear answer for what he, as an individual, could've done that would've prevented the catastrophe that played out that Thursday morning in Porterville, California. The foreclosure crisis that exploded into the Great Financial Crisis of 2008 still simmers below the surface. Millions of Americans are one paycheck or personal tragedy away from defaulting on their mortgage, losing their vehicle, or falling into financial disrepair.

Morales not only destroyed his life, but he also destroyed the life of Detective Randy Hoppert, whose family, friends, and neighbors will mourn

his death for years to come, including his wife, who is currently four months pregnant. Hoppert's child will grow up without its biological father, whom it'll never see, smell, touch, hug, or kiss. A human calamity of epic proportions. And for what? The mortgage companies and banks won't change their foreclosure policies. The police will continue to do their job as directed by the law and their superiors. If anything, the police will start arriving at such events even more armed, more prepared for violence. It gives the state a reason to further militarize. It hardens attitudes.

Instead of shooting it out with the police, Morales' home could've been saved by an organized, disciplined, and committed community political organization capable of blocking foreclosures. Since the 2008 crisis, I've long thought about the potential actions citizens could take in response to various financial punishments: repossessed cars, foreclosed homes, student loan debt, etc. In each case, there is no viable option for combatting corporate greed individually.

Collectively, on the other hand, people have tremendous power. Imagine for a moment if Morales' neighbors, friends, and family surrounded his house in the hundreds or thousands, blocking the sheriff's department from taking action. Imagine Americans organized to such a degree that housing becomes a human right provided by a democratic state willing and capable of providing such housing. Those are the sort of alternatives to the status quo that we should encourage. The fact that such proposals seem far-fetched isn't an indictment of the ideas themselves, but a testament to the lack of imagination and alienation Americans feel so deeply.

Stopping AI Technology & Imagining Alternatives Instead of Attempted Murder

The day after the tragedy in Porterville, 20-year-old Daniel Moreno-Gama "approached the gate of OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's house in San Francisco and hurled a Molotov cocktail at the building before fleeing. Eventually, Daniel Moreno-Gama "was arrested less than two hours later while al-



legedly attempting to break into the headquarters of OpenAI with a jug of kerosene, a lighter, and an anti-AI manifesto.” Charged with attempted arson and attempted murder, Moreno-Gama faces life imprisonment if convicted. His parents suggested to authorities that their son had recently endured a mental health crisis.

Leaving aside a discussion about mental health (lack of resources, a for-profit healthcare system, and so on), it’s unsurprising that Moreno-Gama is rather young. If any segment of the American population faces the possibly catastrophic consequences of unleashing an unregulated form of technology that poses a grave threat to both human beings and the planet, it’s the younger generations. They will live with the repercussions of whatever decisions

the state either makes or doesn’t make in light of rapidly developing AI tech.

Moreno-Gama’s acts aren’t surprising. In fact, what’s more surprising is that such events aren’t taking place on a regular basis. Back in 2023, “a group of industry leaders warned.... that the artificial intelligence technology they were building might one day pose an existential threat to humanity and should be considered a societal risk on a par with pandemics and nuclear wars.” For my generation, who grew up watching movies such as *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1992), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Minority Report* (2002), and *Ex Machina* (2014), the message conveyed in those movies was crystal clear: kill the people responsible for developing such technology or eventually go to war with said technology. Either

way, violence is the answer. Perhaps it is, but not in our current context.

Each of those films portrays individual acts of violence, or small groups of violent actors taking on the tech companies, individual CEOs, or the robots themselves. There is no sense of collective action. There is no sense of revolutionary violence. And that's not to say such violence is ideal or productive, but it would be much better than the individualized violence glamorized in such movies. Even worse, there's absolutely no sense of collective action against the AI companies, their CEOs, or the governments that allowed those corporations to run amok and take over society. Today, our culture reflects the narratives displayed in those films.

Alternative visions for how we might collectively reconstruct or fundamentally change society for the benefit of human beings and the planet are severely lacking. Political writers fail to articulate creative alternatives, as do filmmakers, fiction writers, musicians, and artists. Perhaps this lack of vision is a reflection of the overwhelming sense of dread and despair Americans feel deep within our bones. Can we really change the world? Is it even possible to overthrow the existing system? Those are reasonable questions political activists ask themselves all of the time. Non-politicized Americans also consider those questions when determining whether it's worth their time to get involved in political efforts.

Instead of (understandably) disgruntled individuals tossing Molotov Cocktails at the homes of tech CEOs, what sort of political movement would it take to immediately stop the development of AI technology? What sort of decentralized and centralized mechanisms could Americans employ to halt the progress of environmentally destructive and dehumanizing forms of technology? How could we use culture — films, literature, poetry, music, religion — to undermine the very notion of incessant technological progress? After all, Americans didn't ask for or vote for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok to become ubiquitous parts of our daily lives.

