

THE **Nation.**

APRIL 9, 2018

**WHY THE
TEACHERS WON**
JANE MCALEVEY

FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE IMMIGRANTS...

FOR TRUMP, CRUELTY IS THE POINT

Julianne Hing



THENATION.COM

LIFE IN SANCTUARY

Cintha Santos
Briones, Laura
Gottesdiener, and
Malav Kanuga

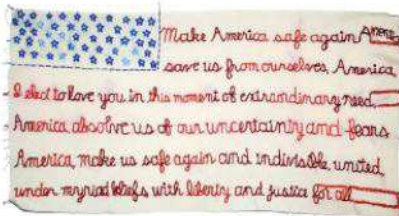




*Artistic
Dispatches From
the Front Lines
of Resistance*



^ **Trigger** / Edel Rodriguez



^ **Incantation for America** / Iviva Olenick

BULLY

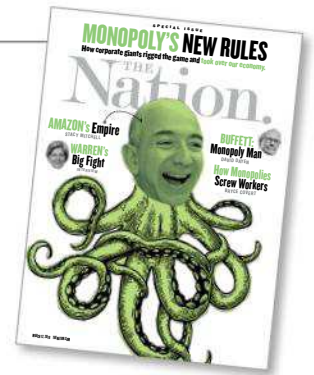


CULPRIT

^ **Bully Culprit** / Robbie Conal

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Octopus's Garden

Stacy Mitchell's prime breakdown of Amazon ["The Empire of Everything," March 12] showed the Jeff Bezos behemoth as the giant black hole that it actually is, gobbling up what's left of American free enterprise, extorting and steamrolling the competition and smaller players, and establishing a labor paradigm straight out of Dickens. Mitchell depicts likely Democratic presidential hopeful Cory Booker as merely another supplicant at the Amazon altar, along with a Congress unwilling to apply antitrust sanctions. And when Amazon can't compete, Mitchell shows, Bezos peevishly threatens to take his toys and go home.

The article offers some hope that anti-monopolist sentiments may be rising in DC—and while the Amazon "HQ2" shakedown generated invaluable free publicity, the groveling may have finally turned enough stomachs. But as long as Amazon can cadge lucrative freebies from politicians like Booker, it may be necessary to impose some form of online convenience surcharge to save Main Street from imploding completely.

MIKE WETTSTEIN
APPLETON, WIS.

Is Trust-Busting Enough?

I'm glad to see the Democrats' renewed interest in breaking up the monopolies that exert oligarchical control over our country ["The Big Fight," March 12]. While necessary and long overdue, trust-busting alone will neither save democracy nor create a sustainable and equitable economy; downsizing Walmart to make room for Target and Bed, Bath & Beyond doesn't get us very far. What's needed are policies and programs that support small and worker-owned businesses and brick-and-mortar shops on Main Street. Reviving the decrepit downtown business districts of small- and medium-sized municipi-

palities would create local jobs and spur local ownership while restoring community pride and hope—scarce commodities in places that have been ravaged by neoliberal profiteering.

ERICA ETELSON
BERKELEY, CALIF.

Old Justice Made New

I really appreciated Rebecca Clarren's article "Righting the Scales," about Judge Abby Abinanti [Dec. 18/25]. Living in Klamath, we see the beneficial impact of her practical and commonsense approach firsthand, both in the lives of those who have gone through her court (e.g., our friends' adult child, who was transformed from an angry and self-destructive person to a thoughtful community member) and, as a consequence, in the increased safety and peace in our neighborhood overall. And we are grateful. In Thomas Buckley's *Standing Ground*, Harry Roberts describes the Yurok approach to restorative justice this way: "Whatever you do, you do on purpose. Don't say 'I'm sorry.' If you break my cup, go get me a new cup. I can't drink coffee out of 'I'm sorry.'"

SUSAN SIMONS
KLAMATH GLEN, CALIF.

