

LUMIPEN

the international issue

Lumpen
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Editor's Note

1.0

➔ In 2008, I was sitting in front of a bonfire in the Valley of 1000 Hills outside of Durban, South Africa, with an international group of social movement activists. I was there interpreting for 2 leaders of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement and, as usually is the case when I am surrounded by international leftists, everyone began piling up on the American. Totally understandable.

For the last 100 years, the US has been responsible for countless wars and coups against democratically elected left wing governments, and the CIA openly admits it assassinated key figures like post-colonial Congo leader Patrice Lumumba. Nevertheless, it can be pretty annoying to be treated as if there is something wrong with you, personally, due to the place you were born in.

As the laughter of yet another joke at my expense died, I took a sip of Klipdrift brandy and said, “You know what? I could care less about being from the US. I hate it. But I am proud to be from Chicago. If it weren’t from Chicago, where the Haymarket affair took place, what would all of you do every May 1st?”

This led to a bit of good-natured mumbling. Someone said, “OK, there may have been some important leftist activists in the US at the time, but the Chicago Haymarket anarchists were all immigrants.”

“What about Lucy Parsons?” I said. “She wasn’t an immigrant. She was an African-American woman born in slavery who ended up making important contributions to the World Communist movement.”

Events that happened in the City of Chicago have had a lot more international influence than most residents of the city realize. Growing up in a working class, pre-gentrified neighborhood on the North Side, I don’t even remember studying the Haymarket in school, let alone social movements like the Black Panthers, Young Lords, and Young Patriots.

When a rock is thrown in a small pond, the waves bounce off the banks and emanate back towards the site of the splash. Haymarket was a rock, and the Earth is a closed system. I would like to think of each one of the articles in this issue of *Lumpen* as a shock wave bouncing back to Chicago from the Haymarket Affair. I hope that this sharing of experiences and tactics fighting neofascist capitalism around the world from Rockford to Maputo, from Delhi to Devon Avenue, will give a few fellow Chicagoans ideas on how to pick up the torch and move forwards towards a world where, at the very least, everyone has “Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, and eight hours for what you will.”

Brian Mier is a graduate of A.G. Bell Elementary School, Gordon Tech High School, Northeastern Illinois University, and Loyola who has been living in Brazil for 25 years.

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→ In the early chapters of their book *The Dawn of Everything*, David Wengrow and the late David Graeber reintroduce the concept of “schismogenesis,” a process whereby two cultural groups define themselves by mutual refusals to adopt each other’s ways. One example is the US’s 24/7 open spigot of cash for the wealthy combined with out-of-reach routine health care for the masses, while just south of

ing. The Dems trap themselves in rules, in a misguided attempt to fold a fitted sheet, incapable of accomplishing even the measly measures they half-heartedly deign to pursue.

Meanwhile, we who oppose the prevailing *régime* have been dragged into a schismogenetic drama. I recently spoke on the *This Is Hell!* about how a liberalism that doesn’t threaten capitalism has been dangerously successful in

1.1

Schismopolitan Awakening

BY JEFFREY YOSEPHUS DORCHEN

Florida, countries crank out doctors like a Play-Doh fun factory.

The US defines itself as the negation of socialism, which it conflates with terrorism. Globally, it squashes efforts to undo privatization or relieve debt, often by violent means. In rhetoric and strategy, it repudiates every relatively decent society, from moderately socialist affluent countries (Western and Northern Europe) to ones labeled draconianly anti-privatization in the global south (Laos, Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela, Vietnam...). The list is long, and includes many countries in which the US has until recently propped up anti-communist regimes.

The US also holds sway over the IMF and World Bank’s policy discourse, imposing debt and austerity on most of the world’s economies, preventing even well-intentioned governments from providing for their people.

We owe it not only to ourselves but the world to fight a force that starts here at home. That force can be called oligarchical crony capitalism, capitalist totalitarianism, unaccountable resource theft and accumulation—any combination of labels that imply the crushing of communitarian ideas and action.

But the outlook here at home is depressing. The Republican Party is the vanguard government organ of an Astroturf anti-socialist movement. Authoritarian capitalists foreign and domestic are on board. The Democratic Party claims to oppose this movement, but they only want to surgically remove—with delicate miniature tweezers, like the ones my Grandma used to serve her saccharin tablets for coffee—the tiniest particles of anti-socialism they find objectionable. The GOP honors no legal niceties of govern-

the marketplace. Advertising likes to parrot moderate liberal sentiments. It assumes, stereotypically, that most people are ineffectually compassionate consumers.

This so-called “liberal domination of the media” has alienated the demographic, geographic, and ideological descendants of the Confederate Slavery States of America, today’s anti-mask, anti-vax, anti-tax, anti-government, anti-CRT, anti-immigrant, anti-entitlement, anti-Brandon population—the Astroturf fascists mentioned earlier. They have come to define themselves, with schismogenetic vehemence, as against anything liberals consider good: decorum at school board meetings, autonomy for the female reproductive system, and not shooting schoolchildren.

Is such a description of the right any less cartoonish than the liberal one I’ve complained about? Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt, and say “Nope.” But that’s their problem. If they aren’t the caricatures we perceive them as, well, good. Let them surprise us with their three dimensions!

It goes without saying that the cartoon portrayal of liberalism has nothing to do with real-life opposition to the *régime*. Nevertheless, aren’t we fated to follow the path of schismogenesis ourselves and become the opposite of the forces we perceive as arrayed against us?

Must we eschew fleecing billionaires who want to use us to fight their lesser-evil side of the born-again US Civil War?

Must we go into battle without guns, hoping to turn away the wrath of armed agents of fascism with only our wide-open beavers, as the balaklava’d woman at the George Floyd protest in

Portland did so brilliantly on July 19 of last year?

If a mirror is broken into glittering fragments, is it not capable of reflecting more aspects of the world than its two-dimensional whole?

Consider this: groups of people, large and small, solely driven by care for the earth and other humans, are creating power. They, and those they aid, are unable or unwilling to retreat into the smug satisfaction of delusional “self-sufficiency” like some LARPer survivalist. Some grow food using methods meant to restore and maintain healthy soil and communities. Some work in community outreach to help the hungry and unhoused. Some work within the legal system to advocate for those in the largest incarcerated population on Earth, and others engage victims and perpetrators in real-life guidance toward restorative rather than retributive justice. Some groups engage in violence to defend others from rightwing vigilantism and policing. More power to them. Punch Nazis.

I meet people engaged in a multitude of actions solely because they care about others, without receiving decent pay or benefits or applause.

These loci of resistance are scattered, like shards of a shattered mirror, rarely in touch with each other—and even then, informally, often accidentally. But the way the left talks about itself, anyone would think that even in their totality they represent no power at all, rather than making up a vast network of opposition.

The populist right sees themselves as oppressed by a bunch of media-dominant, NASCAR-hating, vegan, Biden-loving, pussy hat-wearing, easily triggered weak pacifist snowflakes who are only pro-choice because they can’t stomach killing fully-formed human beings.

The dystopian capitalist elite of Davos imagine themselves ruling over an easily-bullied-and-extorted serf class with no better options than to farm to fill their wealth hoard, serve in their Starbucks and Amazon warehouses of despair, or go into debt-slavery for certificates promising higher earnings in some fanciful future that’s looking more improbable every day.

There is more than enough power among us to win against the forces of anti-communitarianism that hold us back. When I’m able to add up all the good and ignore the shrieks and hoofbeats of the horsemen of the apocalypse, I have no doubt those forces are in for a rude awakening.

Jeffrey Yosephus Dorchen is playwright, fiction writer, literary editor, visual artist, actor, essayist, songwriter, and radio contributor. Co-founder of the Chicago fringe theater troupe, Theater Oobleck, he currently resides in Los Angeles.



Majestic Hoppy Beer



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SINCE 2007

BY
JEAN-LUC
MÉLENCHON

1.2

This is the transcript of a speech made at the Kourou rocket launching base in French Guyana on October 22, 2021. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, 70, is the Socialist Republican leader of the France Unbowed Movement and a 2022 presidential candidate.

→ The October 22, 2021 launch of Ariane 5 reminds us of France's role in humanity's new frontier: Space. Thanks to clear and constant political will and the tireless work of engineers and scientists, France has become one of the main space powers. Kourou, in French Guyana, is the third largest space port in the world. France now has the second largest space program in the world. All of the scientific and technical accomplishments of our country were achieved because of the State's mobilizing in the name of the general good. Since then, we have gained all the know-how needed to launch satellites, manned space travel, and interplanetary scientific exploration. This is a great victory, since so much of the modern world is produced by space technology: telecommunications, transport of people and goods, observation of the environment, and digital technologies.

But we need to put up a warning sign. In the field of space, humanity is arriving at a crossroads. A new path is being proposed: "new space." This corresponds to a liberal, Anglo-Saxon vision. It's masters are unscrupulous billionaires who dream of making space their new playground, and above all, a new source of profit. Heavily subsidized by the US government budget, these masters have inept dreams of space tourism and giant, lighted space billboards. This will be done through cluttering earth's orbit with constellations of mini-satellites. They are planning to reproduce all the ruin they caused on earth in space. They are even preparing to start mining in space. The US legalized the privatization of space in 2015. Luxemburg, never behind in opportunities for financial negotiations, followed suit in 2016. The International Space Treaty of 1967 was unilaterally ripped in half. That treaty stipulated that the celestial bodies were *res nullius*—they did not belong to anyone. What did France do about this? Nothing. Under the rule of Presidents Hollande and Macron, France gave in like a servile follower.

Did humanity arrive in space merely for the publicity purposes of a few billionaires and their multinational corporations? Or was this done to expand the scope of scientific knowledge and improve the lives of the human race? In the next presidential elections, the French can decide to become a pioneer of space exploration for the general interest of humankind. It is up to our country to give life to a francophone model of

science and space exploration. Let's create a Space University. Let's create an employment sector related to space. These technical skills, in a moment of ecological uncertainty, are much more essential than the "internet of things" Elon Musk is promoting. We propose an international mission to clean earth's low orbit, and avoid satellite collisions that would have all kinds of consequences on Earth. We are working to revive the idea of international space exploration, including through robotic missions to Mars under the guidance of the UN and the main international scientific associations.

At all costs, France should avoid having its position on space exploration excluded. This threat exists because of the inconsistency of our leaders. There are leaders who permit our autonomy to deteriorate within Europe and within the field of space exploration—something France helped create. Germany ripped up our satellite treaty in 2017. Emmanuel Macron signed a deal that confirmed the reallocation of manufacturing the Ariane rocket engine in Germany. Meanwhile, the German government, an unfair partner, wants to develop its own mini-launch sector at a launchpad in Norway, instead of Kourou in French Guyana. What's more, this comes after it refused to exclusively use Ariane rockets for its satellite launches.

Basta! France can't do anything good if it isn't the master of its own projects. The time has come to strengthen the National Center for Space Studies (CNES) and restore it to its leadership position in our space policy. It was absurd to accept the installation of a NATO space center in Toulouse without any debate in Parliament, despite the recent history of United States espionage and betrayal. This center has to be closed. France should be capable of defending itself, but it should also refuse to take part in the militarization of space, as promoted by the USA.

If I win the presidential election, France will propose a new treaty on the demilitarization of Outer Space. It will expand its cooperation with Russia and Italy. It will continue our effective cooperation with China. Indeed, France has already sent a camera to Mars on a Chinese rover.

Our horizon of space contains a certain vision of humanity. France has to keep its eyes on the stars instead of getting bogged down in conflicts. What other path could possibly exist for our country?



Beer as a Weapon Against Capitalism

BY EZEQUIEL MORAES



In 1998, propertyless Brazilians gained a constitutionally guaranteed right to squat in vacant, tax-scofflaw buildings, with the onus falling on mayoral offices to expropriate these buildings from their owners and convert them into ownership-based, low income housing. Since then, squatter movements have appeared all over Brazil, some with hundreds of thousands of members. Porto Alegre, a metropolitan region in southern Brazil with around 4 million inhabitants, is one of the epicenters of the squatter movements. There, in the 20 do Novembro squat, the Movimento Nacional de Luta Pela Moradia (MNLN / National Housing Struggle Movement) began brewing its own beer in 2019. What started through selling cups at street parties has grown into a distribution network and its own brand, DA20—a play on words after the expression, “I can’t give you twenty, but I can give you ten.” In this article, Brewmaster Ezequiel Moraes explains how and why they do it.

➔ Most craft brewers here in Rio Grande do Sul—and there is a whole network of them—make beer to provide for their individual wellbeing. We decided to start producing beer here inside the 20 de Novembro squat as a social movement—a way of generating collective income through cooperativism. The work is centralized. Everyone participates and receives quotas equally, according to the number of hours they put in. Everyone divides the tasks and responsibilities. There is no pay scale hierarchy.

When we started with our DA20 label two years ago, we spoke with a few people who were interested in starting a production network with us based on the principles of conscious consumerism. The way we apply conscious consumerism in Brazil is by building resistance networks to counter big companies like AMBEV, which dominates the Brazilian and world beer markets. One of the reasons our poor persons’ social movement decided to produce beer was to fight against the economic concentration of resources into the hands of a half dozen people. So to us, making beer is also a weapon of confrontation.

AMBEV acts like all of the big corporations in Brazil—within the logic of capitalism, maintaining a vertical, pyramidal structure of domination and control. Today it is one of the wealthiest corporations in the world, and Brazil is one of the world’s largest beer consuming countries. Nearly nothing happens in this country without the beer corporations’ involvement. For example, a band puts on a concert, and its artistic production generates waves of followers that can grow to the point of influencing a national election. Who finances this structure of mobilization, consumption, and publicity? Beer companies, car companies, and clothing companies. So AMBEV is knee-deep in this entire process of maintaining the predatory capitalist model.

Let’s be sincere here. AMBEV is an example of how the exploiter ends up being accepted by the exploited. An average guy will sit out on Friday night, happily drinking a 500 ml can of industrialized pilsner because he worked all week and needs a cheap way to eat. These days you

can’t even think of eating beef anymore, but maybe he’s barbecuing some drumsticks or hot dogs, and he’s going to have a beer. The big beer corporations were among those who made the most profit during the pandemic. A big beer company like AMBEV can even move into a city or region, sit down with all the local politicians, and convince them to change local environmental regulations to facilitate opening a brewery. A craft brewer can’t change a law or a zoning code to open anywhere they want. This is an example of the power of monopolies. We know that companies like AMBEV have all the interest in the world in maintaining Brazil’s neofascist government, which in turn upholds the monopolistic power of the big beer companies.

It’s hard for poor people to make beer because we have to work with cheap raw materials, and to develop styles and flavors in tune with the tastes of our fellow squatters and working class comrades. But I am proud to say we have developed a few styles of beer that everyone enjoys. Most of the working poor, who are the ones who drink most of our beer, are used to drinking 500 ml cans of cheap pilsner. You can’t get people to change their tastes very quickly. Down here, people are used to drinking a cheap, regional pilsner called Polar, which is very popular from the point of view of private sector commercialization. Polar is not very good, but it’s what people are used to drinking. We’ve tried to develop a few styles and asked people to try them out. Sometimes we trade beer for goods and services. Last year we started a delivery service for a group of regular customers. We had them buy the malt, hops, and yeast first, and we delivered the beer when it was finished. This helped bring the price down. It’s a different experience from going to the supermarket, paying on the spot, and bringing home your beers. This group paid first, supplied the raw materials, and had their beer delivered a month later. You could say that the squatter movements’ way of producing beer is a more collaborative effort. Producing beer isn’t just an issue of producing the liquid itself. There is also artistic production—

working together to develop visual art that expresses some of the ideas behind our movement. The label of our DA20 beer was designed in solidarity by Nazareno Afonso, an artist who is also a public transportation rights activist and member of the National Urban Reform Forum. The label has an African-inspired look while portraying elements related to the themes of urban mobility, urban environmentalism, and the right to the city. It reflects our vision of the ideal type of city that we want to live in.

We also had to develop a strategy for our packaging. We are using a system of returnable bottles. Right now, we have a network of 80 collaborators who regularly order our product in advance. They pick up the beer, and when they are through, they return the bottles. This is a way of lowering overhead. A bottle costs R\$2 these days in Brazil (around 40 cents US), so if our collaborators return the bottles, we can lower production costs. These savings are transferred to the workers’ quotas.

Cooperativism doesn’t work with the concept of profit—it works for results. Let’s say, for example, we produce, bottle, and sell a batch of 100 liters. To divide the results, first, we have to decide how much will be reinvested in ingredients for the next batch and establish a cash reserve. Then we set aside something for investing in new equipment, which we are constantly working to improve. When we started out, we used aluminum vats, but we’ve replaced it all with steel. We are also learning how to make our own equipment. These days, we purchase very little that is industrialized. We have metalworking equipment and saws, so we do almost all the work ourselves, from building the equipment to producing the beer and working out how to sell it. Regarding the quotas, the rules of cooperativism stipulate that they have to be distributed equally according to tasks performed and hours worked. So if someone worked 10 hours that week and another person only worked 5, we tabulate the value produced by our results, and it is subdivided according to hours worked. Everyone has their returns according to this. This system is now paying for all the groceries in the squat, and sometimes there is a little extra. We all also drink beer, obviously. This is an important expense these days, so we all save money on our own beer.