Collective Action or Individual Misery

Much like 9/11, we don't have to justify acts of terror to better understand why they happen or the material, historical, social, and psychological conditions that make such acts of horrific violence essentially inevitable. We can and should recognize the overwhelming anger permeating American society. Hell, I'm angry. I've maintained, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on current events), a certain level of anger since returning home from Iraq. Many of my fellow veterans have turned to drugs and alcohol, exploded in violent homicidal rage, or taken their own lives as a result of the disconnect and moral injury suffered in the wake of fighting an illegal and illegitimate war.

Part of what's kept me grounded is a solid family structure, lifelong friends, community connections, and, of course, political activism. Those entities and projects have provided a sort of relief valve. Today's society provides individuals with countless destructive avenues and unhealthy rabbit holes to dive down. Hyper-alienation plagues our society. Algorithms keep people sheltered and surrounded by intense echo-chambers of equally isolated and disempowered individuals who can justify any number of reactionary acts of violence. The internet is chock-full of apps, websites, and chatrooms dedicated to reinforcing the very worst elements of human nature.

In the end, there is no easy way out of our collective predicament. But any potential avenue to a better world won't come through individual acts of violence, however banal or spectacular they may be. Rebuilding social bonds, developing and valuing solidarity, assembling powerful, radical political organizations capable of effecting fundamental change, and fighting back creatively and militantly against the elites and institutions that are making our lives miserable and wrecking the planet remain our only hope. It's a rough road ahead, but it's a fight worth undertaking.

The Feminization of Poverty: A Socialist Feminist Perspective

Bayan Saleh

When we speak of poverty in political or academic discourse, we often tend to treat it as a neutral phenomenon, as though it falls upon everyone equally and in the same way. Yet a critical class-based lens exposes the falsity of this supposed neutrality, affirming that poverty is not distributed evenly, and that women bear its burden in a more acute and enduring way.

This is precisely where the concept of the feminization of poverty comes in, not merely as a statistical description, but as a critical analytical tool that reveals the structural relationship between the capitalist economic system and gender relations, and the multiple forms of exclusion and marginalization that arise from both.

The concept emerged in the 1970s to describe the ongoing rise in poverty rates among women, particularly as the number of women bearing sole responsibility for supporting their families grew. Since then, it has become clear that poverty is neutral neither in terms of gender nor in terms of class, and that it is tied to power structures that determine who holds resources and who is denied them.

The latest data from UN Women indicate that 9.2% of women and girls live in extreme poverty, compared to 8.6% of men and boys, with the gap worsening in the 25 to 34 age group, where women are 25% more likely to live in extreme poverty. World Bank reports show that the global gender wage gap stands at 23%, rising to 47.9% in regions of the Global South such as South Asia. These figures confirm that poverty is not gender-neutral, yet numbers alone are insufficient for understanding what is happening, as they describe symptoms without digging into the roots.

When Exploitation Is Twofold

The feminization of poverty cannot be explained by focusing solely on the wage gap; it must be understood within the framework of a deeper economic structure that systematically reproduces gender inequality. Capitalism does not merely produce class disparity, it also reproduces gender disparity through the organization and division of labor in ways that serve the interests of capital above all else.

This is what Clara Zetkin saw with clarity when she argued that the working woman faces a two-fold exploitation, neither dimension of which can be understood without the other: she is exploited as a worker paid less than a man in the labor market, and she is exploited within the family through unpaid domestic labor that guarantees the reproduction of the workforce without costing capital a single penny. Anuradha Ghandy reaffirmed this analysis, noting that this dual exploitation takes even sharper forms in Global South contexts, where class, caste, and gender intersect in a single system of domination.

One of the most important manifestations of this system is the separation between economically recognized productive labor and the unpaid labor necessary for the continuation of life. The domestic and care work performed by women forms the foundation for social reproduction, yet it receives no economic recognition, which diminishes its value and excludes women from economic independence. When socialist feminism demands recognition of this labor and its transformation into a collective responsibility, through public nurseries, care facilities, and social services, it is not calling for a partial reform. It is calling for a fundamental



reorganization of the relationship between production and social reproduction at the heart of the economic system.

At the same time, women are integrated into the labor market in an unequal manner, concentrated in low-wage, precarious sectors with little stability or protection. Rather than becoming a vehicle for economic liberation, paid work frequently becomes an extension of dependency, particularly in the context of persistent wage discrimination and limited professional advancement. This situation is compounded by the double burden women carry as a result of combining paid labor with unpaid domestic work, without any fair redistribution of roles. This duality is neither a biological fate nor a culturally neutral inheritance; it is the product of a class-based economic system that needs to keep women in the position of the flexible worker who can be pushed to the margins when the market demands it, then recalled when cheap labor is needed.