A Nation of Ignorance

Further to Laila Lalami's column on "Redefining 'Immigrant'" [March 12]: In a shocking development, the director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services has announced that the agency will no longer use a phrase in its mission statement that described it as securing "America's promise as a nation of immigrants." The assault on truth and fairness continues, even in the nooks and crannies of government.

BARBARA MARMOR
KANSAS CITY, MO.

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It's Time to Abolish ICE

Dan Canon is running for Congress in Indiana's Ninth District. A career civil-rights lawyer, Canon filed one of the cases against gay-marriage bans that eventually led to the Supreme Court's landmark *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, and he proudly wore a "Notorious RBG" T-shirt under

his suit when he went to watch the case being argued before the Court. Canon has also defended people swept up in raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and he has fought a Kafkaesque deportation system whose officers, at one point, wouldn't even disclose the location of his client.

Now Canon argues that ICE should be abolished entirely. Most Americans don't have "any kind of direct experience with ICE," he told me, "so they don't really know what they do or what they're about. If they did, they'd be appalled: ICE as it presently exists is an agency devoted almost solely to cruelly and wantonly breaking up families. The agency talks about and treats human beings like they're animals. They scoop up people in their apartments or their workplaces and take them miles away from their spouses and children."

The idea of defunding ICE has gained traction among immigrant-rights groups horrified by the speed with which, under President Trump, the agency has ramped up an already brutal deportation process. Mary Small, policy director at the Detention Watch Network, said, "Responsible policy-makers need to be honest about the fact that the core of the agency is broken." Her group led the charge to defund ICE with its #DefundHate campaign last year.

This proposal often runs into an immediate objection: If you abolish ICE, who will perform its function? But the whole point of abolishing the agency is to abolish its function as well. ICE has become a genuine threat to democracy, destroying thousands of lives. Moreover, abolishing it would only take us back to 2003, when the agency was first formed.

ICE was a direct result of the post-9/11 panic culture. The agency was created by Congress in the wake of the attacks and, from the start, was paired with the brand-new Department of Homeland Security's increased surveillance of immigrant

communities and communities of color. By placing ICE under the purview of the DHS, the federal government framed immigration as a national-security issue rather than an issue of community development, diversity, or human rights.

This is not to say that US deportation policies only got bad after 9/11, or that they've been an exclusively Republican project. When Democrat Rahm Emanuel, the current mayor of Chicago, served as a senior adviser to President Bill Clinton, he recommended that Clinton "claim and achieve record deportations of criminal aliens." When Republicans gave Clinton the chance to do just that with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, the Democratic president jumped at the chance.

The act set up the legal infrastructure for mass deportations and expanded the number of crimes considered deportable.

Clinton's embrace of the act also harshened the political climate around immigration. As recently as 2006, Democrats still explicitly appealed to anti-immigrant sentiment as a campaign tactic. During his failed Senate run in Tennessee, Harold Ford Jr. ran ads warning that "Every day almost 2,000 people enter America illegally. Every day hundreds of employers look the other way, handing out jobs that keep illegals coming. And every day the rest of us pay the price." Even Barack Obama, though he took pains to distinguish between "good" and "bad" immigrants, presided over aggressive deportation tactics in his first term to build support for a path to citizenship that never came.

ICE's central assumption in 2018 is that any undocumented immigrant is inherently a threat. In this way, ICE's tactics are philosophically aligned with racist thinkers like Richard Spencer or the writers at the white-supremacist journal *VDare*. ICE act-



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BY THE NUMBERS



34,000

Approximate number of public-school employees who went on strike for nine days in West Virginia

+5%

Amount by which teachers' pay will increase as a result of the strike (in addition to a freeze on health-insurance costs)

-8.6%

Amount by which, prior to the strike, teachers' pay in West Virginia had decreased over the past 15 years

-3%

Amount by which teacher pay has fallen nationwide over the same 15 years

29

Number of states that now provide less school funding per student than they did before the 2008 recession, according to 2015 data

—Joseph Hogan

ing director Thomas Homan has made it clear that all undocumented residents should live in fear of his agents. "You should look over your shoulder, and you need to be worried," he boasted in congressional testimony last year.