So that is how our production system works. Nobody is paid according to their specialized knowledge or level of expertise. We receive according to the hours worked, just like everyone else in the cooperative. It’s not based on a capitalist hierarchy of wages or value, but on the concept of equality of value.

As national leader of the MNLN, Ezequiel Moraes coordinated the occupation of the 20 de Novembro squat in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where he currently resides. He is now affiliated with the MLN (Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas / Neighborhood Struggle Movement).



Building International Solidarity: The Progressive International In a Changing World

BY ALINE PIVA

➔ In recent years, different societies all around the world have witnessed increasing threats to their democratic institutions. What at first might be perceived as isolated events in countries as diverse as Brazil, Hungary, or India, are now increasingly understood as part of a coordinated offensive to bring authoritarian leaders into power. These leaders are willing not only to implement an ultra-neoliberal agenda—with well-known consequences for the people—but also to undermine whichever social advancements and rights the peoples of these (and many other) countries have conquered. The consequences of the rising of fascist, authoritarian governments could be considered a global emergency on its own. Add the effects of global inequalities, the profound economic crisis the world has been immersed in, and the Covid-19 pandemic, and we have the receipts for a global calamity.

Nonetheless, as history has repeatedly shown us, moments of crisis also entail great potential for change. But change will never be achieved with handouts, or through individual, non-organized struggles. We have to build spaces with the potential to strengthen peoples' movements, to give support to those who have been forgotten and silenced for far too long, and to rebuild the people's hope in a better, more equal, and achievable future.

The Progressive International (PI) was launched in 2020, right in the middle of the profound systemic crisis the world has been immersed in. It was founded with a mission to unite, organize, and mobilize progressive forces in a common front, with a clear understanding that this mission is at the core of the current struggle in the international arena.

As stated by Noam Chomsky at PI's launching summit, "The crises we face in this unique moment of human history are of course international. Environmental catastrophe, nuclear war, and the pandemic have no borders. And in a less transparent way, the same is true of the third of the demons that stalk the earth and drive the second hand of the Doomsday clock towards midnight: the deterioration of democracy." This deterioration, Chomsky adds, is paramount for the survival of the authoritarian right, and is being achieved through concerted efforts of the far right. As such, this trend can only be counteracted if progressive forces also organize in a coherent, united front. As he highlights, "Two internationals are forming to confront the crises of this historical moment. One is opening now: the Progressive International. The other is a Reactionary International comprising the world's most reactionary states... One force is working relentlessly to construct a harsher version of the neoliberal global system... The other looks forward to a world of justice and peace... It is a kind of class struggle on a global scale, with many complex facets and interactions."

Since it was launched, PI's coalition has grown to include trade unions, political parties, and social movements that represent millions of people around the world, from the National Alliance of People's Movements in India to the Congreso de los Pueblos in Colombia, to the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25).

Strengthen democracy and support peoples' struggles. Fight back systemic inequalities. Respond effectively and timely to ongoing crises. These have been the three pillars that supported PI's work so far. The first one, called Movement, has mobilized delegations to countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Turkey, and Brazil to overview election processes, stand in solidarity with its peoples, and denounce grave attacks to democratic institutions in these—and other—countries. The second pillar, Blueprint, commissioned over 30 essays from sitting presidents, ministers, scholars, and activists on how to reclaim the world after Covid-19. It has also convened a Covid-19 Response Working Group, as well as organized a collective on Debt Justice including scholars like Jayati Ghosh, Katharina Pistor, and Osama Diab, mobilizing to challenge the IMF's austerity agenda in countries like Argentina and Ecuador. The third and last pillar, Wire, was created to give a platform to these struggles. In addition to building a wire service for the world's progressive forces, and publishing grassroots stories and critical perspectives from around the world, Wire has organized a team of 200 translators to create a new coalition of 31 publications from around the world, amplifying stories across borders and from publications including *Jacobin*, *The Nation*, *Brasil Wire*, and *Bulatlat*.

The recent delegation to Brazil illustrates the role of international solidarity in strengthening local struggles for popular sovereignty. Between August 7 and September 7 2021, the PI planned,

coordinated, and concluded an emergency delegation to join the Articulation of Brazil's Indigenous People (APIB) in the Luta pela vida—the "Struggle for life," the largest mobilization of Indigenous peoples in the history of the country. The delegation, which included climate activists, Indigenous representatives, and Parliamentarians from around the world, traveled across the country to strengthen international solidarity and fortify the resistance to President Jair Bolsonaro's extractivist agenda, meeting with social movements, trade unions, political parties, and Indigenous nations from Brasília to Belém. By adjoining a powerful global coalition to APIB's domestic mobilization, the PI successfully challenged the most environmentally devastating pieces of Bolsonaro's legislation (including the Marco Temporal, Bill 2633, and Bill 490, all of which have either been defeated completely or postponed indefinitely) and struck a blow to the legitimacy of landmark infrastructure projects like the Ferrogrão railroad. In the process, the PI not only demonstrated the potential for international solidarity to deliver systemic change, but it also set the stage for global actions in a critical year.

On another front, in June 2021, the Progressive International convened the inaugural Summit for Vaccine Internationalism. This Summit brought together the national governments of Argentina, Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela, as well as the regional governments of Kisumu, Kenya and Kerala, India; political leaders from 20 countries; healthcare workers; vaccine manufacturers; and public health experts. Together they made concrete commitments to advance vaccine internationalism. This new union can play a key role in ending vaccine apartheid, both through direct relationships between members and the collective pressure the Union can apply on the existing international health system.

As highlighted by Brazilian councilwoman Aurea Carolina, "The unraveling of democracy—both in its daily practices and the broader political system—lays bare the extent of our inequalities, environmental degradation, and social violence worldwide. Recovering democracy and defeating the far right will demand the emergence of a new political culture. It should be noticeable for people in their day-to-day lives, and through the articulation of global networks. The key point lies in the alliance among the progressive movements: in diversity, in solidarity, in power-sharing, in the politicization of life. These values are at the heart of the democratic ideal that the progressive forces must stand for all around the world"—and at the heart of PI's mission too.

Aline Piva is the Coordinator of Progressive International's Latin America Secretariat. She lives in São Paulo.



In 2019, the World looked on in shock as US-backed paramilitary militias executed a right-wing coup in Bolivia, with troops opening fire on protesters with live bullets. One year later a nationwide coalition of indigenous and labor groups retook the government and had illegitimate coup President Janine Áñez arrested. One of the key actors in this process was the 6 Federations of the Trópico of Cochabamba. Here, Ollie Vargas tells their story.

→ The 6 Federations of the Trópico of Cochabamba is Bolivia's most important social movement because it created the Movement Towards Socialism, the party which governs today. Evo Morales led the 6 Federations and is still the president, and many of the party's other leaders hold most positions within the party and government. How did the campesino unions of a sparsely populated rural region, 600 kilometers from La Paz, manage to achieve such a dominant position within the country? They moved beyond sectionalism, beyond community power to political power.

The region lies between the cities of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, about 4-6 hours apart by car. The origin of the local struggles here is that it is a coca-growing region. Coca is a sacred leaf in Bolivian culture, and consumed by the majority in the form of chewing or steeping in tea. From the 1980s onwards, coca became a target of the US war on drugs. The DEA established a base and had Bolivian troops under their command to carry total eradication of the crop by force. When camp-

esinos resisted, they were met with brutal repression, and countless union leaders were killed. Evo Morales himself was jailed, and on one occasion thrown down a side of a mountain after soldiers presumed him dead after a thorough beating.

For Evo, and others in the union, it became clear that local struggles weren't enough to defend one's rights. It was necessary to abandon sectionalism and turn those local union struggles into a generalized struggle for political power that could inspire movements across the country, to transform the country rather than simply making demands to the powerful.

The first step was to generalize the struggle to defend the coca leaf from a local one into a national one. Norma Valderama, leader of the Centrales Unidas Federation (one of the 6) told me, "The government tried to demonize our region by labeling us as drug traffickers. We lived in houses made of wood, yet they called us big narcos! But people in the rest of the country saw through it, because we showed them that we're defending the coca leaf, which is part of our culture going

back 1000 years. We showed how eradication is a humiliation of our culture by the gringos."

The struggles in the Chapare region became historic, and representative of a wider fight against US intervention. A high point was in 1995 with the women's march from the Trópico to La Paz, almost 600 kilometers. The march was titled "The March for Life, for Coca, for Human Rights, and National Sovereignty." It started as just 200 women, but during their 31-day-long trek through torrential rain, beating sun, freezing cold, and repression, women from towns and cities along the route joined until they reached La Paz as thousands, with many more waiting in the city to applaud the final stretch. It was a triumphant moment in which a local struggle was taken up by the whole country, who was desperately searching for leadership.

As Evo says in almost every speech I've witnessed, including most recently, on his birthday, "Bolivia always had power unions and communities. But to nationalize our natural resources, communal power, or social power was not enough. It was essential to create a political instrument and pass from union power to political power—to govern ourselves."

Norma Valderama concurs, telling me, "Taking power is the most important thing for us. That's why we, the social movements, created the MAS as an instrument that can bring together all sectors: workers, transport, small traders, campesinos. The only way our people can protect ourselves is if we have our government

and a president that is our own."

It was on these principles that the "political instrument" was born. Today, the Movement Towards Socialism - Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (MAS-IPSP) brings together all the principal social movements in every region of Bolivia. Those affiliated include the Confederation of Campesino Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB) and the Confederation of Inter-cultural Communities of Bolivia, and the two represent campesino unions in every region at a national level. The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian East (CIDOB) represents the campesino indigenous communities of Amazon, the eastern lowlands, and the southern Chaco region. The Confederation of Indigenous Women: Bartolina Sisa is the women's union for campesino union branches across the country. The Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) is the confederation of all workers' unions in Bolivia. Particularly active in government work are the Mineworkers Union (FSTMB) and the Oil and Gas Workers Union (FSTPB).

These organizations form the Unity Pact, an alternative cabinet that meets with the President to nominate or fire ministers and direct public policy. The Unity Pact also plays a vital role in defending the government on the streets. Indicative of their role were the words of COB leader Juan Carlos Huarachi, who said that "the Bolivian people, through their social movements, say 'enough.' Enough of these acts of racism and discrimination, enough of these destabilization

attempts against our government." While the Unity Pact defends the MAS government, they are also active and critical participants in the internal life of the state. As President Arce reaches the first anniversary of assuming the presidency, Huarachi suggested that the unions will analyze which ministers should stay and which should go; "We are one year into governing. It's important to make an evaluation, ministry by ministry, in coordination with the Unity Pact."

Within this coalition that makes up the MAS—a coalition spanning the Andes Mountains, the Amazon, the southern desert, and everywhere in between—it's the founders, the 6 Federations, who continue to be the leading voice. The President of the Senate, Andrés Rodríguez, is also the Vice President of the 6 Federations. The President of the MAS parliamentary party is Gualberto Arispe, former President of the Youth Wing of the 6 Federations. The Vice President of the parliamentary party is Leonardo Loza, leader of the Chimoré Federation (one of the 6). The social movement of this one region punches well above its weight, precisely because it has maintained a spirit of searching for unity across all movements in the country, rather than getting bogged down in sectionalism. It was that spirit that created the MAS, and it's that spirit that sustains its existence today.

Ollie Vargas is an editor at Kawsachun News, the English language service of Kawsachun Coca, the official radio station of the 6 Federations—at the service of the social movements.

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From Community Power to Political Power: The 6 Federations of the Trópico of Cochabamba



BY OLLIE VARGAS

The Non-Aligned Movement and the Fight for Sovereignty

BY LILY LYNCH

Over two days in early October, the second largest multilateral forum in the world after the United Nations assembled in Belgrade, Serbia. Since most of those in attendance were from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, most Western observers felt comfortable dismissing it as “irrelevant.” But the Nonaligned Movement, celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of its first meeting also held in Belgrade, pushed back against that idea. Speakers from the 117 delegations present emphasized the need to “reinvigorate and relaunch” the movement in order to fight vaccine inequity, exceptionalism, unilateralism, and hegemony.

The Nonaligned Movement (NAM) is probably the largest and most radical movement you’ve never heard of. Founded during the period of decolonization at the height of the Cold War, the movement gave newly independent states from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean a forum to enhance their collective power, “nonaligned,” or independent, of both the Soviet Union and United States. The movement was and still is ideologically heterogeneous, but member states were bound by a principled opposition to all forms of colonialism and imperialism, as well as a willingness to challenge Cold War bloc divisions. The Nonaligned Movement was also a consistent champion of the most oppressed peoples on earth. It was a vociferous opponent of apartheid in South Africa at a time when many NATO countries supported it, and while Palestine has a reduced observer status in the United Nations, it is a full member state of NAM.

Though the movement’s first official meeting was held in 1961 in Belgrade, then the capital of socialist Yugoslavia, its origins are in the previous decade. The most important foundational event was the Bandung Conference, also known

as the Asian-African Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955. Bandung meant newly independent states gathered to discuss how best to ensure their sovereignty would never be violated again, as well as to integrate themselves into the system of global affairs. The conference produced the Ten Principles of Bandung, which remain at the heart of NAM’s philosophical approach to the world. They are:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.
4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
6. Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties’ own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.
10. Respect for justice and international obligation.

As a European capital, Belgrade played a somewhat unlikely role in the movement. That first summit in Belgrade was held on the initiative of Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito. Yugoslavia had split from the Soviet Union in 1948, and was seeking to maximize its own position in global affairs while remaining independent of both the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Tito saw in the newly independent states of Africa and Asia potential partners who were similarly wary of predation by the superpowers.

With the end of the Cold War, many Western observers were quick to declare NAM irrelevant or “dead.” However, the movement is still very much alive. From the initial 25 member states present in Belgrade six decades ago, the movement has grown to 120 members. It was clear listening to speakers from the delegations in Belgrade in October that actual member states feel that NAM has a vital role to play today. The Bandung Principles, the speakers emphasized over and over again, are being trampled, and the pandemic has exposed deep inequities. As Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation of Botswana Lemogang Kwap said, “The fight against the pandemic endures in many of our developing countries. Our efforts will remain incomplete if we do not compel the international community to accede to our demands for equity in access to lifesaving vaccines. Vaccine equity [and declaring vaccines] a global public good is not only a moral imperative, it is also an important matter that lies at the heart of the demonstration of the true spirit of multilateralism, global solidarity, and international cooperation, which others often preach, but do not practice.”

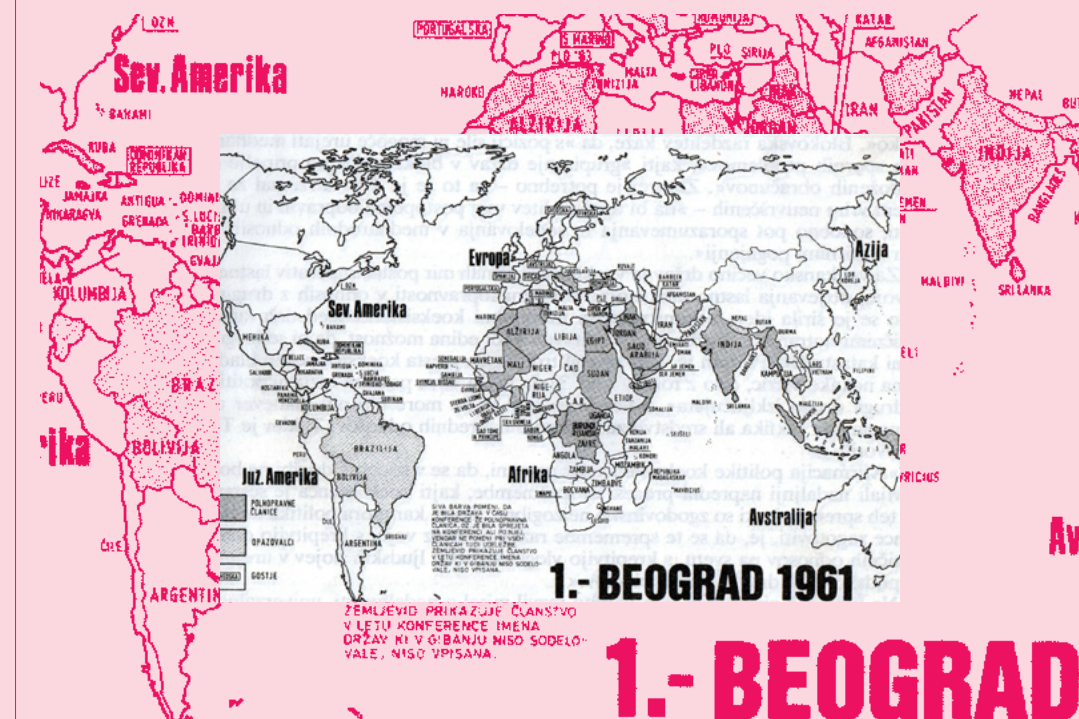
Felix Plasencia, who assumed the office of foreign minister of Venezuela in August, also spoke about the pandemic. “We reject sanctions

that are illegal but that may also be fatal in the current pandemic. [They] are undermining all efforts to resolve a crisis, and in any case we would like to invite you to fight together against this cruel and inhumane policy, including using the pandemic and human suffering for promoting your own political agenda,” he said. “This in [some] instances, like the IMF, prevents our country from accessing funds that would be of great importance to us at this time. Bearing in mind this reality, the time has come to double our efforts in order to observe the principles of the UN charter. This is all we have to defend ourselves against the great powers.”