Crises and Austerity: When Women Pay for Crises They Did Not Create

What makes the picture more complex is that economic crises, conflicts, and climate change deepen

the feminization of poverty, with women disproportionately affected by these shifts, particularly in the most fragile societies. In a global context where economic exploitation intersects with historical forms of domination, women across vast regions of the world become more exposed to the harshest forms of poverty and marginalization.

Yet the issue does not stop at exceptional crises. The austerity policies imposed by international financial institutions on Global South countries over decades represent a glaring example of the feminization of poverty as a deliberate political decision. When public services such as education, health, and welfare are cut back, they do not disappear. Instead, their burden shifts onto women, who compensate with their bodies and time for what neoliberal policy has stripped from state budgets. Austerity, in this sense, is not a neutral policy; it is a gendered policy whose costs women pay first and most heavily.

The struggle against austerity policies and the struggle for women's rights cannot be separated. The woman who loses access to public education when schools are privatized, the woman forced to leave work when public nurseries close, the

woman who bears the care of the sick when health budgets are slashed; all of them pay the price of economic decisions made in international institutions that are neither elected nor held accountable. For this reason, confronting the feminization of poverty is inseparable from confronting the global capitalist economic system that produces and reproduces it.

This gap is equally visible in the realm of employment, where women's participation in the labor market is lower than men's, and where a large proportion of working women are in precarious, low-wage jobs with limited protection. Women suffer to a greater degree from food insecurity and the absence of social protection systems, a reality that deepens their economic vulnerability and makes any external shock more capable of pushing them below the threshold of subsistence.

From Diagnosis to Change: Toward Radical Policies, Not Superficial Ones

What makes this phenomenon particularly dangerous is that it is not confined to individual suffering; its effects extend to household welfare, contribute to the intergenerational reproduction of poverty, and constrain development potential by marginalizing women's roles and excluding their economic and social contributions. The feminization of poverty thus becomes an expression of a structural dysfunction requiring radical treatment, not partial solutions that soothe symptoms without touching the roots.

This is where the divide between the class perspective of socialist feminism and liberal reformist feminism becomes apparent. Liberal currents limit themselves to demanding women's empowerment within the existing system without challenging its structure, focusing on individual empowerment through education, training, and access to microfinance. The socialist feminist perspective, by contrast, holds that these tools are insufficient unless accompanied by fundamental change in relations of production, property, and power. The woman who obtains a small

loan in a society that excludes her from education, burdens her with unpaid domestic work, and subjects her to precarious labor laws remains a prisoner of the same structure, even if her situation improves marginally.

Confronting this phenomenon demands policies grounded in both gender equality and the elimination of class exploitation together. This includes achieving wage equality, guaranteeing women's legal rights at work, broadening social protection to cover the most vulnerable groups, and investing in education and training to economically empower women. It also requires recognition of the economic value of care work, the provision of public services that reduce its burden, and a redistribution of roles within the family and society that allows for more equitable participation in both paid and unpaid labor.

Yet these measures, however necessary, remain insufficient unless they bring about a change in the nature of property relations that structurally make women's labor cheaper, more precarious, and less protected. Full recognition of care work does not mean merely including it in GDP calculations; it means transforming it into a collective responsibility borne by the state and society, not by women alone. And achieving wage equality does not mean only raising the minimum wage; it means dismantling the class hierarchy in the labor market that makes women, particularly those from the lower classes, the most vulnerable in every crisis.

Ultimately, eliminating the feminization of poverty cannot be separated from a critique of the capitalist economic structure that produces it. The issue is not merely about improving living conditions; it is about a fundamental reconsideration of how labor is organized and how resources and power are distributed within society. As long as women bear the burden of reproducing life without recognition, without wages, and without protection, any talk of equality remains a discourse suspended in the air, never touching the ground on which millions of women stand every day.

Big Scale But Plausible Activist Education

Michael Albert

We activists much less radicals much less revolutionaries face many difficulties. I don't mean the pain and suffering imposed by grotesque social institutions all around us. I do mean the repression we encounter, either. I mean, when we face all that, when we seek to end all that, the difficult conditions within us that obstruct our progress.

I have in mind, for example, our insufficient visionary and strategic, insights. Our relative lack of sincere mutual connections and trust. And our limited practice of needed skills as well. Plus our insufficient confidence and initiative. All these deficits are hopeful in one sense. they mean we can do better.

Consider the following quotations:

Steven Biko told us, "The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." Emma Goldman reported that, "The most violent element in society is ignorance." Mark Twain had his own sarcastic version of the same message, "In the first place, God made idiots. That was for practice. Then he made school boards."

One could multiply such comments without limit. And we would all smile and nod. Indeed, I doubt that there is a single soul who seeks to help create a better world who would deny the desirability of consciousness raising, especially at a time when schools and media so aggressively smother creative aspirations.