Homan doesn't apply a light touch when it comes to expressing his authoritarian tendencies. He has threatened to jail and prosecute local officials in so-called sanctuary cities that do not fully comply with ICE mandates. The agency has also clearly been targeting immigration activists for deportation and has worked to deport individuals for speaking to the media about ICE. And while Homan's saber rattling has essentially been ignored by the media, some Democratic candidates are hearing it loud and clear. So are the communities they hope to represent.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is challenging Representative Joe Crowley in New York's 14th District, which covers parts of the Bronx and Queens and is among the most diverse and immigrant-heavy congressional districts in the country. She told me that, "after a long and protracted history of sexual assault and uninvestigated deaths in ICE's detention facilities, as well as the corrosive impact ICE has had on our schools, courts, and communities, it's time to reset course." Ocasio-Cortez not only supports defunding ICE; she wants a full congressional inquiry into its enforcement and detention practices. She further argues

COMMENT

It Takes a Crisis

What West Virginia teachers won—and how.

Dignity and respect are the root cause of every serious labor struggle. This was certainly the case in West Virginia's unprecedented nine-day statewide education strike. When the workers won on Tuesday, March 6, singing and dancing erupted among the thousands who packed the State Capitol. Their final chant before leaving the building was: "Who made history? We made history!"

The strike produced a string of victories, not all of which are immediately tangible. Perhaps most significant, it restored the dignity of 34,000 workers, rebuilding the pride of West Virginia's working class and reinforcing one hell of a union that will carry the struggle forward.

This point seemed lost on much of the media that covered the strike. No matter how many times workers talked about defending public education and expanding quality schools, the press focused on just two issues: health insurance and a raise. But Wendy Peters, the president of the Raleigh affiliate of the West Virginia Education Association, says, "Wages and health benefits were almost a distraction. They are important, but there were five major stances we took, and we won all five."

These included defeating an expansion of charter schools, killing a proposal to eliminate seniority, and scuttling a paycheck-protection bill (aimed at weakening unions by taking away their right to deduct dues through

for a "truth and reconciliation process for victims of any potential sexual assault, neglect, and misconduct discovered as a result."

The call to abolish ICE is, above all, a demand for the Democratic Party to begin seriously resisting an unbridled white-supremacist surveillance state that it had a hand in creating. Although the party has moved left on any number of core issues, from reproductive rights to single-payer health care, it is time for progressives to demand that deportation be taken not as the norm, but rather as a disturbing indicator of authoritarianism.

Maintaining white supremacy can no longer be the purpose of our immigration policy. Democrats have voted to fully fund ICE with only limited fanfare, because in the US immigration discussion, the right-wing position is the center and the left has no voice. A disturbing word fatigue has occurred around the very notion of mass deportation, with the threat being taken so lightly that many have lost the ability to conceptualize what it means. Next to death, being stripped of your home, your family, and your community is the worst fate that can be inflicted on a human, as many societies practicing banishment have recognized. It's time to rein in the greatest threat we face: an unaccountable strike force executing a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

SEAN McELWEE

Sean McElwee is a researcher and writer based in New York City.

payroll collection), as well as agreeing on a mechanism to fix the health-insurance crisis and securing a raise big enough to matter.

According to Peters, "Each one of the bills that would undermine the education of our kids by attacking teachers were being voted on in committees and making their way to passage. We were getting pounded on here by a majority of Republicans in both houses."

Peters, who has a master's degree and years of experience in teaching, adds, "Their bill on seniority would have let them replace me with someone unqualified to give a good education to our kids. I have a 5-year-old son, and I am fighting for him to get a quality education."