Others suggested that growing bipolarity embodied by the United States and NATO on the one hand, and China and Russia on the other, could mean that a new Nonaligned Movement is precisely what the world needs. This is complicated by the fact that both China and Russia have observer status in the movement, which critics say means the group is no longer truly nonaligned. However, Yugoslav successor states Montenegro, North Macedonia, Croatia, and Slovenia also enjoy observer status in NAM, and all are members of NATO. The future of NAM is uncertain, but observers still say that its potential to help influence world affairs remains.

As Lina Džuverović, a curator and academic based at Birkbeck’s Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of London, wrote in an email: “The summit... in Belgrade is more than just a symbolic marking of an anniversary date... It is indeed a visible political gesture, but it is also a powerful reminder of an alternative to global technocapitalism. The significance of NAM today is that it demonstrates that living solidarity is possible and that an alternative does exist... NAM may be a highly visible ‘top-level’ political proposition, but ‘on the ground’ we are beginning to hear and give space to indigenous voices, and we are seeing unprecedented organizing, be it through the Black Lives Matter movement or the Mutual Aid initiatives that appeared across the globe in response to Covid-19,” she wrote. “I see a strong connection between NAM principles and these movements.”

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50 Years down the Path of Brazilian History

BY PAULO MOREIRA LEITE



On May 1, 1978, the first issue of the Brazilian underground newspaper *O Trabalho* hit the streets. The paper was the result of the fusion of 4 clandestine Trotskyist organizations with the student movement *Libelu*, all outlawed by the authoritarian military junta at the time. In this article, Paulo Moreira Leite, founding editor of *O Trabalho* and now one of Brazil's most accomplished journalists, looks back at a moment in history when hundreds of fragmented and persecuted leftist organizations joined together with the labor unions to overthrow the US-backed dictatorship.

Like so many people throughout history, I spent much of my youth trying to make sense of what was going on in Brazil, my country. Then history hit me in the face. It changed my existence and the plans of many in my generation.

In 1973 I enrolled in the Universidade de São Paulo, a free, public institution that is a source of pride for us Brazilians. Even today, it's ranked among the World's Top 100 Universities. I wanted to be an intellectual and produce academic research, but I ran out of time and was forced to drop out when my generation got caught in a whirlwind of political and social changes that transformed ourselves and Brazil forever.

During the first few weeks of class, the military junta's DOI CODI political police arrested, tortured, and executed Alexandre Vannuchi Leme, a geology student and member of the ALN armed revolutionary group founded by Carlos Marighella, one of the main leaders of the Brazilian left during the 20th century. In a large-scale police operation in 1974, the government arrested 18 students and teachers in a university preparatory course and submitted them to prolonged sessions of torture. In 1975, an action against the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) ended with the execution of many of its directors and most important members. In 1976, the entire directorate of the PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil) was machine gunned down during a central committee meeting. In 1977, the arrest and torture of activists from the Trotskyist Workers League provoked a large protest in downtown São Paulo, the first time in years that the student movement came out to the streets to confront the military police and denounce the cowardliness of the regime.

Despite the open violence and permanent threats from the generals, many people worked together to fight for structural change. Here is a personal example. Among my cohorts in the social sciences department there were activists from the Catholic left associated with the liberation theology movement, members of two orthodox communist parties and two Trotskyist groups, former armed guerrillas, and at least one group of self-proclaimed independents, who the rest of us criticized as excessively moderate reformists.

There were always a lot of good laughs to be had among such a varied group, especially since it seemed so futile, at least in appearances, to take on a dictatorship that was born and sustained by the most powerful force on the planet: the North American Empire. But you couldn't ignore the fact that among that miscellaneous collection of revolutionary groups with different acronyms there was, above everything else, an immense will to defeat the dictatorship and change Brazil. This became even more clear in 1978, when a force emerged that, from that point forward, would make a huge difference for the majority of the Brazilian people. Under the leadership of Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, the labor union movement would become a decisive force



in Brazilian politics for the next five decades.

Starting with a series of wildcat strikes and work stoppages that triggered the end of a regime that was planning to stay in power forever, the union workers exposed a system of super-exploitation that was one of the government's pillars of order. This exposure of class conflict set the tone for all street protests from that moment forward, as the fight against capitalist exploitation became an important and often mandatory rallying cry. A military regime, that was born out of wage stagnation enforced by tanks and bayonets, began to tremble in its boots when the workers held nationwide strikes to protest against the counterfeit inflationary indices used to mask the erosion of their paychecks.

During the 1960s, a lot of middle class kids joined the armed struggle, and many of them lost

their lives, criminally sacrificed to the machine. A decade later, resistance to the dictatorship took the form of labor struggle, and we soon discovered that this changed everything. Student activists began to go to assemblies and take up collections to deliver money and food to the families of striking workers. In an unforgettable symbolic gesture, I remember the day one young writer friend showed up with a 5 pound salmon for striking steelworkers.

This coalition of forces, born out of the working class base of Brazilian society, led to the four consecutive presidencies of Lula and Dilma Rousseff, the two most popular leaders in the history of our Republic. This movement led to essential improvements to our development and sovereignty, and for the well being of the poorest segments of society. One example is how enroll-

ment in the free public universities expanded, with 52% of spaces reserved for poor and Afro-Brazilian students.

As we recover from the embarrassing attack against our democracy in 2016, when Dilma Rousseff was deposed through a coup d'etat, Brazil is beginning to reopen its doors to a better future that will do justice to its economy, natural resources, and culture and make up for the last five years of lost time. Like many lessons that old age can teach the youth, the massive level of support that our population is showing for Lula right now shows that the consciousness of our country hasn't been lost.

Paulo Moreira Leite started his career as a reporter in 1969 and has worked at Brazilian news publications such as *Gazeta Mercantil*, *Folha de São Paulo*, *Veja* and *Istoé*. He is currently Editor of *Brasil 247*.

How Striking Farmers Shut Down the Indian Capital

BY DEBOJIT BANERJEE AND GOURAB GHOSH

Indian Millennials have never seen a democratically elected government as strong in Parliament as they are witnessing now, during Narendra Modi's second term, often called "Modi 2.0." But now it also seems they are experiencing a mass movement so fierce that it can shake the foundation of such a powerful government. Before jumping into conclusions we must first understand historical facts pertaining to the farmer movement.

On September 17th 2020, three farm laws proposed by Bharatiya Janata (BJP) and its allies were passed undemocratically in the Indian Parliament. Behind the smokescreen of COVID-19, the ruling party successfully prevented the opposition from presenting any arguments or proposals against the bill, which was designed to turn the government-regulated agricultural market into a corporate-dominated open market. For example, the government publicized this bill with the tagline "One Nation, One Market," without mention of the minimum support price (MSP), which has to be provided to farmers in government-regulated markets.

This is when it began. Millions of farmers took to the streets of New Delhi under a common banner led by communists and socialists, presenting a solid stand against this act. At that time, leaning on a strong establishment, the Modi government was unwilling to have a dialogue with any farmers' organization, or with any opposition at all. But the farmers blocked the nation's capital by taking over every highway and border leading to Delhi for two months. Only then did the government feel compelled to invite the farmers for a discussion. It was not fruitful. The position of the farmers was clear, and not up for compromise: in a country where 70,000 of them committed suicide in 7 years, these farm laws were unaccept-

able. Still, the arrogant government kept trying to negotiate. During the first discussion session, the farmers not only opposed their proposal but also refused to accept lunch, responding, "We Brought Our Own Food."

Thanks to their unity and commitment, protesting farmers started gaining support and sympathy from all regions of the country. In response, the government started to connect this peaceful movement with separatist and Naxalite movements. Their plan was to discredit the farmers and demolish support throughout India by associating the movement with Communist parties.

After occupying highways in and out of Delhi since September 2020, and after the deaths of 159 protestors, including 4 tragic suicides, plus hundreds injured, the farmers planned to celebrate their Republic Day Parade parallel to the Military Parade. This was the first time India had witnessed a parallel Republic Day in the capitol. Millions of farmers participated, along with 200 thousand tractors, which they had modified for protection from tear gas shells. In the end, the government successfully related the farmers' rally with the Khalistani separatist movement by funding a group of hooligans who hoisted a separatist flag at the Red Fort, an important place in New Delhi where the national flag is usually flown. Consequently, the farmers failed to retain the public support they had enjoyed up until that time.

At junctures like this, a movement usually has only one option, and that is to back off. But instead of retreating, the farmers refused to submit. They were in the streets of Delhi no matter what happened. They were there braving the bone-chilling cold in winter, they were there when it was blazing hot in summer, they were

there when it was raining torrentially, they were there when the police resorted to extreme brutality, and they were even there when fellow protestors died from health hazards or police violence. Perhaps this irresistible determination for the cause is beyond imagination for some.

In September, the farmer's movement passed its 1 year mark without leaving the streets of the Capital for a single day. On November 19, the Modi administration withdrew the three farm laws that spurred the protest. But the fight is still underway. On December 4, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha farmers union issued a statement saying, "We will not end this agitation without a formal response on each of the issues being raised by us. We want to see all the cases foisted against farmers as well as their supporters, who were part of this movement, to be withdrawn and assurance to be made formally."

One thing is certain, India has witnessed a movement not only against capitalist oppression but also an inspirational tale of people organizing against a strong fascist government through unity, commitment and irresistible will, and bonding together with a strong political ideology. Protesting farmers of India have won the hearts of revolutionary activists around the world. Their movement will go down in working class history and inspire future revolutionaries.

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Rio de Janeiro Carnaval: Stage of Resistance

BY GABRIEL DESLANDES

During the 1920s, a group of teachers who used to drink together after school in the working class neighborhood of Estacio de Sa started a Carnaval group. In a joke related to their profession, they called themselves “Samba School.” The name caught on, and every year during Carnaval, the twelve biggest samba schools, some of which have as many as 5000 dancers and musicians, parade through Rio’s Sambadromo stadium for two nights in a row, in what has become Brazil’s largest television spectacle. As Gabriel Deslandes shows in the following article, this event has turned into an important space of working class political resistance.

➔ Rio de Janeiro’s samba schools are the protagonists of Brazil’s most famous Carnaval. They are also a space of cultural and social resistance from poor, predominantly Afro-Brazilian residents of Rio’s favelas and suburbs. Some samba school parades go beyond local politics and culture and are used as a vehicle to transmit political messages to millions of television viewers. Unidos de Vila Isabel, from Rio’s north side neighborhood of the same name, stands out as one of the most politicized groups in Carnaval history. One of their most important influences is the group’s main vocalist and composer, Martinho da Vila, who has also had a successful career as a samba singer, author, and cultural agitator.

THE BLACK KING OF CARNAVAL

Da Vila first joined Vila Isabel in the mid 1960s as a composer. He helped build the school into a Carnaval powerhouse, incorporating political problems and themes of social and racial inequality into his lyrics. Even during the height of the US-backed military dictatorship during the 1960s, he affiliated with the clandestine Brazilian Communist Party and built ties with leftist groups in the Portuguese diaspora in Africa. In 1972, Da Vila traveled to Angola at the moment it declared independence from Portugal, and was dazzled by the cultural vitality of the people and their cultural similarities with Brazilians.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movements strengthened ties and worked to reconstruct a common history between West Africa and the Americas. Inspired by his visits to Mother Africa, Da Vila promoted cultural exchanges between Brazilian and Angolan artists in a partnership with the socialist Angolan Popular Liberation Movement (MPLA).

Da Vila’s left-wing political activism inevitably influenced Vila Isabel’s Carnaval parades. During the military dictatorship in 1972, they slipped past government censors with a Carnaval parade song called “Where Brazil Learned About Freedom,” which celebrated hundreds of years of slave and working class uprisings against Brazilian elites. The chorus dreamed of “a Brazilian



brotherhood with no masters or slaves.” Da Vila’s 1974 Carnaval parade composition, “The Carajas Tribe,” was not as lucky. The lyrics honored an indigenous tribe in the Alto Xingu region of the Amazon rainforest that was being exterminated by the army, who was starting strip mining in the region. The song was labeled subversive by the military junta and was barred from Carnaval, and Vila Isabel had to come up with something new at the last minute.

Martinho da Vila’s role at Vila Isabel samba school reached new heights in 1988, the 100th anniversary year of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. This was one of the first Carnivals to take place after the fall of the dictatorship in 1985. During these early years, all of the samba schools experienced an unprecedented period of political effervescence and freedom of expression. Da Vila took advantage of the reopening to exalt Black power with a composition called “Kizomba, Festival of Race.” On a low budget, using inexpensive materials for its dancers and musicians like straw and batik, Vila Isabel performed one of the most exciting parades of all time. “Kizomba, Festival of Race” celebrated Afro-Brazilian art and religiosity and paid tribute to Pan-African leaders like Samora Machel, Malcolm X, Agostinho Neto, and Martin Luther King Jr. The song itself called for the end of apartheid in South Africa. After a delirious stadium crowd spent the whole hour of Vila Isabel’s parade on its feet, dancing and singing along with the lyrics, the judges had no choice but to declare Vila Isabel champions of Carnaval for the first time in the school’s history. Later, an internal document leaked from the Brazilian Army showing that it had viewed Vila Isabel’s parade that year as “a revolutionary black protest against whites.”

During the 1990s, Rio de Janeiro Carnaval began to receive sponsorship money from the private sector. This had a negative influence on the themes chosen for the parades because its increased role as a television spectacle limited space for political criticism. However, this new commercial dynamic enabled the Venezuelan State Petroleum Company (PDVSA) to sponsor Vila Isabel’s 2006 parade to the tune of around \$1.5 million, with the theme of “Soy loco por ti, América” (I am crazy about you, America). The parade celebrated Latin American integration. It was an overt move by Venezuelan President



Hugo Chavez to publicize Bolivarian ideals to a Brazilian audience of tens of millions. Vila Isabel paraded through the Sambadromo Carnaval stadium celebrating a collective Latin American cultural identity and celebrating the continent’s pre-Colombian roots from the Yucatán Peninsula to Tierra del Fuego. While promoting the Bolivarian dream of the “Giant Homeland,” the school celebrated historic freedom fighters who fought for the emancipation of Latin America like Che Guevara, San Martín, José Martí, Augusto Sandino, and Simon Bolivar. Despite attacks in the corporate media, the parade excited the public and that year, Vila Isabel won its second-ever Carnaval championship title.

Ten years later, with another song written by Martinho da Vila, Vila Isabel honored the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Miguel Arraes, the socialist governor of Pernambuco who was arrested and exiled during the military dictatorship. In its parade, Vila Isabel celebrated Arraes’ struggle for agrarian reform, investment in public education and improvements in the lives of the working class.

In 2021, Carnaval was canceled due to the pandemic. This year, however, Vila Isabel will return to the Sambadromo, with a parade honoring the life and work of Martinho da Vila himself, now 83. It will be the first time in the Carnaval parade’s ninety-year history that a samba school has ever paid tribute to its own lead composer. This tribute will represent the consecration of a nearly sixty-year relationship between a legendary singer and activist and the samba school that he belongs to.

Gabriel Deslandes is a Rio de Janeiro-based journalist and Carnaval writer.

Berliners' Victory against Gentrification

BY SANDRINE WOINZECK

In September 2021, 56% of Berliners voted yes on a referendum calling for the expropriation of 240,000 apartments owned by the city's biggest real estate companies.

➔ Berlin, the capital of Germany, has 3,664,088 inhabitants and 85% of them are renters. In the recent city elections, one million people voted for the expropriation of all real estate from companies that own more than 3000 apartments and to convert those spaces into low-income housing.

The violence that Berliners are facing because of real estate speculation is increasing alarmingly. Most of the city's property is controlled by big real estate companies, and there is an average of 10 evictions per day.