What? Schools smother thought? You bet they do. Schools exist to prepare people for their societal futures. So far, that seems not so bad. After all, we do need to be prepared, don't we? But for what future?

Some at school become prepared to rule, to make decisions, to become the masters of the universe. Others at school become prepared to follow instructions, to take orders, to keep our heads down, to obey.

The former group are imbued with the ridiculously false notion that they are superior. The latter group are imprinted with the imposed condition of being subordinate.

The former future masters become confident. The latter future subordinates become reticent. Neither group is supposed to think too creatively, too outside the box about their own situations or about anyone else's.

Schools prepare us to enforce continuity and obedience. Whether we are destined, read channelled, to ourselves be above or below. Whether destined to ride in the saddle or be ridden by those in the saddle we learn our place.

To be on top we learn to be callous or better oblivious toward others' pain. To be on top we learn to be atomized and compete. We are imbued to believe that what now is, is what will always be. Except, of course, for something new, shiny, and really profitable for the few.

Education to prepare us to slot neatly into our societies is tightly constrained as to means and methods. Yet, I think we who want a better world take as a given that to reach a better world we need lots of learning.

We would agree, for example, that people who are first encountering new topics and first becoming

adept at understanding them need lots of learning. That people pretty familiar with some areas, but becoming increasingly so, or people diversifying their awareness, need lots of learning. More, that the learning we all need needs to transcend merely imbibing information, merely memorizing what we are fed. We would agree that we additionally require comprehension, skill at utilizing insights, means to evaluate options, and talent at communicating desires. And we also know it wouldn't hurt at all, indeed it would only be beneficial, if somehow those in tightly restrictive schools that teach most attendees overwhelmingly how to endure boredom and how take orders (or at elite levels how to manifest elite prerogatives and ignore the pain of others) had a path to see more clearly than the blurry images their teachers impose.

Consider the social forces that seek major changes in the U.S., my home country, and also around the world. How might these forces, both individuals and organizations, better pursue increased awareness and creativity for those we solicit and for ourselves as well?

Truth be told, can we really deny it, we pursue greater consciousness and skill not very effectively. In fact, often, we pursue these essentially not at all.

Schools and really all social institutions and habits spit out wanna-be owners and (what I call) coordinators who are largely blind to freedom and dignity for anyone but themselves and spit out exhausted stifled workers who expect little from life and are prepared to endure it.

So, what do we do about all this? One thing we might do is to seek improvements in existing mainstream education. To do that has great merit, but I suspect we can agree that the deep rooted problems of all existing mainstream education systems make it quite difficult though we can nonetheless certainly imagine teachers and parents, not to mention students, giving it a go. They could reject disempowering methods and curriculums. They could think creatively about what ought to happen in classrooms during the day, and for that

matter in schools after the school day ends and at night, under the auspices of local communities.

Okay, but do we have another way to accelerate consciousness raising? We can read, write, study, give talks, and, while more difficult, we could even hold face-to-face educational gatherings. Nowadays we have proliferating online forums by three or four people, with lots of audience who are home in their rooms, seated at their desks. That is better than nothing. It can even be done creatively, though let's be honest, it often isn't. Those kinds of knowledge pursuit are to real, collective, engaged learning a little like a tweet or a quick video is to a serious text or movie, I suppose.

At any rate, however good or not so good what we now have may be, what about adding to the mix sustained schools of our own? What about having lasting institutions which persistently facilitate individual and collective consciousness raising? Can we have schools in that enlightened sense entirely under our own purview? Schools that actively engage their participants? Schools that powerfully empower all who attend? Can we have that within our reach? Online, but also even brick and mortar face to face schools for consciousness raising and not system reproduction?

I bet everyone who wants a better would agree that to have that would be wonderful. But then we would likely add that it would involve huge costs that most social change projects can't muster.

Demands by teachers and communities can move toward all that, sure, and they should. But even now, not yet able to enact what is optimal, couldn't we exploit technological connectivity to create a relatively inexpensive online project able to at least somewhat accomplish the same aim?

One possibility would be to have online schools, sponsored by various organizations, in the same way that many universities sponsor online learning – but with a social change oriented curriculum of available courses and a priority to address social change and facilitate cross constituency connectivity.



Z Communications, some years back, embarked on just that path, calling the project, ZSchool. Students were able to sign up and take courses that faculty seekers-of-a-better-world designed and hosted. That experiment had 8 week sessions, and then a month off, and then another 8 week session, and so on. For the first session, with no financial backing, it had 14 courses in place. For the second it had over 20. And the hope was ZSchool could grow from there, pending interest from potential students – which in this case mainly meant, interest from Z’s audience.