Respect and dignity were also front and center in the health-insurance issue. In its 2017 session, the State Legislature passed SB 221, which shrank the board that governed the Public Employees Insurance Agency from 10 to eight members and removed a requirement that organized labor have a seat on the board. Later that year, the board proposed the implementation of Go365, an app that requires workers to wear devices like Fitbit that submit tracking data. Workers who refused would face increased health-care costs. Peters notes, "It was a complete, total invasion of our privacy."

In addition, health-insurance rates would have been calculated a new way, with premiums based on total family income, not an individual worker's income. "By adding my husband, I was facing a \$200-a-month increase," says Peters. "So when Governor Jim Justice offered a 1 percent pay raise in January, people had had enough." The indignities kept rolling in, including the governor's calling

teachers “dumb bunnies” at a town hall in Logan County in early February.

From the very first day of the strike, the unions shut down every public school in the state, with all 34,000 workers out. As the strike rolled on, a steady stream of thousands protested at the Capitol—many wearing bunny ears—while others staffed picket lines around their schools. At the same time, the parents of over 270,000 children supported the strikers while scrambling to find places for their kids to stay. On Tuesday, February 27, the governor sat down and hammered out an agreement.

“We won on all five stances—everything—which is pretty incredible,” says Peters.

The settlement includes a commitment by the governor to veto all of the anti-union legislation and to enact a 5 percent pay raise for teachers. The unions also won the creation of a task force on health care that guarantees organized labor seats at the table. Each of the three striking unions—the American Federation of Teachers–West Virginia, the West Virginia Education Association, and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association—will appoint a member, essentially restoring workers’ right to govern their own health care. The health-care task force was required to have its first meeting by March 13 and must issue its final report before December 2018. “Most important,” says Jay O’Neal, a key rank-and-file leader in the teachers’ strike, “we made it so thousands of eyes will be watching everything the task force does.”

Defeating a raft of anti-union legislation in a right-to-work state, even as oral arguments are being given in the *Janus* case before the US Supreme Court, would have been a huge win all on its own. But to top that off with a structured process to resolve the state’s health-care crisis, a freeze on the proposed financial increases in the plan, a reversal on the mandated use of a privacy-invading app, and a pay raise huge by state standards—that’s breathtaking. The win was so big that, almost immediately, the right wing set out to upend the settlement and make

the outcome seem more like that of the Wisconsin uprising in 2011: total defeat.

Within hours of the settlement’s announcement, State Senate President Mitch Carmichael announced that his chamber didn’t plan to approve it. West Virginia station WSAZ reported that “Carmichael speculated that as many as 22 Republicans in the 34-member Senate will oppose Governor Justice’s plan.” Wednesday, February 28, was to be a cooling-off period, with everyone returning to their classrooms the next day. Instead, rolling-strike votes began spreading across the state, in all 55 counties, with workers electing to defy their leaders and continue the strike until the deal was voted on and signed into law by the governor.

Gary Price, the superintendent of Marion County schools, recalls the moment when he heard that “our little elementary schools—you know how elementary-school teachers all are very nurturing, all very kind—that they voted 100 percent not to return.” It was then that he realized the whole state was in trouble. “The crisis really escalated, because we went from having one work stoppage to having 55 work stoppages in 55 counties.... It was something that was out of control at that point.”

By that Friday, Price had gathered all of the state’s superintendents for a meeting in the Capitol with Carmichael. Their message to him was clear: “This strike will not end until the package is voted on and signed by the governor.” Price says he believes that it was “critical when we [the superintendents] put our thumb on the scale.” But he is clear that their message was strong precisely because the education unions had created a serious crisis.

Despite the unions’ wins on all five of their demands, much of the media failed to grasp the magnitude of this victory. Headlines suggested the workers won by sacrificing the very people they went on strike for: the West Virginia working class.