It is impossible for the majority of Berliners to move or to find a decent and affordable home. This has enormous consequences for our quality of life and our survival. It is impossible to separate from bad relationships, protect oneself from domestic violence, leave one's parents, move to a different neighborhood or a different type of housing and live decently on an average salary. These are the problems of people who are already lucky enough to have a home. What about those who are looking for one? Only privileged people have a chance in this speculative real estate market. For all the people affected by any kind of discrimination, it is almost impossible to find housing.

The housing crisis increases violence, reduces our quality of life and our possibilities to choose our way of life. It increases poverty, discrimination and the gap between social classes. This situation increases the fear that tenants have of losing their homes. The fear of homelessness leads Berliners to accept indecent housing conditions and disrespectful behavior from landlords. Landlords even use this fear and our need for healthy housing to increase their profits.

LANDLORD STRATEGIES

To increase profit, real estate companies divide buildings into condos that they resell by the unit. Often these apartments are rented out at the time of sale. Since contracts for apartments in Berlin and Germany are open-ended, landlords have developed tactics to terminate these rental agreements. For example, they can claim that they want to use the apartments themselves. The struggle of the affected tenants is very hard. They are isolated and fight alone in the building against their landlord. Their fight often ends with an eviction. These eviction battles often leave the former tenants with health and psychological problems.

A new phenomenon in Berlin is the use of security guards, not to protect anyone but to "keep the peace" in the buildings. These security guards prevent tenants from organizing themselves to collectively solve problems. Tenants who are too rebellious are threatened by these security guards. This tactic of intimidation makes the tenants prisoners of the bad intentions of their landlords. Moreover, this tactic prevents what has been one of the strengths of Berlin's tenants up to now: organizing in groups to defend our housing rights and our buildings.

Another new phenomenon is social white-washing. Real estate corporations become charitable and use the lack of apartments in Berlin and the misery of the tenants to position themselves in the media as responsible landlords. Meanwhile, they buy massive amounts of apartments whose rents fatten their shareholders.

These are a few examples of the violence of real estate speculation. Although the right to housing in Berlin is anchored in the city constitution (Article 28: "Every person has the right to adequate housing"), every year, people freeze to death in this city. This use of housing as a consumer good is an aberration of our system.

Every human being is born to live somewhere. We must succeed in banning speculation in real estate and real estate ownership.

TENANTS FIGHT BACK

The expropriation campaign is one of the strongest responses to this predatory real estate speculation. On September 26th, Berliners with German citizenship were asked to vote for or against the expropriation of all residential properties owned by companies that have more than 3000 apartments. The Yes vote won, but for now it is just a draft law and is not legally binding. Many Berlin activists believe that property owners will not let their property be expropriated in this way. Let's not forget that private property is often at the center of our constitutions in this capitalist system. If we want expropriation, we have to do it ourselves.

Gemeinsam gegen Verdrängung und Mietwahnsinn (Together against eviction and rent madness), of which the expropriation campaign is a part, is an alliance of many Berlin groups that fight for the right to housing. This alliance is co-organizer of the Housing Action Day, a transnational day of action which has been held at the end of March for two years now. It regularly organizes large tenant demonstrations and fights for the abolition of housing as a consumer good.

A final example of our struggle is the Mieter:innen Gewerkschaft Berlin (Berlin Tenants' Union Berlin), which is the first tenants' union in Berlin. The aim of our group is to establish a collective right and a right of co-determination of tenants, similar to the trade union structures for workers' rights. This group helps tenants to organize and fight for their housing. It promotes the idea of unconditional solidarity, but also the conviction that the price of a building goes down if inhabitants are organized and fight. In this group there is also an intersectional working group, FLINTA Stadt, which we could translate as LBTGQ* City. Their goal is to build a city of solidarity for ALL.

As long as the existence of the planet is questioned, habitat will continue to be a central theme. It is perhaps one of the best arenas where the fight against social injustice and our unequal system can take place. We must think of radical transformations if we want our children to survive. The vision of a city of solidarity in which everyone has a place is a real alternative. Let's build this world together. Feel free to contact these groups to exchange ideas.

Wir bleiben alle! We all stay!

darumenteignen.de/en
www.mietenwahnsinn.info/aktuelles
mg-berlin.org/en/home

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Nayib Bukele and the Myth of Popular Support in El Salvador

BY ROBERTO ZAPATA AND CAMILA ESCALANTE



➔ President Nayib Bukele's improvised political experiment has given rise to a new dictatorship in El Salvador. Although in the beginning he was profiled as a youthful, social media savvy and alternative face, Bukele's Nueva Ideas administration rapidly turned down a path of authoritarianism, centralizing power, promoting militarism as a main state policy, and banning any type of criticism against his government.

Despite this, Bukele's fans in the mainstream foreign press insist that he remains popular among Salvadoran youth. Until recently it was hard to find challenges to this claim. Now, at the halfway mark in his term in office, it is clearer than ever that young people are faring poorly. Thousands of young Salvadorans continue to flee the country each month, while those who stay are becoming increasingly involved in mobilizations and activism to oppose the government's neoliberal, authoritarian measures.

A major uptick in street protest against the Salvadoran administration began as the Bitcoin law was taking effect. Three major protests were held in the capital of San Salvador in September and October, 2021, in which a wide array of organizations demonstrated their discontent with the political and socioeconomic path being imposed. Youth have not only participated in marches but are also leading the grassroots organizing behind these collective actions. Two of the largest networks of leftist organizations, the Coordination of Popular Movements and the Popular Resistance Block, have engaged young people nationally, including within their leadership. What's more, the increased visibility of vocal opposition to Bukele's autocratic management from progressives, feminists, LGBTI+ youth and anti-imperialists is inspiring greater involvement in organizing around dissent.

There are many factors behind this shift away from support for Bukele. First, the militarization. One of the main promises and expectations for Bukele's government was that new opportunities were going to be generated for youth. However, military service was not what they had in mind. In just two years, Bukele increased military spending by more than 75% with the goal of doubling

the size of the military by recruiting 20,000 young people by 2024, taking the country to levels of militarization not seen since the armed conflict (1979-1992). These "new opportunities" are aimed at working class youth with lower access to higher education and employment. This dramatic increase in militarization can only exacerbate abuses by security forces against women, the LGBTI+ community and other vulnerable groups.

A second cause of growing discontent is the government's reinforcement of traditional family values and gender roles. It is a well-known fact that younger generations tend to be more progressive on issues like LGBTI+ rights and abortion. Because of Bukele's millennial-president profile, some thought he would be at least open for discussion on these topics, but so far his stances have only become more and more conservative. Recently, he declared on Facebook that he had ordered the removal of any text that could open the door for same-sex marriage or abortion from his regime's proposed constitutional reforms. In May, 2021, members of congress from his political party archived a gender identity bill. These moves have drawn strong criticism from feminists, LGBTI+ organizations and progressive youth.

Third, his political party Nueva Ideas' talking points might still look and sound good to some but conditions for working class families are simply not changing. An unprecedented public relations strategy has been central to keeping the masses distracted from the most pressing issues but after two and a half years in power, and with all branches of the government at his mercy, more people are starting to realize the contradiction between what's depicted on social media and what their actual socioeconomic conditions are.

Increasing cost of living, disappearances, gang control of the territories, vulnerability to climate change, and femicide have all worsened, and with so many frustrated people fleeing the country, 2021 may have played out as the year with the most Salvadoran detentions in the US border in history. Former officials from the previous FMLN party government have been subject to political perse-

cution and journalists have faced sweeping censorship. Meanwhile, criminalization of social movements, six of which have been raided by the Office of the Attorney General in recent days, including Las Melidas and PROVIDA, are provoking outrage.

Conditions for a more solid shift in youth consciousness in 2022 seem certain. Social movements are seizing the opportunity for renewal and incorporating new generations into the struggle. While Nayib has invested a great deal of time in attacking the traditional parties, the FMLN and ARENA, the majority of the vast array of organizations, movements and figures of the growing opposition cannot be classified as part of either party.

Some of the most visible opposition has come from progressive NGO sectors, while less visible, are activists, young and old, who are building on decades of campesino struggles, fighting for sustainable solutions to provide food and end hunger for communities and defend El Salvador against the occupation of the United States and transnational corporations. Rural organizations of the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC) and La Via Campesina have decades of confronting neoliberal policies in Latin American agriculture and pushing for profound changes in social and productive structures and relations. These, and other organizations and communities, exist as steadfast units of decades of anti-imperialist struggle, and are preparing to challenge Bukele while reinvigorating the fight against neoliberalism and militarism in Central America, guided by lessons derived from the historic struggles of El Salvador's indigenous campesinos and popular organizations in past decades.

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Tracing the Line, or, the Promissory Politics of Climate Change

BY FICTILIS

DELIVERY LINES: AMAZON'S SUPPLY CHAIN

In 2019 Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos made a critical articulation about contemporary capitalism, akin to Vanderbilt's "The public be damned" or Thatcher's "There no such thing as society"—quotations of the elite that serve to define their epoch. The quote in question didn't get quite as much media attention at the time as Bezos's post-space-travel reminder to Amazon employees and customers that "you paid for this," though that statement was similarly telling and deservedly ridiculed. Rather, it went relatively overlooked within a speech Bezos gave at a special press conference held for the announcement of Amazon's Climate Pledge, a set of energy and purchasing goals ostensibly intended to address climate change. In attempting to explain the connectedness of capitalist firms and recruit more signatories to the pledge, Bezos also characterized the neoliberal, data-driven, always-on gig economy that has become relevant to enough of life to define our present era. "We are all a part of each other's supply chains."

PRODUCTION LINES: LABOR SURVEILLANCE

Amazon has become known for subjecting the people that make up its own vast supply chain—employees as well as "independent" contractors—to demanding performance standards. And judging performance against stated goals requires self-monitoring. Amazon worker performance is tracked via infrastructure that produces data, which then contributes to the dataset that is used to make increasingly robust performance benchmarks. This self-perpetuating cycle of data-driven surveillance has profound implications for safety and general working conditions, both inside and outside of fulfillment centers. This follows the larger "Uberization" of the economy, where digital platforms serve as intermediaries between customers and networked service providers. Workers do not own the surveillance-cum-employment platforms or the data they collect, nor do they have a say in what data is collected and how. With more work happening offsite, remote, or by contractors, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between inside and outside the workplace, on the clock

and off, or to tell where the production line is—and how it might be stopped. And as more data on location, health, and consumption is collected and connected to work, performance metrics extend outside of the workplace to the extent that what is being produced is data.

LEDGER LINES: ACCOUNTING FOR SCOPE

Worker surveillance has its analog in a company's internal processes of accounting for environmental impacts. Measuring a different kind of efficiency, firms carefully track their own operational processes according to categories like energy use, material throughput, and waste. Land-intensive programs to mitigate the environmental impacts of these operations similarly depend on measurements like the carbon sequestration abilities of various non-human organisms or entire ecosystems. Land itself is made to perform labor, and its performance is tracked, measured, and evaluated, quantified, and financialized in the form of carbon offsets, ecosystem services, biodiversity, and other climate mitigation policies. The ability of both forms of labor to become all-encompassing—i.e. you're always at work, and everything has an environmental impact—leaves much room for the setting of arbitrary boundaries that suit specific purposes.

Like the lines drawn between employee and subcontractor, which allow the company to avoid responsibility for safety, health, and other issues of worker wellbeing, sustainability reporting uses the notion of "scope" to delineate what the company is and isn't accountable for, or their "lines of responsibility." In carbon accounting, a widely used three-tier system purports to designate what is and isn't under a company's control. But the math gets fuzzy, and the idea of "control" becomes a free pass to absolve responsibility by only claiming territory when it's convenient or easy. A producer might take responsibility for their own operations: direct emissions, such as the emissions of their own buildings (Scope 1), as well as energy they purchase and consume, such as electricity that powers their factories (Scope 2). But oftentimes indirect emissions, like the emissions of their contractors and subcontractors, or other impacts along the value chain from suppliers or producers, are written out

because they are "outside of their control." Just as no one is checking back on the mechanics of meeting prior, outdated carbon neutrality pledges, no one is really policing the boundaries that determine scope, and where responsibility lies. A company may not directly "control" the work of its subcontractors, but it still exerts influence over them through performance metrics. The scale of Amazon's aggregate demand influences those in its supply chain who may be technically "out of scope" for the self-monitoring of its climate impacts. In this way, as in much shady accounting, firms can have it both ways. Its measurements of worker safety or climate impact can be both on the books and off the books in the larger system of social, financial, and reputational accounting.

SIGNATURE LINES: PROMISSORY POLITICS

Amazon's Climate Pledge is just one of many public announcements of environmentally-motivated goals that came to dominate political discussion from the late twentieth century onwards. As innovations in data science made long term climate modeling increasingly robust, and everyday experience made this science increasingly undeniable, it became common practice for businesses, governments, and consortiums of both of these to make public promises, pledges, and agreements that set future target dates for action or major milestones. Anticipated by the military and corporate tradition of scenario building and forecasting, and further enabled by the increasing power and ubiquity of networked computers and accompanying datafication, this promissory politics is encouraged and made sensible by cultures of tracking and measurement in business management and personal self-improvement. Promise-making has become a regular part of the brand management of corporate firms and governmental entities sensitive to investors, employees, customers, and other stakeholders' concerns about so-called "non-financial" factors, known in industry lingo as "ESG" (environment, social, and governance). But the practice of promising cannot be dismissed as mere greenwashing, as it is so earnestly blind to its own contradictions to appear pathological, and so

widespread as to become nearly obligatory. Corporate promises are voluntary, piecemeal. They may be touted as backed by science, but they are not backed by any kind of governance. They are, instead, presented as better alternatives to government regulation. Amazon's Climate Pledge itself, and the PR messaging around it, was crafted to achieve a one-upmanship of not only the US government, but of the coordinated efforts of the nations of the world, its target date prominently advertised as "ten years sooner" than the dates set in the Kyoto Protocol. Efforts to gain signatories to the pledge thus represent a different form of coordination: an organizing effort on the part of the capitalist class to stave off regulation and convince the public that an unfettered market can be trusted to solve climate change. Bezos's purchasing of naming rights to Seattle's Key Arena, formerly owned by Key Bank's parent company KeyCorp, and choosing to name it not Amazon Arena but "Climate Pledge Arena," underscores just how much of a stunt this is; a staged competition between the false binary of market and government in the arena of public policy.

Corporate environmental commitments usually take the form of some future date at which the company expects to reach net-zero carbon emissions for some percentage, or some part, of its operations. Since the practice is still relatively new in the business world, and old press releases have a way of disappearing from

public view, progress toward past goals can be difficult to measure. And measurements of current promises are subject to the same creative accounting involved in their drafting, with so much room for interpretation in variables like the cost of carbon, the type of offset and how it is measured, how the scope of "operations" is defined, which emissions count, how "renewable" is defined, what baseline the percentage is judged against, and so on.

Governments who have been in the promise-making business longer tend to leave behind paper trails of announcements, agreements, and agendas that reveal promise-making as an ongoing game of missing targets and setting new ones, a game whose rules require constant moving of goalposts. US President Jimmy Carter's 1979 target for 20% of the nation's energy to come from renewable sources by the year 2000 was moved forward by President Barack Obama in 2013, thirteen years after the initial deadline had passed, to a new goal of 2020. The nation's promises, at least, are renewable. Perhaps in recognition of this embarrassing precedent, President Joe Biden offered a target percentage range of 50–52% for reduction in US greenhouse gas pollution. The precision of this range, appearing to be backed by some kind of math, is belied by the fact that it is measured against pollution levels from the seemingly arbitrary date of 2005.

The archive of United Nations policy documents reads like an obituary of past commitments: the unmet goals of Agenda 21 (1992–2000) were replaced by the Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015), which were replaced by the current Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030), praised by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as a "universal, transformative, and integrated agenda" and a "historic turning point for our world." In September 2020, the news passed with little fanfare that of the twenty targets negotiated by the world's environment ministers as part of the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity goals, not a single one had been met. Even the much-lauded Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, the round of promises that still informs most status-quo policy, were at the time of their negotiation already recognized by some involved as insufficient: dependent on increased ambition of each nation's voluntary commitments, undergirded by blind faith in technological innovation, and unfindable through existing government and philanthropic means. One gets the feeling that each agreement is the kind a person makes simply to end the discussion, and get back to whatever it was they were doing until the deadline passes and we all agree to sit down together again, pretending to make progress.

Signature lines—which somehow make these promises feel official—have conveniently replaced another line of struggle: the picket line. Resulting from existing public and private pressure, like employees and lobbyists working through board consortia, the main function of these signature lines is to allow business to continue as usual. They make verbal commitments that help employees feel better about their jobs and the companies they work for. But these promises usually just involve more feel-good strategies like offsets that don't address problems with underlying business models, let alone whole economies. They function as a form of creative accounting instead of creating accountability, and allow for deferral of the kind of "rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented" action that the IPCC now says is needed to avoid a two-degree temperature rise.