Well, okay, it was a good experiment. It was a good try at creating a consciousness raising institution whose merit we could assess in action. But, what if, as indicated above, our real goal is much larger, how might we expand on this idea? What if, as one approach, we were to think of such an online school as just one component of something much larger?

How about if we were to imagine other components hosted by various other media outfits, political parties, unions, organizations, or movements? Suppose each participating organizational host sponsored a school populated by faculty and students from their organizational ranks and related constituencies. And then suppose also that all the hosts together collectively promoted the entire online school, and all its courses, the sum of all the hosted schools, to each of their full audiences.

For example, suppose ten or twenty or more organizations worked cooperatively to do that – some of them very large, some more modest in size. They generate a big, encompassing entity and within the whole there are lots of components each of which is organized by a particular host organization. Sort of like departments in a college.

If so, there could easily be 100 or more courses offered per session. All students would be able to

sign up for any course. The entire world of progressive, radical, and revolutionary audiences would likely hear about such a composite school from their respective host organizations as well as from other organizations not yet hosting a school, but nonetheless supporting the project and directing people to it.

What's more, students would not only take particular courses of their own choosing from one or more components of the whole, they would also be part of an entire "student body" that would span all the hosted components, and thus all those constituencies could share their experiences.

Think of the benefits this type of cross fertilizations could have not only on consciousness raising within each course but on developing trust and shared understanding across the involved constituencies inside particular countries and even from country to country.

The per student cost of courses to provide means to people for teaching and maintenance would steadily drop due to economies of scale, even while host organizations and faculty did well enough to help finance their own activism better than in the past – all this on top of spreading ideas and skills.

One could even imagine the overarching whole entity periodically hosting live face to face events in particular regions.

Before you tell me, sure, nice dream, but it is too big, it would involve too much trust, it would have too many moving parts – consider, are we seriously talking about creating new societies? If we are, how can this type project be ruled out as too big or too complex? Okay, so why not imagine it as a prelude to planning for it and implementing it?

Suppose we look down the road and see at some future point that there are 10,000 students and ex-students, or even 100,000, or more. With a wide array of host organizations involved, such numbers are not fanciful and may even wind up,

in time quite conservative. After all, Mamdani's campaign, just in NYC, had 100,000 volunteers.

And not only would there be the benefits of direct learning and sharing for all those students individually due to their participation in one or likely more than one component school, and from one to another in the classes they would all take, but the whole 100,000 or more could become socially entwined – and networked – in a manner that would transcend the far more limited dynamics of the usual forms of social networking.

Would this type of overarching school with many hosted components associated with numerous organizations be hard to build? Yes, sure it would, but not, I think, for the usual reasons. The technology is easily to hand. Years ago, Z Communications, all alone, and relatively small, created ZSchool and other projects did similar things in their own ways as well. And it would be technically easy to entwine component schools, each autonomous but all mutually aiding one another.

In fact, once the template for a component school was in place, it would be rather simple for additional media operations, political organizations, political parties, unions, etc. to add their own efforts, with each of those other organizations having to do only the most minor labors, besides promoting courses to their constituencies.

The technology is simply not a problem. Indeed, maintenance would not be a problem. And to judge by the ease with which we signed up a first group faculty years back to initiate the Z version of such a project, faculty wouldn't be a problem, either. Costs would be manageable and in fact generate surplus to go to the hosting organizations for their own activist efforts. There are more than enough highly informed and creative people to have a surfeit of wonderful courses, though I think there would be a learning curve to having courses well matched to activist needs and well able to promote confidence and creativity among their students. So why do I and I bet most of you reading this still suspect that creating this type radical

cross constituency school would be hard?

Because it would require commitment, which in turn would require what we might call anti-skepticism. It would need initiative. Potential students, potential faculty, and most especially potential host organizations, would all have to be willing to dare to make it happen, to share with others involved, the opposite of atomized relations, and to do all this in the face of uncertainty that enough others would as well. The disinclination to risk a large collective effort, or even any collective effort at all, would be a formidable obstacle.

I bet you can imagine naysayers aggressively urging that “you can’t work together. You have nothing worth teaching, sharing, working on together much less with people who have different main priorities.” The main impediment, dare I suggest it, would be a fear of working together – and even a fear of success – much less of failure. A fear that others wouldn’t deliver.

We have all seen those factors scuttle many a good idea, many a powerful potential. Yet even so, this particular possibility, while it is big time is also quite straightforward.

We do certainly need consciousness raising of multitudinous sorts. Partly for ourselves, progressives. And then of course, for everyone who has gone through mainstream education and come out stunted rather than liberated.

And we do certainly need intercommunication among diverse constituencies from many different organizations and many different places.

So we do need lasting structures for consciousness raising and assessing, and we need material benefits for diverse organizations and for social change activism writ large.