According to Emily Comer, a 27-year-old educator in her third year of teaching Spanish, the raises will not be paid for with cuts to Medicaid. She says the plans on the part of the teachers and the service personnel are to win corporate-tax increases to pay for the long-term fix in the health-care plan. Comer notes, “Our message from day one has been for a reversal of corporate-tax breaks. We want to raise the gas severance tax. People were chanting this in the Capitol for two weeks. It has been what we wanted from the beginning, and it’s what we plan to win.”

The teachers understood that to win, to avoid going down in the record books as another huge defeat, they had to stay on strike and escalate the crisis. They could not have achieved their victory without having the community firmly on their side. Educators, like health-care workers,

have an incredibly powerful, organic relationship with their communities—relationships so strong they are durable against sophisticated right-wing attacks. The solidarity created in West Virginia was built in a strike that united the state against the power structure. The sooner the progressive movement understands that, in order to save our democracy, people must rebuild robust unions—which means a strong embrace of not only education, but also teachers and public-service workers—the sooner we all start winning.

JANE McALEVEY

Jane McAlevey is an organizer, scholar, and the author, most recently, of No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A Flood of Problems

In March, powerful storms walloped the East Coast, bringing with them historic flooding. The Boston metro area experienced its third-highest tide on record, and more than 100 people had to be rescued. A NOAA study released the same month thus offered a timely warning, pointing out coastal communities where tidal flooding could soon become a “weekly event.”

The effects of rising sea levels are particularly marked on the Atlantic Seaboard, where in less than two decades the average number of days with high-tide floods has more than doubled in some regions. Some projections show flooding in the Miami area every other day by 2060. The March report demonstrates how the problem “is going to become chronic rather quickly,” NOAA’s William Sweet told NPR. “It’s not going to be a slow, gradual change.”

And President Trump’s policies will only make matters worse. Last August, Trump repealed an Obama-era executive order requiring more stringent building standards for government-funded infrastructure, like bridges and levees, in at-risk areas. According to this Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, these high-tide events were correctly “anticipated to increase over time due to the effects of climate change.” By contrast, Trump’s infrastructure plan, released in February, does not include the words “climate,” “warming,” “resilience,” or “disaster.” An attorney from the Natural Resources Defense Council said the Trump plan “utterly fails to ensure that such infrastructure is built for a 21st century climate.” Coastal residents might soon agree.

—Emmalina Glinskis



“Our message from day one has been for a reversal of corporate-tax breaks.”

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Nightmare Flight

A nor'easter tragedy that left two elderly passengers in critical condition demonstrates that when the federal government deregulates an industry and allows uncompetitive markets, it's consumers who suffer.

Stefani Kuo, who shared her account through social media, said a Chinese couple were flying from Minneapolis to New York when American Airlines redirected their flight to Baltimore, from which the airline—rather than putting the couple up for the night in a hotel, as might have been expected during a nasty winter storm—would bus them on to their destination nearly 200 miles away. Kuo was approached by the couple, who spoke little English, and interpreted for them during a nine-hour bus ride that offered limited access to food or restrooms, making just one rest stop. At that stop, Kuo saw the couple lying face-down on concrete after they were struck by a pickup truck. As American stood by, Kuo figured out what hospital they'd been taken to and translated for medical staff on the couple's behalf.

The airline industry has normalized refusing even basic passenger accommodations. In December, President Trump's Department of Transportation delayed implementing a regulation requiring airlines to report when they damage passengers' mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, and airlines have come under journalistic scrutiny for pricing schemes that mislead consumers. As major carriers face zero consequences for abuse while squeezing out remaining competitors, this latest incident underscores what's at stake when airlines have no incentive to take care of their most vulnerable passengers.

—Madeleine Han



Eric Alterman



Out of Step With the *Times*

America's most important op-ed page is coddling its recent conservative hires.

When *New York Times* opinion editor Bari Weiss was an undergraduate at Columbia, she agitated against a number of faculty members who were either Arab or Muslim and/or were perceived to be critical of the state of Israel. She was motivated at the time, she said, “to expose the racism of these professors.”