The fundamental logic of these promises is familiar to anyone who has ever been in debt and set up a payment plan; a promise to pay in smaller increments towards a future date of completion. Indeed, climate change may be framed as a situation of intergenerational debt, but one with a kind of compound interest in the warming that has already or is or due to occur, such that the overall debt only grows despite any incremental payoffs. All these pledges and targets seek to buy time but nobody gets paid, and the feeling of imminent existential foreclosure remains.

That these kinds of targets always fall conveniently on years that mark decades or half-centuries like 2030 and 2050 reveals their basis more in public relations than a science whose predictive modeling might suggest more specific dates. Projects like Biden's "30 by 30," which has the

The assembly line of Fiat 1100 at the Lingotto Building in Turin, Italy, 1939.





A collapsed section of a historic stone wall in South Africa's Kruger National Park, where populations along the shared border with Mozambique are being displaced in the name of conservation. Source: National Parks Gallery/Public Domain.

Picket line at Mid-City Realty Company, South Chicago, Illinois. Photo: John Vachon, 1941. Source: Library of Congress.



goal of conserving 30% of land for biodiversity by the year 2030, sound more like a business magazine's annual roundup of young entrepreneurs than a concrete, science-informed plan. To be fair, the farther off a target, the more justifiable its imprecise positioning. And round numbers certainly are more memorable. But given the margins between 1.5 and 4 degrees of warming, such arbitrary selection or nearest-decade rounding could mean the difference between life or death, survival or extinction.

Following Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is politics by other means, such public promises, goals, statements, resolutions, protocols, and agreements can be understood as a continuation or transubstantiation not of politics but the absence of politics. Or the avoidance of politics. Promises are not merely policies that can't be policed, they are fundamentally non-policies to begin with. Their main effect, if not their actual intent, is neither to initiate, nor even to guide action, but instead to forestall it.

In some sense, politics has always been about making promises. But what we see today is a phenomenon wherein promises replace politics. The willingness to make promises set in the future is directly proportional to the unwillingness to make the political changes needed in the present. Hence the increasing proliferation, and desperation, of promises.

BORDER LINES: CONSERVATION AS ENCLOSURE

In order for all these promises to be kept and conservation goals to be met, huge swathes of land would need to be used, affecting its existing designation, zoning, legal rights, and claims. Much of the world—up to fifty percent of it, according to E.O. Wilson's influential "Half Earth" proposal—would essentially become a kind of "promise land." This comes after the wave of land acquisitions in developing countries by foreign wealth funds, private equity funds, agricultural producers, and other major firms in the food and agribusiness industry following the sharp increase in international food prices during 2007–2008. These land grabs were also about water (since land rights are often rights to the water below) and energy, since biofuels are a way for rich countries to meet their renewable energy targets. The widespread practice of trading REDD credits ("Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation") for carbon offset programs has further fueled this global land rush on a scale some compare to that of the colonial era, giving the name "green grabbing" to this massive appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends.

The world's proposed climate plans—which would require both massive conservation offsetting to meet net-zero demands and rare earth metal mining to increase battery and panel manufacturing—will rapidly expand this global land grab. The entire enterprise amounts to a

new enclosure movement, akin to what historians describe taking place in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in late medieval England, except now, as some critics of platform capitalism have already argued, may be from capitalism to some kind of neo-feudalism. It's as if the inequitable ownership structure of the digital platform economy is being inscribed upon the physical landscape; the boundary lines of the terrestrial platform called Earth being redrawn in its image.

EXCURSUS: DRAFT LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

The powerful tools that allow us to meet together today, across vast distances of space, depend on equally powerful tools of exploitation that affect resources and people in more remote locations. To extract the resources that go into cables, towers, satellites, and devices; to manufacture and distribute products; to host the platforms and run the servers; to power and to cool the equipment; and to store the resulting waste. All of that happens on land. Sometimes underwater, or land that is submerged. But always in place. And all of these places once belonged, or still belong, to many different peoples whose names are too numerous to list here. The ease with which we now click a few buttons and experience each other's presence obscures the violence required to create and maintain the infrastructure that makes it possible.

While we gather today from different places with their own histories, our gathering depends on even more places with which we all have a direct material connection. We acknowledge those with deeper connections to the lands that are affected by the infrastructure used to gather today, and the ways in which such lands have been and continue to be appropriated via coercive means, ranging from outright theft to treaties or contracts signed under duress within legacies of unjust relations. Our acknowledgement of these relations is a first step toward repairing them. This acknowledgement is in no way intended to replace or diminish the practice of traditional land acknowledgements or the specific acknowledgements of host institutions and participants, but rather it is an attempt to seriously engage them and extend them into an online networked environment where their relevance may not be so obvious.

BATTLE LINES

If part of the means of production is the land upon which it takes place—the grounds of production—then its ownership matters. If production will increasingly mean not production of commodities in the traditional sense, but production of (commoditized) climate mitigation, then workers must own this means of mitigation. If production increasingly takes place within platforms of data collection and management, then workers must own the means of knowledge

production. Furthermore, if workers can also "own," in the sense of taking responsibility for something, or claiming it as their work, and climate change produces new means of performing, monitoring, and defining labor, then Marx himself—a habitual practitioner of the classical chiasmus and other literary inversions—might have endorsed a contemporary call for ownership of the production of means.

Bezos's motto—"We are all a part of each other's supply chains"—is more than just a technical description of the networked organization of firms like Amazon. It neatly encapsulates the dis-organized state of labor among its own suppliers and the broader global precariat, as well as the culture of personal branding and internalized, mediatized person-as-corporation, the ideology of individual consumer responsibility for climate change, and a sense of obligatory participation in the given economic system in order to merely survive.

This global networked "supply chain" may have largely replaced the traditional single-plant assembly or picket line as a locus of labor struggle, but it too contains choke points and places along the chain that can be blocked. A chain, after all, is still a kind of line; one that is only as strong as its weakest link. Only its networked aspect makes it more resilient, as exemplified in Amazon's own third-party platform model. The supply chain metaphor contains within it the seeds of its own undoing, if only we recognize it

not as a statement of corporate social responsibility, but of worker solidarity. The workers of this world have nothing to lose but their supply chains.

Seeing a network means connecting dots. And what we do when we connect dots is draw lines. Capitalism is global, and so are its effects. This much can be plainly seen. These dots have been connected, these lines have been drawn. But the lines themselves are not yet fully seen for what they are: battle lines.

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FICTILIS is a curatorial collective whose research-based projects share ongoing interests in language and taxonomy, materialisms and waste flows, monuments and public memory, and political ecology. In 2015, FICTILIS founded the Museum of Capitalism, an institution dedicated to educating this generation and future generations about the ideology, history, and legacy of capitalism.

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Is This Hell?

BY CHUCK MERTZ

How a low budget Chicago radio talk show became a conduit of international dissent

➔ *This is Hell* started as a one-hour summer replacement, an irregularly-scheduled fill-in in case someone was unable to make their shift. The irregular schedule fit an irregular show featuring an accordionist and a piano player accompanying me, a bitter, blind, broke, gap-toothed radio show host reading the news, and discussing it with friends in a large production room where bands would usually record.

I had also just started an internship in the Chicago Fox affiliate's newsroom. I saw how news was made, and what *This is Hell!* could be started coming into focus.

On all the news it was nothing but smiling faces, excitement over low taxes, balanced budgets, and skyrocketing stock markets. The deep denialism of a burning planet and any complicity capitalism played in its destruction was blatant and, somehow, not obvious to those on TV and those watching. Nor was there any recognition of democracy and the market's competing interests—eventually, we will have to choose between profits and people.

A permanent public affairs programming slot opened at WNUR on Saturday mornings, and we were chosen to fill it. The requirement was that during each hour of the show, we had to do a longform interview. Our worry was booking in-studio guests. That's when we found out the on-air control room and interview booth adjacent to where we were producing our show now had the capability to call guests and put them on-air. Back then, our greatest concerns were the impact of free trade, corporate power, and the shifting of liberal media to a neoliberal stance that prioritized profits over everything else. We were witnessing the abandonment of values that gave us Social Security, Medicare, unemployment coverage, and labor unions protecting secure, well-paid jobs. We knew it was all disappearing. Republicans were always on board with defunding social services, but it didn't really happen until neoliberal Democrats agreed. Our guests were critical of globalization and the

World Trade Organization before, during, and after the Battle for Seattle, and we aired their warnings that business would become the law. We were the first media outlet in the United States to feature an interview with the reporter who broke the story that Florida had vetted fifty-six thousand votes from the state's 2000 presidential voter rolls, helping George W. Bush steal the presidency.

Our opposition to sanctions on Iraq caught the attention of *Voices in the Wilderness* and its co-coordinator, Kathy Kelly. Kathy and her group were purposely and publicly violating US trade sanctions against Iraq, inviting the US to stop them and charge them with a crime. They were against the war on Iraq before the war on Iraq was officially declared.

Voices' support opened up the possibility to interview anyone we wanted. Everyone the media was busy ignoring looked up to the work of *Voices*—and *Voices* knew everyone.

For instance, ten days prior to 9/11, Noam Chomsky first appeared on our show. We interviewed Howard Zinn several times because of *Voices*.

Four days after 9/11, Noam returned to *This is Hell!* for his first live interview following the tragedy. Noam had gotten it right: the wars that were coming, the logics that would be used, the media coverage that would promote war, and the public being convinced that it was necessary—not only for US national security, but for the good people of Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the fact that millions would be displaced and hundreds of thousands, mostly civilians, would be killed. Having had Noam and Howard on, we could now easily book opponents of the war on drugs in the States and in Mexico. We hosted guests reporting from Bolivia during the oil and water wars that would bring Evo Morales, the first elected indigenous leader, to power, and we talked to people in Venezuela covering the failed US coup to overthrow Hugo Chavez.



With the Iraq war raging and Guantanamo open, we talked to human rights advocates who discussed the capture and unlawful detention of foreigners on foreign land. We even spoke with Moazzem Begg who had been held at Guantanamo unlawfully for nearly three years. As early as 2003, we had economist Dean Baker on to repeatedly warn us of a US housing bubble. Dean was betting anyone a thousand dollars that the bubble would burst. When it did, the news media insisted that nobody had seen it coming. By 2008, we were on to the next presidential election, talking to critics who doubted how progressive candidate Barack Obama was, or if would be if elected. While the media saw history in the making with the possibility of the first African-American to be elected president, our guests were more interested in substance. What they saw was not hope and change but more of the same, including a declared foreign policy that appeared very much like the outgoing Bush administration's. The "War on Terror" continued throughout Obama's presidency.

When Occupy happened, we interviewed the people who originally came up with the idea, and the activists who ran with it in Zuccotti Park, as well as here in Chicago and out in Oakland, California. We've heard from Nuit Debout and the ZADs and covered the Yellow Vest movement. We were fortunate to reconnect with Brian Mier right around the beginning of the Operation Lava Jato scam that weaponized Brazilian law to overthrow democracy in Brazil and install current President Jair Bolsonaro.

As for the pandemic, in March 2020 when President Trump was claiming the virus was a Chinese bioweapon and predicting seventy thousand would die from the virus, epidemiologist Rob Wallace came on our show—repeatedly—to tell us the virus was likely zoonotic, and that at least a half million would die in the US, possibly a million-and-half before the virus was no longer a threat.

And from the beginning, there was always climate change.

I don't know about you, but to me... *This is Hell!*

Chuck Mertz is a bitter, blind, broke, and gap-toothed radio show host. Originally from Michigan, he has lived in Chicago since the 1990s. His program *This is Hell!*, has been manufacturing dissent since 1996 on Chicago's Sound Experiment, WNUR 89.3FM. It streams live every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 10AM (Chicago time) at www.thisishell.com. The world broadcast premieres of those shows air Saturday mornings on WNUR from 9AM to 1PM (Chicago time). It also airs abbreviated one-hour versions on Lumpen Radio and Radio Free Moscow KRFP.

➔ In late 2017, a report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation detailing “nine persistent extremist movements” in the United States was made public. At the time, most people in the United States were still dealing with the very raw emotions following the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, just a few months prior. However, what seemed to captivate public attention the most regarding the revelation of these “nine persistent extremist movements” was the category known as “black identity extremists”. An egregious classification indeed. Much discourse was made online and in the media over whether or not it was right to lump this group, “BIE,” into the same category that included other groups such as white supremacists and sovereign citizens.

2.4

The Socialist Case for Puerto Rican Independence

BY AUSTIN GONZÁLEZ

What did not seem to garner as many headlines or online discourse was another group listed in this classification, “Puerto Rican nationalists.” As a matter of fact, if one were to engage with the modern United States socialist or progressive movements and ask them if they viewed the United States as an empire with colonies, one should not be surprised at how many people may reject this assertion outright. Further, if one were to ask any socialists in the United States if they knew of any Puerto Rican nationalists, or of the history or current status of the nationalist movement, one should also not be surprised to receive a glazed-over look in the eyes of the person they are speaking to. The fact of the matter, whether



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citizens of the United States want to acknowledge it or not, the Puerto Rican independence movement is one of the greatest “domestic” threats to the US empire, and the United States government has been aware of this from the very day the islands were annexed in 1898. From the days of Puerto Rican nationalists like Ramón Emeterio Betances, Lolita Lebrón, and Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, to everything and everybody in between, Puerto Ricans have been fighting for their freedom quite literally since Christopher Columbus himself landed on the island of Boriken in 1493. It is well past time for socialists in the United States to recognize that, yes, the United States is an empire, and, yes, the United States does have colonies, which they are actively exploiting in modern times. As the rest of the world has declared colonialism dead, it is common for the average Puerto Rican to wonder just what the islands will look like at the end of this century, that is if we even make it to the end of this century in one piece.

The Puerto Rican independence struggle is one that predates even the United States’. Long before the ink on the United States Declaration of Independence was dry, indigenous Taino and Afro-Puerto Ricans had been in struggle against the Spanish conquistadors subjugating the islands of the Caribbean. Puerto Rico remains the oldest remaining colony in the world, an island chain condemned to eternal servitude toward imperial powers many miles away from its own shores. It was Puerto Rican nationalists, such as the aforementioned Betances, who helped continue this history of struggle against the Spanish colonial empire and would help play a critical role in the Cuban Wars for Independence of the late 19th century.

To this day, there is a saying among Cubans and Puerto Ricans: *Cuba y Puerto Rico son de un pájaro las dos alas*. Cuba and Puerto Rico are two wings of the same bird. One only needs to look at the national flags of both Cuba and Puerto Rico to see the intentional twin design that early nationalists of both nations helped develop in

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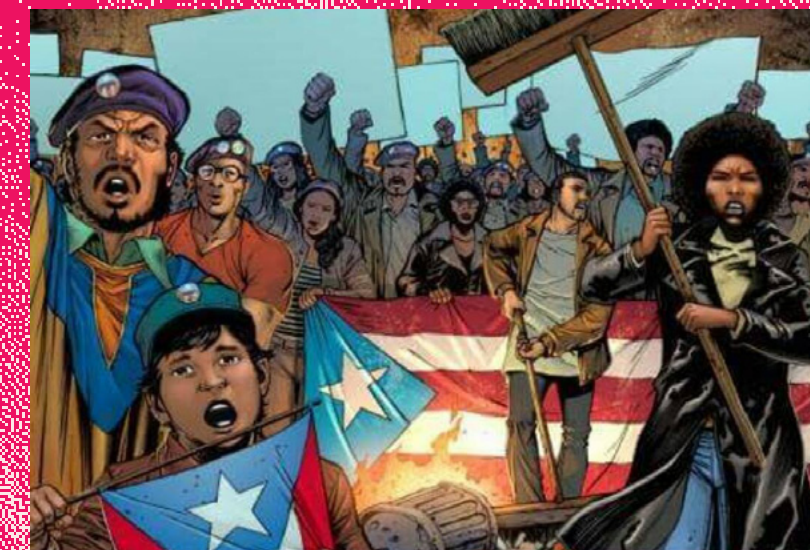
solidarity with one another. However, while Cuba was able to find political freedom at the dawn of the 20th century (albeit a neocolonial one, at the time), Puerto Rico, along with the Philippines, Guam, and other Pacific Islands, was annexed by the United States. After decades of heroic struggle, the Filipinos were finally able to wrest control of their political sovereignty from the United States empire. As for Puerto Ricans, Chamorros, and other Pacific islanders, well, that wait continues to this very day.