An obvious question arises: Why not make it so? We had that thought in mind, years back, when a bunch of us worked very hard on ZSchool. We hoped that when others took a look at that first

component, not only would some who did so be interested in taking one course or another that was already offered, but, even more so, some organizations with substantial constituencies would be interested in hooking up with this effort so as to have their own school, gain their own income stream, benefit their own constituency, help the overall prospects of activist consciousness raising, and perhaps most exemplary, so as to work together across constituencies and agendas developing trust and shared methods and aims.

Imagine doing it all even also for existing current students addressing topics they have mainstream courses in, but doing so with uplifting curricula augmenting, challenging and correcting, the decrepit limitations and lies of their mainstream lessons.

Our more modest experiment worked but it didn’t spread. What happened instead was massive growth of mainstream social media which on top of steadily worsening mainstream education – and this was even well before Trump, much less now – facilitated some possibilities but largely demolished tight collective ties, shrunk attention spans, and attenuated time given to reading much less to seriously examining and discussing until commercialized social media merely replicated compulsive, largely conformist, atomized resignation.

So can we make better happen? Can we provide education that conveys hope and confidence? Education that empowers all involved? Education based on and that produces mutual aid and critical thinking?

Why not? There is no law of nature, not even a constraint of technical difficulty blocking our way. Indeed isn’t the biggest obstacle externally imposed doubts we could throw off?

So, will we make real extensive empowering consciousness raising possible? That is always the question for any new project proposal. Will we or won’t we?

Revolutionary Social Change That Lasts

Ted Glick

I believe, I really do believe, that it is (still) possible that this world can be turned upside down, in the way Jesus of Nazareth meant in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, among other things, in Luke 20-21: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. . . Woe to you who are rich. . . for you will mourn and weep.”

Why do I believe this?

My reading of history, in all its positive and negative aspects, inclines me toward feeling hopeful, just as I am fully aware that we have many rivers to cross and mountains to climb and descend until human society becomes, worldwide, finally, what it can become.

Orban in Hungary being defeated is hopeful. The changes brought about in US society because of the Black Freedom movement of the 50s, 60s and beyond make me hopeful. The changes brought about by the women’s movement in so many ways in so many places in the world make me hopeful. The MAGA Republicans being overwhelmingly defeated in various local and state and special elections all over the country since Trump was elected in 2024: this is very important for us to remember and internalize.

I am encouraged when I read in the April, 2026 issue of Scientific American an article based on research entitled, “The Kids Are All Right,” that “youth are more empathetic and less narcissistic than in the past, as well as more open-minded and inclusive. Drug use is down, youth violence has dropped and teen pregnancies have declined. IQs have gone up, and kids exhibit more self-restraint and patience than they did 50 years ago.” And then there are youth organizations like the Sunrise Movement which have shown real stay-

ing power and organizing ability over the last 10 years.

There are the tens of millions of people of all colors and cultures in thousands of localities who took to the streets in 2020 after George Floyd was murdered by local police in Minneapolis. There are the successive wave of nationally coordinated actions of resistance to Trumpfascism beginning the day before he took office and continuing ever since up to the latest No Kings action on March 28, with over 8 million people coming out in 3300 localities.

But the ultimate reason why I believe that we have a fighting chance to truly bring into being a very different, much more just and democratic world is the fact that, for the first time ever, our earth, this wonderful third planet from this solar system’s sun, is facing a common enemy that can only be defeated by our peoples joining together: the worldwide climate crisis, caused primarily by the coal, oil and gas industries and their blind supporters in government, like Trump.

Most people get it on the existential seriousness of this crisis. According to a public opinion survey conducted in 2024: *“Four out of five people around the world (80 percent) want more climate action from their country. They also seek global unity in responding to the crisis, with 86 percent agreeing that their countries should set aside geopolitical differences, such as those regarding trade and security, and work together on climate change. There is a clear expectation that governments need to lead and strengthen their commitments to address climate change, with a resounding 89 percent of people wanting to see more climate action from their governments.”*

These opinions, combined with the many positive reasons to get off fossil fuels and onto renew-



ables—like saving money, reducing air, water and land pollution, job creation—have been translating into worldwide action for many years. Here’s what the International Energy Agency reports:

“Global energy investment in 2025 is set to reach a record \$3.3 trillion, with over \$2.2 trillion directed toward clean energy—including renewables, grids, storage, and efficiency—which is double the \$1.1 trillion invested in fossil fuels. Solar photovoltaics (PV) lead all energy sources in investment, while total energy transition investment reached a record \$2.3 trillion.”

And check this out, from an AI Overview: *“The 2026 war in the Middle East, leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, has severely disrupted global energy markets and catalyzed an urgent shift to renewable energy, transforming energy security into a, if not the, top policy priority. With nearly 20 million barrels of oil stalled daily, countries are moving beyond short-term energy rationing to accelerate long-term investments in*

solar, wind, and battery storage to gain independence from volatile chokepoints.”

Would a successful “urgent shift to renewable energy” mean that the USA and the world have become the much more just and democratic societies that we can become? No, it would not, but such a successful energy revolution, taking place in major part because of the demand of masses of people from below, will empower all of us, literally allow us to breathe better. It should stimulate a continuation of other world-changing actions to eliminate hunger, reverse the destruction of animal and plant species, provide adequate homes and worthwhile jobs, free and good healthcare for all and so many other positive things. A huge weight will be lifted from us, the weight of so many of us afraid to have children or afraid for the world our children and grandchildren and the seven generations after us will inherit.

I really do believe all of this is possible. I believe that we can win.

Progressive NGOs Will Enable Trump: A Warning — And A Way Out

Jim Driscoll

For over forty years, I have worked inside what critics call the “NGO-industrial complex.” In 1982, as a Vietnam combat veteran, I quit teaching organizational psychology at MIT’s Sloan School of Management to work full-time for peace and justice. Since then, I have helped lead and build social change efforts across the country.

That experience has made me a critic of the NGO model—not because NGOs are useless, but because of how they are structured.

After World War II, social movements increasingly adopted the corporate form: hierarchical organizations led by executive directors, dependent on professional staff, governed by boards often populated by wealthy donors and their allies. These organizations require large budgets and rely heavily on foundation funding. That dependence shapes behavior.

Anyone who has served in leadership in such organizations knows the reality: the first question each morning is often not “How do we advance the mission?” but “How do we make payroll?”

The result is predictable: caution, conservatism, and risk aversion. Protect the 501(c)(3) status. Avoid legal exposure. Maintain relationships with elected officials and the media. Above all, keep funders comfortable.

This dynamic has been widely recognized. Activists, initially women of color in “Incite,” coined the term “NGO-industrial complex.” Scholars like Harvard’s Theda Skocpol have analyzed how large climate change organizations drifted toward caution. Over a century ago, Robert Michels

described the same tendency as the “iron law of oligarchy”: organizations, even those committed to radical change, tend to become dominated by professional leadership with a stake in stability.

So what does this have to do with Trump?

Research and historical experience are clear: the only reliable way to stop an authoritarian like Trump from consolidating power is large-scale, sustained, nonviolent noncooperation—mass disruption that imposes real economic and political costs on those in power and their backers.

To their credit, a broad coalition of NGOs and unions is now calling for escalating actions, potentially culminating in national shutdowns. On paper, this is exactly what is needed.

But here is the problem: I have watched, repeatedly, as these same organizations retreat at the decisive moment.

In the 1980s, the nuclear disarmament movement mobilized millions. When grassroots activists escalated to civil disobedience at the Nevada Test Site, the national organizations withdrew support, citing legal and political concerns. We continued anyway. Thirteen thousand people were arrested, and that campaign helped force an end to U.S. underground nuclear testing—the only clear policy victory of that movement.

In 2020, a coalition of organizers prepared for mass disruption if Trump attempted to overturn the election. When he did, the NGOs chose not to mobilize. They trusted the legal process. That time, we were fortunate. It worked.



Photo: EF5

We cannot assume that outcome again. Remember 2000 when the movement relied on the legal process while the Republicans stole the election with the “Brooks Brothers riot.”

The pattern is not accidental. It is structural. When confronted with real risk, large organizations tend to hesitate, compromise, and delay. They are embedded in systems—legal, financial, political—that reward caution.

If Trump moves to cancel or subvert the upcoming elections, we should expect more of the same.

The question, then, is not whether people will resist. It is whether that resistance will be organized enough—and independent enough—to matter.

The answer, as always, lies in the grassroots.

Across the country, local networks are already forming: organizers training for nonviolent action, communities confronting ICE, groups moving into the streets, from protest to disruption. These are the people who do not hesitate.

What is missing is national coordination.

To meet that need, some of us are organizing a National Noncooperation Spokes Council—a horizontal, grassroots network capable of planning and coordinating mass action independent of large NGOs.

This model has a long history. From the Spanish Civil War to the Clamshell Alliance, from the Pledge of Resistance in the 1980s to the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999, movements have used decentralized, democratic structures to coordinate large-scale disruption.

The key principle is simple: decisions are made from the bottom up. Local groups send representatives (“spokes”) to a council. Those representatives do not act on personal authority. They return to their groups, consult, and carry back decisions. Power remains rooted in the base.

This structure avoids the central weakness of large NGOs: decisions are not filtered through institutional risk calculations or funder concerns. They reflect the will of people prepared to act.

If and when a national crisis comes, we will not rely solely on executive directors weighing legal risk and donor reactions. We will rely on thousands of organized people deciding, together, whether to act—and how.