Contrary to popular belief among some sectors of the United States, Puerto Rico’s continued colonial status has not been the result of a lack of fighting back or of a lack of any level of popular support. The simple fact is that any time the Puerto Rican independence movement has received an upsurge in activity, it has been summarily crushed by the United States and its colonial lackeys on the islands. One needs to look no further than the independence movements of the 1930s and 50s, led by Albizu Campos and the Partido Nacionalista. The culture of intimidation and fear that has dominated on the islands through tactics such as *carpetas*, the infamous secret documents compiled on independentistas, has consistently forced nationalists and independentistas into clandestine activity. Whether it be the Young Lords and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party of the 1970s and 1980s, or the Macheteros of more recent memory, the United States has never lost sight of one of its top “domestic” threats. This is the risk that every Puerto Rican nationalist takes when they are fully open regarding their views on the status of their nation. In modern day Puerto Rico, there are few things more revolutionary that one can do than wave that light blue flag, and dare to be unashamedly, unabashedly, unequivocally Boricua.

In last year’s general election on the islands, hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans opted to do just that. Dare to be Boricua. Under the charismatic new leadership of Juan Dalmau and his bold *Patria Nueva* platform, the Puerto Rican Independence Party received its highest share of the vote in over fifty years. It should be no surprise that support for independence is on the rise and continuing to accelerate. The islands, once cited as an example of overpopulation (and, therefore, the justification for sterilizing black and brown Puerto Rican women), now continue to depopulate at alarming rates. Cryptocurrency colonizers from the United States have already declared Puerto Rico a potential utopia for gringo settlers to enjoy a relaxing time on the beach while they continue to enjoy the fruits of the exploitation of Puerto Rico’s Latin American brothers and sisters abroad.

In Puerto Rico, the two party system itself, long dominated by the supporters of either Statehood (New Progressive Party) or of the Commonwealth status quo (Popular Democratic Party), has continued to be delegitimized in a constant struggle of one upping another over which side can let the people of Puerto Rico

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down more. For so long, Puerto Ricans were told that independence was a sure path toward unemployment, economic devastation, and even worse, to Cuba—or now, Venezuela! Now, as the islands suffer blackout after blackout caused by the unfiltered gringo capitalism and the privatization of the electrical grid, it is hard for one living in Puerto Rico not to ask how exactly could things possibly get any worse than they are right now? Indeed, the Statehood party’s moral bankruptcy can only be matched by the Status Quo party’s ideological bankruptcy. More and more Puerto Ricans are embracing alternatives and asserting their own right to nationhood.

For socialists in the United States and across the world, it should be simple. Puerto Rican statehood is incompatible with a proper socialist vision, and so is inherently an acceptance and adherence to United States exceptionalism. For Puerto Ricans, statehood is to accept a deal with the world’s foremost imperial power in turning a blind eye to the exploitation of the rest of Latin America (and the world), not to mention the continued exploitation of black and brown Puerto Ricans by white Puerto Ricans. If one’s vision for the future of Puerto Rico is one where Dominicans, a people merely 80 miles to the west, are unable to land on the islands without being treated as outsiders and discriminated against, any self-respecting socialist should want no part of this future. Let us consider how Puerto Rico was utilized as a base for United States surveillance and operations against its neighbor in Venezuela as recently as 2019. How preposterous is it that Puerto Ricans are unable to trade with, or even visit, the closest continental landmass in Venezuela? It is undeniable that Puerto

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Rican statehood itself is a violation of the very laws of nature that God himself developed for the islands of the Caribbean and South America. These lands have an ancient history together, dating back to the very first peoples who populated the islands of the Antilles, and the South American coast adjacent to them.

The empire of the United States is a very real thing. An active threat across the world, rampaging across Africa and Asia, and continuing to subjugate the entire Americas. To be a socialist in the United States is to recognize that we all have a sacred duty, and that duty is to be fighting the military industrial complex from within—fighting the United States empire within the metropole itself. If we do not let the voices of Puerto Ricans—of Chamorro, of Samoans, of indigenous peoples across the United States—lead, we do a great disservice to the storied history of socialist movements providing support and assistance to decolonial movements fighting for freedom.

Lastly, I humbly say to my fellow socialists and leftists: if the FBI has deemed “Puerto Rican nationalists” worthy of attention, maybe you should too.

Austin Gonzalez is an organizer based in Richmond, Virginia, as well as a member of the Puerto Rican diaspora. He also serves as a member of the National Political Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America.



2.5

The Symphonious Fugitive: How to Represent That Which Is Not There?

BY RUSLANA LICHTZIER

A review of the exhibition *If only this mountain between us could be ground to dust*, by Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme (both born in 1983), the Art Institute of Chicago.

First was the sound: an electronic symphony, fuliginous and mournful, yet terribly beautiful and alluring. The music, “a riotous solemnity,” slipped past the gallery walls to where I was standing, in a dark green hallway. I listened to the beat-stripped techno tones, layered with dusky vocals and field recordings, while approaching a wall; or rather, I sensed the tactile music that brushed against me as it fled its architectural enclosure.

If only this mountain between us could be ground to dust, by the Palestinian-American duo Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme (both born in 1983), curated by Maite Borjabad López-Pastor, was on display at the Art Institute of Chicago, in July 31, 2021-January 3, 2022. Paraphrasing in its title a popular Palestinian song, the exhibition presented that which the state of Israel—with the support of its American allies—works hard at obfuscating, namely the ongoing destruction of Palestinian history and lives. This task that the artists took upon them-

selves began with a paradox: how to represent that which is not there. How to represent the undoing of Palestinian life and culture? And, how to represent the Palestinian bodies that subsist in spite of their ceaseless obliteration, that manage to escape with fugitive means, by evading their own capture and representation?

A free-standing wall opened the exhibition, shimmering with scattered words in reflective vinyl. I composed and recomposed them into phrases as I walked along: “Bodies not supposed to be seen like this / A violent act / Museums are graveyards on the piles of dead bodies / Once an artist now just a tool.” Beyond this wall a path was marked with saturated colors: bright magenta light radiated from curtained windows, intersecting the gliding color fields that escaped a large, site-specific video installation. The installation’s design was simple and incredibly effective: at the center of the room sat projectors pointing toward the four surrounding walls, each partially obstructed by freestanding plywood



Installation shot of Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme: *If only this mountain between us could be ground to dust*, 2021. Photograph by Aidan Fitzpatrick. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

panels that broke up the projections. The arrangement implicated the audience, since there was no darkened space to withdraw to.

The installation featured two multi-channel videos, shown consecutively. “Oh shining star testify” (يهدشا قعطاسا لة مچزللا ادتشيأ اي , 2019–21) presents CCTV footage taken by the Israeli military near Hebron on March 19, 2014, showing Yusuf Shawamreh, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy, who was on his way to pick akkub flowers, a delicacy in Palestinian cuisine, growing wild at high altitudes and blooming for only a short time. After the military shot the teenager dead for crossing the separation fence into what used to be his family’s land, the surveillance video was released for a short period and circulated online. The artists layer the monochromatic CCTV footage with scenes of lush green and yellow fields and text in English and Arabic.

The video grapples with a question raised by Saidiya Hartman in her influential 2008 essay “Venus in Two Acts”: “How does one revisit the scene of subjection without replicating the grammar of violence?” As it circulated on various media channels, the CCTV evidence—which the artists managed to download before it was removed from the web—contributed to the destruction of Palestinians, who are not only killed but also represented as killed, and as soon to be killed. “Oh shining star testify” responds to this saturation by doubly fragmenting the logic of the apartheid that produced this representation. The first fragmentation happens with the layering and visual splitting of the video into multiple channels. The second occurs in the gallery, by projecting onto uneven, overlapping surfaces that further fracture the visual field. In doing so, the artists poetically shatter the linear, catastrophic history imposed on Palestine.

One notable scene features a person passing through a field to pick the same plant Shawamreh was foraging when he was killed. Here, the saturated violence inflicted on the Palestinian body seem to be absorbed by the land that is depicted with bright hues of greens and vivid yellows. In doing so, the work presents not only the brutalities of a space that is structured by apartheid but also the beauty of loved and intimately known indigenous land.

A second multi-channel video, “At those terrifying frontiers where the existence and disappearance of people fade into each other” (مهاجرتخاو سزانلا دوجو اهيف طلتخي يتلا قبعومرلا دودجلا كالت يلغ , 2019–21), consists of human avatars and textual excerpts from Edward Said’s most personal and poetic work, *After the Last Sky* (1984). The avatars are based on online images of participants in the Great March of Return, a massive civil movement held weekly on Fridays in 2018-19, during which thousands Gazan Palestinians—who are kept in the world’s biggest “open” prison—protested their inhumane living conditions and demanded the right to return to a homeland occupied by Israel. The artists rendered these images through software while reenacting the protestors’ body movements and



feeding the embodied performances back into the software; the results register any missing visual information in the avatars' faces as incomplete features, as glitches, and as scars.

The attention the artists give to these gaps in visual data is especially evocative. By working with that which is not there, they highlight the fact that the low-res recordings are of people generally blocked from sight—for the last fifteen years Gaza has been under siege by Israel, with all media and humanitarian access barred. Working against the state which both obliterates Palestinian lives and repudiates their obliteration, the artists rendered the avatars with their own bodies, resulting in a singularly uncanny depiction. "Uncanny" is used here in its Freudian sense of *unheimlich*; the original German indicates the local, the home (*das Heim*) which has become un-home-like, or uncanny. I evoke the *Unheimlich* because though the artists were in Palestine when the Great March of Return was unfolding, they couldn't reach and join the protestors due to the architecture of the apartheid. Split and seized across an intimate distance—the protests were happening only 60 miles from the artists—produced an uncanniness that permeates the work.

Further, rendering the missing data as scars on skin visually reinscribes the mostly unseen, and yet fully intentional, debilitation of Palestinians by the Israeli state. During the Great March of Return, the Israeli military perfected its so-called humanitarian approach—shooting to cripple and not to kill—and maimed thousands of people who were then denied medical attention, which meant the loss of any possibility of full rehabilitation. This military strategy is imposed on Palestinian bodies already being maimed daily by the Israeli state, which limits the amount of water, calories, and megawatts allocated to Gaza, keeping it, as Benjamin Netanyahu said, at "the bare minimum [needed] for survival." Hence, the scars imposed on the avatars should not read as trauma-porn but as documentary.

With these glitches the artists propose, as well, a radical new tactic. The unregistered avatar holds the potential to virtually escape the definition of Palestinians as being outside the law—ille-

gal and condemned—becoming instead that which evades the law and visual capture. Escaping the violence of the apartheid algorithm, which is programmed to identify that which it condemns to the barest of lives, the glitched-and-missing-data avatars are fugitives.

The fugitive and the fugue come together in a series of small, spare white on black text prints. In "Don't read poetics in these lines" (2010–21), tweets responding to the Arab Spring ironically morph into concrete poetry. The compositions were constructed via erasure, with the artists heavily cutting-up tweets they have been collecting since 2010. The internet, and the constant chaotic calls it evokes and serves, what the artists call an "amnesiac archive," is darkened here and represented as a space of absences. The resulting poetry is stunning.

If only this mountain between us could be ground to dust is symphonious. Its poetic tactics resonate as I am writing these words. It reverberates a demand I sensed while being in the show, which by design insists on my inclusion. Shedding light on my body, it literally shed light on my presumed stance as an outside viewer and illuminated my position as being already implicated in the ceaseless obliteration of Palestinian presence and history. And yet, the saturated and nuanced sonic and visual tones seduced me into an impossible state that was near to trance. I was spellbound, because the exhibition is terribly beautiful. In writing "terribly beautiful," I echo Moten, who wrote of it as an ontological state of black art (a category to which, in my opinion, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme belong). In *Black and Blur* Moten explains, "the music is a riotous solemnity, a terrible beauty. It hurts so much that we have to celebrate." And so I do, as this exhibition's anarchic force, its rituals of mourning and of grace, its wit and elegance keep reverberating.

Installation shot of Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme: *If only this mountain between us could be ground to dust*, 2021. Photograph by Aidan Fitzpatrick. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago



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Gentrifiers Latest Attack: Affordable Housing in Humboldt Park

BY XIOMARA RODRIGUEZ

➔ In May of 2021 it was announced that Chicago Alderman Maldonado and the CEO of Hispanic Housing, Paul Roldán, were moving forward with the building of a new 9-Story Affordable Housing Complex. This complex is part of Hispanic Housing Development Corporation's "Preserving Paseo Boricua" development strategy, which is working to bring affordable housing to our neighborhood so that longtime residents can afford to continue living in the community they have called home for generations.

Immediately after it was announced that the plan for the affordable housing complex was moving forward, a Block Club Chicago article came out centering the voices and discontent of a group who calls themselves the "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association". According to the article this group "opposes the project because of the lack of community involvement in the decision making process and because they think the building is too tall for the area". However, this article fails to mention the fact that this affordable housing complex plan came out of a mandate given to community leaders. This mandate was articulated in a summit sponsored by the Puerto Rican Agenda at Chi Arts High School with the participation of nearly 300 community members and community organizations including: LUCHA, Hispanic Housing, Casa Norte, Bickerdike, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, and Association House. The fact that this "East

Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" went to the press about how upset they were about a lack of community involvement in the decision making process, while completely disregarding the fact that community members came together to mandate this affordable housing complex, makes it pretty clear that the way the "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" defines their community is exclusive of their neighbors who support affordable housing.

This "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" describes itself on its facebook page as based in "a diverse neighborhood on Chicago's west side that is bordered by North Avenue, Western, Division Street, and California." As someone whose family, according to their partitioning, has lived in so-called "East Humboldt Park" for over five decades, I was shocked and disturbed by this neighborhood association's blatant disregard for the lives and well being of their neighbors who are being priced out of the community.

However, the East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association's response to this affordable housing complex is more than an isolated act of ignorance and selfishness. Their response speaks to the systemic violence our community has faced in the battle to survive against colonialism, capitalism, and white-supremacy. When a representative of the "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" by the name of Max Collopy is quoted saying "The adjacent buildings are either one story or four stories. There's no



building within the vicinity that's nine stories, let alone facing the park", he is not just saying that the view he is able to see from the park is more important to him than families having access to housing, he is acting from an awareness that we live in a world that values the voices of people who can afford housing over people who cannot.

Moreover, we cannot take this response by "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" to an affordable housing complex out of the context in which it was made. Firstly, the area that the "East Humboldt Park Neighborhood Association" has partitioned as "their" neighborhood is one of the areas in Greater Humboldt Park that has experienced some of the worst gentrification and price hikes. Additionally, the Hispanic Housing Development Corp's "Preserving Paseo Boricua" development strategy comes out of an acknowledgement of the decades of gentrification Puerto Ricans, specifically, have struggled against in Lincoln Park, Lakeview, River North, and now Humboldt Park. The struggle to find affordable housing has become central to the story of Puerto Ricans in Chicago, but the ways in which people have attempted to dispossess us from our housing hasn't only been through Block Club Chicago articles. If you walk to the corner of Rockwell and LeMoyné in so-called "East Humboldt Park" you will see a mural depicting a Brown woman calling for help from a burning building, there are hands breaking chains, and on one of the chains it says "Housing is Still the Issue". This mural is referenc-

ing the many Puerto Rican families we lost in Humboldt Park, because their landlords were conducting arson for profit. Arson for profit was an attack on the lives of our community members who were viewed as worthless by more wealthy landlords. This article in Block Club Chicago is an attack on our community members whose lives are seen as worthless by more wealthy neighbors who do not have a need for affordable housing.

It is incredibly dangerous to view this article and attack on the Hispanic Housing affordable housing complex as an isolated incident. My family and all Puerto Rican families in this community are here as a direct consequence of settler colonialism. Humboldt Park's existence is a direct result of the process of settler colonialism during which French and British settlers violently disappeared, murdered, and dispossessed Indigenous Bodéwadmikiwen, Kiikaapoi, Myaamia, Ochéthi Sakówin, and Peoria people. Similarly the Puerto Rican community is in Humboldt Park because of the same disgusting process of settler colonialism, because the United States, as a settler colonial nation-state, also operates as an empire utilizing external forms of colonization. The invasion and economic devastation of Puerto Rico by the U.S. forced the spatial deconcentration of dispossessed Puerto Ricans, like my grandparents, lured by the hope of low-wage employment to abandon their homes and family to occupy and settle on seized Indigenous land. The gentrifiers of Humboldt Park's actions are informed by this

gruesome legacy of settler colonialism with their latest attempt at dispossessing their low income neighbors of the only housing many of us can afford, and disappearing the culture/community we have cultivated out of necessity for generations replacing it with "co-living" apartment complexes geared towards millennials".

Xiomara Rodriguez is the Director of Informatics at the The Puerto Rican Cultural Center and is a lifelong resident of Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood.

No Cold War: why building opposition to the US attacks on China is crucial for humanity

BY FIONA EDWARDS

↳ The struggle to defeat Washington's new cold war against China is becoming the key focal point in international politics today.

Following a humiliating defeat in Afghanistan, the US is moving on from its disastrous "War on Terror", to concentrate on what US Secretary of State Blinken has described as the US's "greatest geopolitical test" of the 21st century – stopping the rise of China and maintaining US global dominance.

China's rapid economic rise, which has brought more than 850 million people out of poverty in 40 years, and taken China to the brink of becoming an advanced economy, that will soon be larger than the US, is regarded by the US political establishment as a challenge to their dominance and therefore intolerable. Unfortunately both the leaderships of the Democratic and Republican parties are united in their commitment to carry out a new cold war which aims to hold back the social, economic and technological development of China.

This new cold war is not only an attack on China's people, however, but an attack on all of humanity. US aggression against China constitutes a threat to world peace and prosperity and is a major obstacle to tackling the shared threats facing every human being such as avoiding climate catastrophe, ending the Covid 19 pandemic and building global economic recovery.

In response to this threatening US agenda, a new international movement against the cold war is growing that is demanding an end to US aggression and supporting global cooperation to deal with the real problems facing humanity.

BIDEN ESCALATES THE COLD WAR

The new cold war against China was launched by former US President Trump and has unfortunately been continued by Biden. The economic, propaganda and diplomatic attacks on China have been maintained, the focus on blocking China's

technological advance remains, and the US's military build-up against China in Pacific region is increasing.

The key difference between Trump and Biden's approach to attacking China is that the new US administration is attempting to build a wider international front of US allies, particularly amongst advanced economies in the Global North, to participate in these attacks.

At the most recent NATO summit in June 2021, a number of European governments unfortunately acceded to the new cold war agenda advanced by Biden. The summit's communiqué identified China's rise as a "systemic challenge" and a threat to the Western military alliance.

It is ridiculous to suggest that China poses any threat to the US or any other countries in NATO. China has no military forces close to the US or Europe. China does not send warships to roam around the coasts of the US or Europe.

The US, however, is stepping up its military encirclement of China. The US currently has 400 military bases surrounding China and the US military budget for 2022 of \$750 billion will

see hundreds of billions of dollars spent on upgrading US military capabilities to threaten China. Britain, France and Germany have sent warships to the South China Sea this year in politically provocative gestures of support for this US-led military build-up in the Pacific.

A further escalation of the new cold war against China took place in September, when Australia, the US and Britain announced the formation of a new military alliance known as AUKUS. This will see the US furnish Australia with the technology to deploy nuclear-powered submarines which is in violation of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The creation of AUKUS is an act of aggression against China which threatens peace and stability in the Pacific.

Discussion at the leadership level of the US military is particularly alarming. The Head of US Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard, wrote in January 2021: "There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons" and that the US "must shift its principal assumption from 'nuclear employment is a



not possible' to 'nuclear employment is a very real possibility'."

US-led military activity around China represents a clear danger to humanity. It risks that the cold war between the US and China could escalate into military clashes or even a hot war involving two nuclear armed states. The catastrophic consequences for humanity of miscalculations arising from this US aggression, including the threat of a nuclear confrontation, are too terrible to contemplate. Building a global peace movement against the growing threat of the US military in the Pacific region is therefore a key task for progressives across the world.

NEW COLD WAR IS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF HUMANITY

In addition to the dangers posed by increasing US militarism, the new cold war presents many other threats. A particular danger is that demonization of China by leading politicians and the mainstream media in the West – including the attempt to blame China for the Covid 19 pandemic - has fuelled a rapid increase in racism and hate crimes directed against people of Chinese, East and Southeast Asian heritage in the US and Europe.

Research from the forum Stop AAPI Hate revealed that there were nearly 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents in the US in 2020. This year saw the horrific massacre of eight people including six women of Asian heritage in Atlanta. A similar trend has occurred in Britain, where reported hate crimes against East and Southeast Asian people have risen by 50% in two years, from 1,492 incidents in 2018 to 2,212 in 2020.

Economically, it is clear that any country that pursues a cold war approach against China will suffer damage, including losing jobs, trade and investment. A study by the leading consultancy Oxford Economics concluded that tariffs on Chinese goods exports to the US raises the cost of living for US families by hundreds of dollars while others have concluded they have costs hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The fact that the top priority of US administration is to stop the rise of China means that colossal resources are being wasted on a cold war instead of dealing with the real threats facing humanity – in particular climate change.

The latest analysis from the Carbon Action Tracker estimates that following the recent COP26 conference the world is on course for 2.4C of warming, far above the critical threshold

of 1.5C necessary to avoid climate catastrophe.

The US is not only the world's largest contributor of carbon emissions historically – emitting twice as much as any other country – but today the US remains the biggest polluter of any major economy in per capita terms, emitting twice as much as China per capita. The US currently emits 14 tonnes per capita, whilst China emits 7.4 tonnes per capita. The US's existing climate target, to cut its per capita carbon emissions to approximately 10 tonnes per capita by 2030, is dangerously inadequate.

BUILDING A NEW MOVEMENT AGAINST THE COLD WAR

With multiple threats of hot wars, rising racism, economic damage and the prospect of climate catastrophe it is vital to build the broadest possible global coalition against the US-led new cold war against China.

Sign the No Cold War founding statement, which was launched in July 2020 to rally international opposition to the US-led new cold war: www.nocoldwar.org.

Fiona Edwards is a member of the No Cold War international organising committee. She lives in London.

A Space for Rebels: The Story of the MST's Florestan Fernandes School

BY MARIA GORETE

→ ENFF (Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes/Florestan Fernandes School), was born out of a decision made by the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (Movimento de Trabalhadores Sem Terra/MST) to create a political education system for activists from the cities and the countryside. It enables workers from all over the world who are denied their basic rights to meet, talk and share knowledge and experiences within a Latin American perspective. Therefore, from day 1 it was envisioned as an internationalist project.

The school was inaugurated on January 23, 2005, in the countryside outside of Guararema, Sao Paulo, after the physical structures were collectively and voluntarily built by comrades from the MST. It was our social movement's base who raised the walls and transformed them into classrooms, auditoriums, cafeterias and a library. We then started an adult literacy program and created an atmosphere for fraternization and solidarity among activists from all over the World. Education is built into every brick that was laid by the voluntary workers from the MST who built the school.

The walls of the ENFF contain the energy of thousands and the utopian dream of a world with no exploitation or oppression. We strove for autonomy from the very start and were supported by Chico Buarque, José Saramago and Sebastião Salgado, who donated their CDs, books and photos to support the project. People from around the world helped any way they

could to contribute to this dream construction through an international solidarity campaign. Today the ENFF continues to operate through activism and through voluntary professors with partnerships with public universities like UNESP, UFJF, UFRJ, the Oswaldo Cruz Public Health Institute and through international solidarity from the Association of the Friends of Florestan Fernandes School.

The school is named in honor of the late Brazilian sociologist and politician Florestan Fernandes because of his class origin, his tireless fight against social exclusion, the knowledge he generated on the struggles of his time, and his commitment to socialism. The ENFF was built with mysticism and in memory of other warriors like Frida Khalo, Patativa do Assaré, Antônio Cândido, Marielle Franco, Patrícia Galvão, Vito Gianotti, Rosa Luxemburgo, Paulo Freire and [Brazilian socialist football legend] Dr. Sócrates, who all have rooms at the school named after them.

The school's political education strategy uses socialization and knowledge production to break from the logic of the mercantilization of knowledge. It builds skills for various different areas and dimensions of life through popular education and scientific discipline. It has created new areas of knowledge through a mixture of political formation and technical training. Due to our partnerships with the public universities and professors, ENFF offers graduate and postgraduate courses.

Our participatory methodology uses collective and individual study, collective labor, organicity, mysticism, culture and art in ways that recognize the humanist and socialist values that are part of our communal living philosophy of day to day life in the school. Our pedagogical project is linked to the fight for and construction of human emancipation. Themes that are taught include agrarian reform, agroecology, Marxism, feminism, Latin America, diversity, racism and popular social movements, always striving to link theory with practice.

The goal is to amplify the appropriation of knowledge, prioritizing popular, class based education from pre-school to university. Knowledge is an instrument of transformation for the MST. The organization of courses encompasses a wide range of knowledge for building a new standard of life that promotes a re-connection between human beings and nature.

ENFF's internal organization is based on the values of education and work and the division of tasks. All students are responsible for the maintenance of the school's physical space through collective working groups. Between school periods the maintenance of the ENFF is coordinated by the Brazilian internationalist Apolônio de Carvalho Brigade which is made up of a rotating group of militants who take turns contributing to the consolidation of this educational project.

We know that transformation doesn't happen magically. It has to be made by conscious people. In this way, activists learn political clarity, the

capacity to interpret events, analyze and create tactical and strategic plans, and to create solutions for issues that arise in the day to day class struggle. These skills are imperative for anyone who wants to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society.

Education is not envisioned as an end in itself but as a moment of class consciousness that is important for understanding the contradictions and determinations of society and building historical autonomy. This process of educational and political formation can not be seen as a recipe or a formula that is ready and complete, but as a process of permanent creation. This is why our learning project aims to deepen knowledge on issues of regional, ethnic, racial and gender diversity without losing sight of the total reality of the processes, enabling a reading of the problems, challenges and potentialities of the international, regional and local class struggle. We consider this relationship fundamental in the learning process, which always maintains its revolutionary vigor, strengthening and giving continuity to the struggle, as well as preparing for the future by creating a generalized feeling of transgression against the order of capital.

The ENFF was born out of a desire to criticize the way society produces knowledge, and those whose interests this process serves. It was created to form organic intellectuals who are anchored in their reality and understand the contradictions of the class struggle, with the skills to continually extract elements from this to make qualitative jumps in their class consciousness.

Florestan Fernandes School works for subjects to become protagonists in their own stories and begin demanding social changes. This is a task that requires a lot of courage and dedication to our ideals and dreams for a just, solidarity society. This transformation can take the form of new ways of engaging in politics, restoring the historic struggle of the exploited and oppressed and building solutions for our times. Our school goes beyond walls, geography and symbolic borders. It is a school that aims to decolonize knowledge and consciousness.

Maria Gorete, is an organic farmer and militant of the MST who is former academic coordinator of Florestan Fernandes School. She currently in the Território Cristina Alves agrarian reform settlement in Itapecuru-Mirim, Maranhão, Brazil.



No War but Class War: A conversation with Hüseyin Dogru

BY BRIAN MIER

Most of the articles included in this issue of Lumpen were prepared in late 2021. As we were going to press, war broke out in the Ukraine. As I was putting the final touches on the edit before sending it to the design team, Hüseyin Dogru, Coordinator of the antifascist media production company Redfish, called me from Berlin. The following is an edited transcript of a few points he made during our conversation on possible repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine. Shortly after our phone call he discovered that, due to being partially funded by the German/Russian video on demand news agency Ruptly, the EU announced it was going to shut down Redfish, erase all of its social media posts and freeze all its assets.

➔ This war shows the hypocrisy of the West more and more. The West is going really insane. They could end it all just by saying, “we agree, we will not expand NATO to Ukraine.” It would be done if they did that. Instead, they have started shutting down media outlets. They have the whole technology in their hands and they can just do it.

If you look at the media coverage, the voice has changed. Western journalists are saying things like, ‘this war is bad but you can’t compare it with Iraq or Afghanistan because they are used to things like that.’ They are basically saying that, as Europeans, they are more civilized and this is why war shouldn’t happen in Europe. It’s mad. Another journalist was interviewed on BBC and complained that blond people with blue eyes are dying. It’s crazy.

This conflict is definitely going to be a long term thing. At some point it’s going to ease down, but you never know when. Nobody predicted that Putin was going to go in like that. Our editorial position at Redfish is that we do not support

any kind of war except class war. As you can see on our timeline on our social media, we did heavy coverage of the anti-war protests in Russia. Our stand is that we oppose all imperialist wars.

The Azov issue is important, as is the fact that everyone is now sending weapons to Ukraine. Everyone makes money. War means money and profit for a lot of companies. This is very dangerous. The Ukrainian government is handing over weapons to everyone now. And we saw what happened in Libya and Iraq, where these weapons ended up. The Azov Battalion, the right wing, are going to be brutally armed. And I think this is the tactic of the West, especially the CIA, to create a controlled chaos. This is what they did during the Crimea and Maiden protests - the West sided with Azov and right wing fascist groups there.

The other thing which is worrying me is that while the Ukraine war is really horrible and ugly, this is just the start of something bigger because the US is using the situation to its advantage. First, they just took away Europe from Russia -

they killed the relationships. They are going to use that now to make Europe dependent on them in terms of cheap energy, gas, petroleum and anything else they can. At the same time, this is a process of preparing for the future conflict with China. The US will use Europe’s dependency to push the EU into a position to support them in an escalation with China over Taiwan, which will definitely come. I think this is the first step towards China again, strategically, because now they have the justification.

They are going to say, “Xi Jinping is even worse than Putin, and look what Russia did, so we have to unite.” And they will use that fear of the population to justify a big escalation in the future against China in Asia, because the US has made this clear.

One year ago in Biden’s first international speech at the Munich Security Conference in Germany in 2021, he said, the biggest threat to US security was China.

What happened back then is that France emphasized that it had its own relationships and that it needed to follow its own interests.

That was very dangerous for the US. But the US will change that narrative right now. France and Germany had the same reaction when the US attacked Russia verbally on a diplomatic level.

One year ago France also emphasized that, although the US was an ally, it needed to have its own aims, goals and relationship with Russia. Now this is all broken. The US is really going to take advantage of it.

Hüseyin Dogru is co-founder and head of production at Redfish Media. He lives in Berlin.



History Doesn't Forgive You

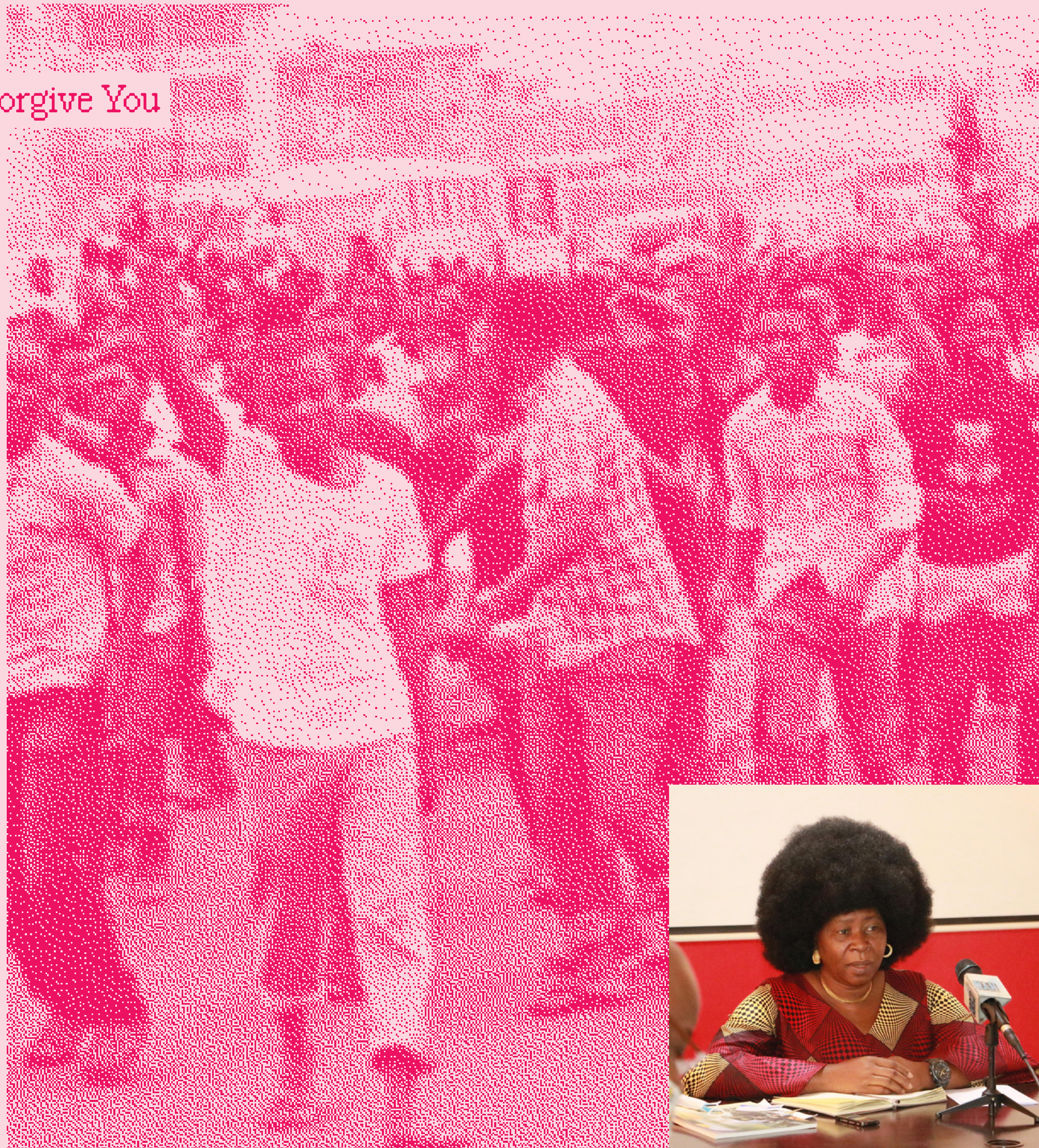
BY ENE OBI

➔ During the 1980s, the IMF introduced structural adjustment programs to Nigeria and so many other countries in Africa. There were big economic issues involved and we were alarmed when we saw what they were.