I am writing this while traveling, trying to raise the initial resources needed to build this network before the next election cycle reaches its peak in the fall.

If we succeed, by the time you read this, you may hear from a National Noncooperation Spokes Council asking a simple question:

If Trump tries to steal the election, should we shut it down?

Unlike the NGOs, I think we know your answer.

Death by a Thousand Cuts: The MAGA Supreme Court Destroys the Voting Right Act

Bill Fletcher Jr.

The US Supreme Court's decision in *Louisiana v. Chavis* is the latest and probably most decisive blow to the Voting Rights Act since the attacks went full force in the aftermath of the election of President Obama. The attacks, well-orchestrated and following a path that had been advanced by the Redeemer (white supremacist) movement of the 19th century, has worked to use the words of the Constitution and Voting Rights Act as a way to destroy the intent behind the Voting Rights Act.

The *Louisiana v. Chavis* decision revolves around a Congressional district that was created in Louisiana to address the need for Black political power in the state. Continuous efforts by racist Republicans have aimed to eliminate Black political power and cripple the Democrats. The Court decided that too much attention had been paid to race in the creation of this district. The clear intent of this decision is to eliminate race as a category to which attention should be paid in the creation of Congressional districts.

Let's be clear about a few things. First, this matter of "race." "Race" is not a descriptive term, contrary to the interpretation that is continually offered by Justice Roberts. It is about history. The history of this country has involved the oppression and marginalization, if not outright suppression of political representation and power for particular populations, most especially African Americans, Chicanos/Mexican Americans, Native Americans, (pre-1965) Asians, and Puerto Ricans. Continuous efforts have been undertaken by forces on the Right to disenfranchise these populations, but rarely in the name of "race." In fact, if one looks at the 19th and early 20th centuries, supposedly race neutral language was frequently used in order to suppress communities of color.

In today's situation, Justice Roberts, et.al. would have use believe that racist marginalization is no longer a significant problem and, therefore, attention to "race" in the construction of Congressional districts is somehow inappropriate. This is a classic example of how the Right wishes us to ignore history and pretend as if we can all march off into the future holding hands and sing "We HAVE overcome."

Second, the destruction of the Voting Rights Act is part and parcel of an effort to further destroy democracy. It is important that we view this in relationship to Trump's call to the state of Texas to redistrict as a way of gaining more Republican seats in the House of Representatives, an effort subsequently attempted by several other Republican-led states and then countered by Democrats. MAGA wishes to secure long-term, if not permanent, minority rule by the 30% of the population that is entranced with MAGA, supports the super-rich, and seeks a return to the 19th century, with all that entails.

Third, MAGA wishes to eliminate all Congressional districts that have a majority people of color population. Despite the periodic MAGA voices of color that are pulled onto the stage to claim that MAGA is not white supremacist, the reality that MAGA understands is that most majority voters of color districts favor Democrats. Therefore, suppressing the Voting Rights Act and eliminating majority voters of color districts aims at...you guessed it... suppressing Democrats.

One of the tremendous mistakes made by too many supporters of the Voting Rights Act has been to assume that the defense of the Voting Rights Act was assured—in part because for years there was a bi-partisan consensus—and that any defense need only take place in the courts or on the floor of



Photo: David Sachs / SEIU

Congress. As the rightwing mobilized, first into the Tea Party and later into MAGA, it should have been clear that a full-scale assault was underway against democracy. What we are seeing now is only one further step towards rightwing authoritarian rule. This cannot happen.

What we need immediately, and have needed for years, is a mass voting rights movement that links litigation and lobbying with grassroots organizing and mobilization. The Voting Rights Act was the result of people in the streets who put immense pressure on Congress. We need that once again, along with new and creative tactics. Let's consider a few.

We need a new way of drawing Congressional districts that factor in matters such as the long history of racist marginalization.

We need to consider the use of ballot initiatives that force states to change the manner and content of voting districts. Consider the Florida ballot initiative that was used to re-enfranchise thousands of formerly incarcerated citizens. The ballot succeed-

ed only to be undermined by Republicans in the Florida legislature. Knowing what we know now, ballot initiatives must be worded in such a way that nefarious forces cannot undercut them.

We need to prepare for November 2026. MAGA has given every indication that they aim to grab our voting rights. We cannot let that happen. We must vote early and vote in huge numbers against anti-democratic forces. We must start planning now, in our local communities and with a broad array of groups, regarding how to respond to anti-democratic attacks on voting. We must prepare our friends, neighbors and family for the sorts of disinformation that will flow and will be aimed at suppressing our vote.

All of this can and must be done. The Supreme Court decision is a horrible development and there is no way to dress it up and pretend otherwise. What we can do, however, is neutralize its impact by our own organizing, mobilizing, and sheer numbers. Indeed, we must openly challenge those who wish to strip our rights and ensure dominance for the rich and infamous.