First of all, Nigeria did not need any international aid. We did not need money from any international organization at the time. Nigeria decided it wasn't going to borrow money from the IMF but it wanted to implement IMF structural adjustment policies anyway.

So we students were looking at this, we were looking at the IMF conditionalities and it was clearly not good for Africa. Many people, including members of professors unions and other organizations, got together and looked at the policies and said they were not going to be good for Nigeria. A lot of it had to do with what they would do to our social structures. The Nigerian system did not have the kind of social welfare structure that other countries in the West had at the time. There was this idea that they would withdraw funding subsidies and that they needed the health and education sectors to move on their own. A lot of social structures were going to be withdrawn from the poor and the vulnerable. This was problematic because government is supposed to work at the service of the people. It is for the people and it is by the people. It has to do with the well being of the people and the security of the people. It has to do with the economy of the people. And so when you are bringing in policies that are going to oppress the people, what does this do?

I was a student union leader at the time. I was the student union president at my university and I can tell you I spent a lot of time working to convince students to come back to class after our demonstrations. This was during the military regime and a number of us were arrested. Some students were killed. The government acted with high-handedness. They were not listening to the students because they felt that the voices of the students were just nothing. They arrested leaders from different schools all over the federation because our protests were nation wide. These protests took place under the auspices of the National Association of Nigerian Students, within which I was the Student Union President at the University of Jos, which is in the center of Nigeria. All schools in the country drew under that umbrella. Whenever a demonstration was coming up, we had ways of spreading the word and inviting the entire country out. We made a



very well coordinated attempt, but we can't say that the leaders really listened to what we were saying. They enacted the IMF conditionalities anyway, despite the trouble. Instead of listening, they sent the police and the police was not enough so they brought out the army so that everybody was scattered or arrested and taken to prison.

We spent years demonstrating against the structural adjustments. We took our voices to the road. We took our voices to protest, we were arrested and after some weeks of detention we were released and many times we were arrested again. I myself went into detention many times and spent time in prison. But at the end of the day, all of the things we predicted happened because they ignored the voices of the young people, as usual.

We were trying to tell the Nigerian government that we were struggling because of the economy. And today, we are worse off because of this because the structural adjustments destroyed every structure - the education sector for Nigeria was destroyed, the health sector was destroyed. The government withdrew its funding from every social amenity. How can you withdraw something like that from the people in a country like Nigeria, where the social structure wasn't fully supporting the people in the first place? The social structure already wasn't supporting the population because the development plan didn't meet with the population growth rate. This is why we viewed the IMF conditionalities as something that was not going to be good for Africa at all.

Today, I think the student movement from that time has been vindicated. Many years down the line - I remember this very well and I still remember the small corner of the newspaper where it was written in 1996... The IMF Deputy Director apologized to Africa, admitting that its policies were a failure. Of course, they cannot work in Africa, because they are not African. You don't know anything about the economy but you go somewhere and you design a new structure and you feel that it is the best for Africa. How can this be?

And so, the rest is history. They destroyed our systems and then Nigeria ended up having to borrow, anyway. And so we are now left coping with all the damage. We former student activists are no longer young people, but what we predicted has come to place. It has ridiculed Nigeria and ridiculed different countries in Africa. I go to different countries in Africa and I can tell you that the IMF structural adjustment program destroyed every facet of our structures. It has ridiculed Africa, removing a lot of dignity from people and shredding people out, leading to so much poverty, disdain, sickness and want, unfortunately.

I think what we all know is that history will not forgive you when you need to stand up for something and you don't stand up for it - history doesn't forgive you. We didn't have smartphones and all the connectivity we have now. We didn't have Instagram or WhatsApp and all that. Today

the young people can easily connect.

I would like to think that our struggle is connected to last year's #EndSars protests, against the Nigerian police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and police violence. The young people of Nigeria called out through the social media, they called themselves to the streets. At that time, the Nigerian Labor Congress was supposed to go on strike. When the strike was called off at the last minute, I knew that something was going to be up because the young people were tired. And they came out in mass across the country, they were well organized. At the end of the day, Lagos turned very volatile. The government seems to have mobilized other young people to counter and attack them, but it was very very massive and unprecedented.

So I am encouraged by the young people. I am encouraged by that demonstration because it made me understand that the young people have not left us alone. They are not going to leave the future of the world to be determined by older people. And I think they are much more organized. The emergence of the feminist movement, the young feminist movement, was also an encouragement for me. It showed me that even if we leave the stage, others will continue. So my encouragement to young people is that you should always stand up for your rights and you need to unite your voices together. As young people, the future belongs to you. And the kind of political class we are having today, especially in the developing world, they are very selfish individuals - many of them. Let me say many of them because it's not all of them that are selfish. There are some dedicated ones but they are very few. And so we have a class of very selfish individuals who are leading Nigeria, Africa and the world. You need to be aware of this and you must stand upright for your country and for the world for generations to come. Do your bit. Make sure that you do not stand still.

As Nelson Mandela said, "do something, don't stand still. Crawl if you will and walk if you will or run if you have to."

So I want to say that I have no regrets about going to jail. I have no regrets and I am happy that I did what I did - I will do it again if I have the opportunity. We are mobilizing across the country with the social movements on a lot of different things and we are building coalitions with the labor unions and all the civil society organizations so the sky is the limit. We are still in the struggle. We are not giving up.

Ene Obi is a former leader of the Nigerian Nationalist Student Movement and the Nigerian Labor Congress. Currently she is the Convener of the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room and Country Director for ActionAid Nigeria

Save the Nearest Prairie with Your Burning Desire

BY PEREGRINE KODIAK

➔ Stop filling your holes for one second and step into this time machine. We're going back, way back. Way before white people came to the Americas. Let's take a look at the landscape and the rugged humans and indigenous genius by which tribes remain strong, even in this weak moment. Look out the time machine window at women giving birth in the cold dark, rearing tomorrow under the stars. No electricity. No money. No walls. No emojis. Yet, they are exercising the same existential rights as we and other Earthly life forms are. The right to pollinate and be pollinated. The right to parasitize. The right to express sex appeal. The right to play with herbs. The right to ignite anthropogenic fires for a higher purpose.

People have peacefully set fire to shit since time began, but it's hard to find record of fire activism because all the records burned up. Of course, other instruments of peace were left lying around. Significant bow and arrow operations are attested by 59 exhumed 10,000-year-old skeletons at Jebel Sahaba, Egypt. Those Mesopotamian remains tell of a violent skewering at a peaceful, unarmed conflict. As the arrow left the bow, it was no longer a component of the archer. Today the same science holds. The moment the Molotov cocktail leaves your hand, you are unarmed, and the demonstration becomes peaceful again.

A person might argue that the pursuit of peace leads to unrest. That it is human nature to seek peace outside of one's self, by all means necessary. And it is only logical that the best flavor of peace would be seized on the edge of the last realm of existence—the last accessible dimension. By the time this outermost region of subjectivity is encountered, the surroundings

and inhabitants are so fearfully strange, taunting the quivering trailblazer, that the pilgrim reaches instinctually for whatever existential right is at hand. The right to ignite is the flamboyant frontrunner.

Fighting fire with fire is exhilarating. Ask any firefighter. But fire is more fabulous when used in peace and love. As rejuvenation. For survival. How do you think the spirit of so many Indigenous Nations has survived, tucked away in all of the Earth's most hostile corners? Their inspired use of fire as an art form has opened boulevards of collective corroboree in civic expressionism, encaustic contour, and virile vehicle.

Fire art. The human right that had to be stolen from God. And isn't God forgiving! Only God lets us steal fire, eat forbidden fruit, and just keeps bestowing blessings on us party people. God gets it. God's a pyro too. And in God's image, we humans like to burn shit. Indeed, the original humans on these North American lands were having a great time playing with fire.

Let us consider some nearby locale—Rockford's Bell Bowl, the gravelly basin left behind by the Wisconsin glacier 13,000 years ago. It takes a lot of balls to claim that the first humans living in Illinois walked here, essentially from Russia, on the frozen Bering Strait. But we do know that by 8000 BCE, the glaciers were eaten up, and out of that Rock River Basin gravel sprung happy little tree sprouts, magically, as if painted by Bob Ross. It took a long time, like another 1500 years before the Eastern Woodland cultures felt welcomed enough by those happy trees that they began to hang out and hunt among them. Thousands upon thousands of years passed, and we have no idea what we missed. But somewhere around 1700 BCE, Native Americans started building

ginormous mounds. These man-made mountains were the coolest thing man had ever made. But it was soon discovered that there was one way to make them cooler. The mounds looked amazing on fire.

Trees became offensive. And in-the-way. But bushes were cool. Red Osier Dogwood, for example, was great in the peace pipe and offered spiritual protection. And willow bark was used for pain relief and cheesy baskets symbolizing longevity. Of course, blackberry and raspberry bushes were the jam! And after getting one's skin torn to shreds from hunting and gathering those delectables, it was customary to mummify oneself in witch hazel poultices. Witch hazel was also cool for "witching," or walking around with a witch hazel stick in each hand like a human Ouija Board, waiting to see if the sticks would cross, and... joy of joys! Stop right there and start digging for water. Digging! Obviously a favorite past-time of mound builders! Why do we so exclusively celebrate the building aspect? You can't have a mound without a dig! Maybe it was about the dig!

Well, we know it was about the mounds, because a flaming pit doesn't look anywhere as cool as a flaming mound. The meme of the flame quickly eclipsed the fad of digging. People started committing all manner of fire art. Fire was great for moving shit out of the way of projectiles, meanwhile moving prairie chickens, sturgeon, and mammoths in front of them. Fire was good light for clubbing bunnies. Fire vaporized toe-stubbing stumps and rabid squirrels. Fire art became all the rage. People were torching shit all over the place! All the time. Burning down all the stupid trees and their shitty shade. It was like, the



more they blazed up, the more gifts God would bestow. The landscape began to change to support a more open, festival-friendly scene. Sun-loving squads of wildflowers crashed the bash by the zillion. Now you know. Native wildflowers like to get toasted. Especially their little seeds. And all up in their pollen tubes were butterflies and bees, who are cool with flowers getting toasted because they can just fly away when it gets to be too much.

Native wildflowers are the best party guests. They always bring food and drugs—the good shit, like purple coneflower, aka Echinacea, which is like Robitussin. And jewelweed, which both soothes bug bites and tastes like walnuts. (Eat the seed pods.) And yarrow, a delicious tea, great in salads and to scare away fibroids. And milkweed, which is both poisonous and edible at the same time! And was used by Chippewa moms who wanted to be turbo lactaters. Milkweed! The same stuff that Monarchs need today!

It was all right there—in the prairie—the very best place to indulge your inner arsonist. I might propose that you can still savagely stalk your peace to this alien dimension, and you might argue that such diversion can't be achieved, and that to suggest as such would be fraud. Prairies are as obsolete as tractor pulls. But no! The great news is that you CAN find your burning peace and exercise your right to ignite right here in Illinois, "The Prairie State". Not too long ago, 22 million acres of prairie grew on Illinois soil. There are still 2000 acres remaining! One prairie, in particular, the previously mentioned Bell Bowl Prairie, situated in Rockford, Illinois, is unique in that the last glacier dumped a bunch of gravel there, and today's flowers are rooted in rocks and sand. Only very special kinds of flowers (endan-

gered ones) can grow in rocks and sand. And special kinds of birds and bees (endangered ones) live with the special flowers there. And wouldn't you know that this prairie is owned by Chicago Rockford International Airport, which has plans to run a bulldozer through it to make a road? Why? Because Amazon and UPS would better be able to serve your online shopping habits. Do you really need another MP3 player? Maybe! Be sure to order a megaphone too, because the peaceful protest is in full swing and your voice is important.

Prairies are an amazing stage for peaceful demonstrations. They look a lot more awesome on fire than buildings do. Bell Bowl Prairie should be preserved at least for that purpose—a training ground for pyrotechnic demands for justice. Of course, it's not practical for urban activists to carpool hours to enact resistance in a prairie. But if you look around, tiny prairies can be found at libraries, schools, and in pots in front of police stations. High-profile stages of great impact. Strategically spaced way stations for the monarch migration. A perfect frequency for the fires of civil unrest. All you have to do is ask around. "Where is the nearest pollinator garden?" You could probably walk there from wherever you are. Or perhaps set the outermost limit of your quest for peace as a place reachable on foot. Look for the solitary songbird atop the tall, lonely bunch grass—and spiky seed heads, fluttering with invertebrates, waiting for a match.

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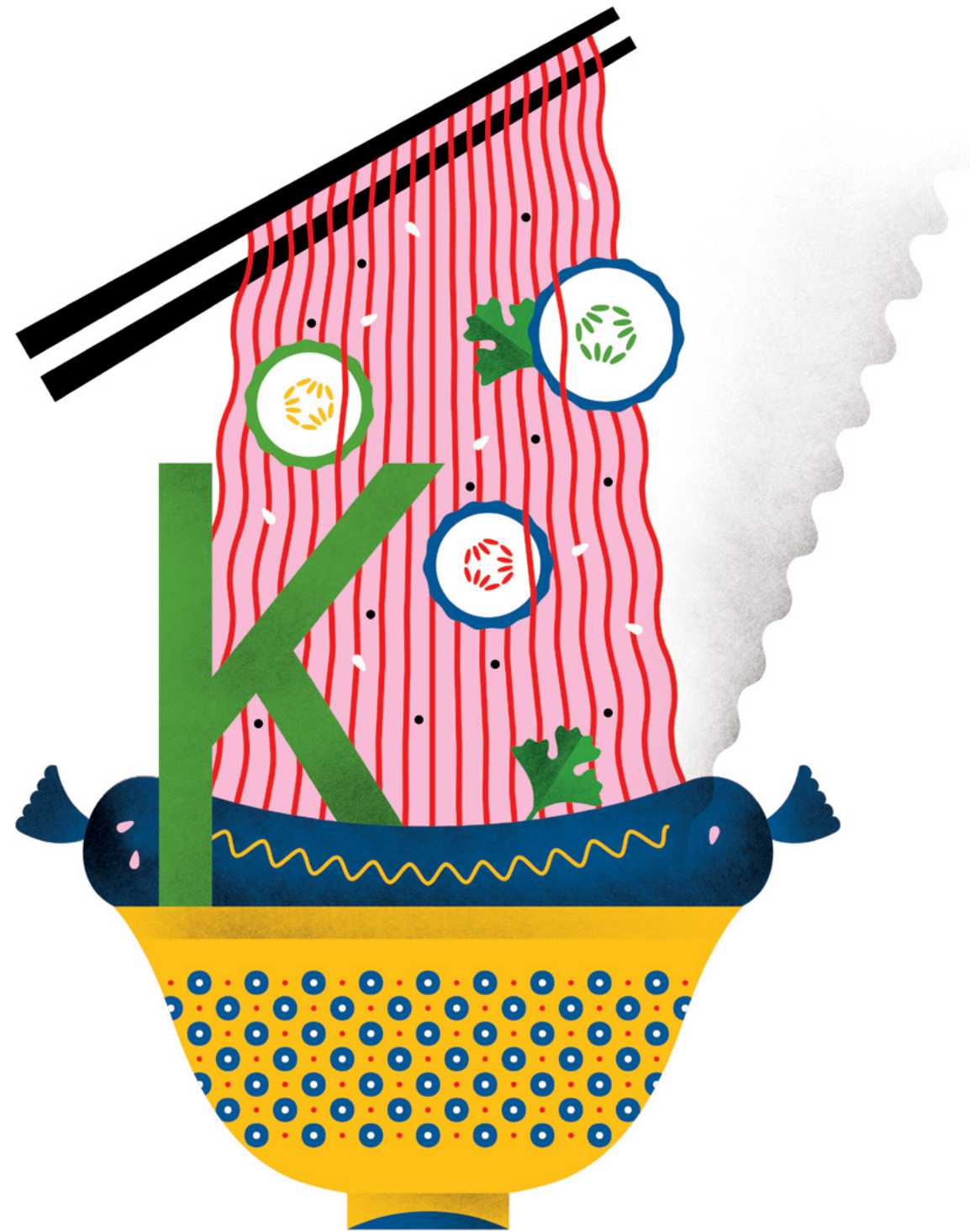


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