I wrote about one of these cases back in 2008. In that instance, a group of “pro-Israel” neoconservatives housed in various right-wing organizations were seeking to prevent Barnard, an all-women's college that's part of Columbia University, from granting tenure to the anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj, whose father is Palestinian. Her 2001 book *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* examined the role of archaeology in validating the Zionist claim to Israel/Palestine. Not being trained as an anthropologist, I defer to the judgments of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, which chose the work as one of the winners of its 2002 Albert Hourani Book Award, as well as the three separate tenure committees that approved her tenure recommendation. (It was eventually granted.) Weiss, on the other hand, took to *Haaretz* to attack Abu El-Haj's scholarship as an anthropological manifestation of Edward Said's thesis in *Orientalism*, which she apparently misunderstood to be arguing that “there is no such thing as truth or fact. Instead, there is only identity.” The 2007 op-ed identified Weiss only as a “Dorot fellow living in Jerusalem,” and not as a recent college graduate with no scholarly expertise who was best-known for attacking Muslim and Arab faculty members in the United States.

Moreover, the entire campaign against those whom Weiss and her comrades accused of “racism” turned out to be built on sand. Columbia took the attacks sufficiently seriously to appoint an investigative committee, which found “no evidence of any statements made by the faculty that could reasonably be construed as anti-Semitic.” As summarized by *The New York Times*, the committee did find, however, that the neoconservative groups were the cause of “a broader environment of incivility on campus, with pro-Israel students

disrupting lectures on Middle Eastern studies and some faculty members feeling that they were being spied on.” The New York Civil Liberties Union gave the committee credit for “properly identifi[ying] the threats to academic freedom posed by the ‘involvement of outside organizations in the surveillance of professors,’” but criticized it for failing “adequately to place the intrusion into the academy by outside organizations in a broader political context.”

The irony, therefore, is rich that Weiss has now become a leader in the crusade by the *Times'* conservative pundits against students seeking to shut down speakers on campus with whom they disagree. Personally, I happen to share this concern, and I wish these (largely well-meaning) student idealists would stop taking the bait every time a conservative organization invites a controversial or even racist speaker. I agree that their hurt feelings are less important than the academy's commitment to the free exchange of ideas. I, personally, wouldn't invite Charles Murray, co-author of *The Bell Curve*, or Christina Hoff Sommers, a critic of feminism, to speak at my university, but I would defend their rights to be heard as well as challenged. Weiss's hypocrisy on this count is stunning: In her attacks on contemporary student “social-justice warriors,” she complains of “an in-group wielding its power against a perceived heretic”—when that precisely describes her own behavior as an aspiring censor of professors' speech.

Weiss and her conservative colleagues do their cause no favors by using their *New York Times* columns to repeatedly hyperventilate about the dangers posed to society by a bunch of confused (and sometimes obnoxious) college kids. Critics have counted 10 such scolding pieces in recent months by Weiss, Bret Stephens, and David Brooks. Brooks, for instance, recently complained that today's students “combine snow-



I wish these student idealists would stop taking the bait every time a conservative organization invites a controversial or racist speaker.

flake fragility and lynch mob irrationalism into one perfectly poisonous cocktail." None of these authors take note of the fact that unprincipled provocateurs like David Horowitz and Milo Yiannopoulos purposely exploit this tendency in order to raise money and consciousness for their racist, sexist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic campaigns.

Moreover, the incompetence of Weiss and Stephens—both refugees from the far-right *Wall Street Journal* editorial page—demonstrates just how far the mainstream media are willing to go to coddle conservatives. In Weiss's case, the paper was forced to remove an entire paragraph from

her column after she quoted from a fake Twitter account to make her point. (The *Times* was already reeling from a tweet by Weiss that hailed the American-born Olympic athlete Mirai Nagasu for being an "immigrant.") Stephens, the pundit who once called anti-Semitism a "disease of the Arab mind," recently wrote a paean to Benjamin Netanyahu explaining that he is, "for Israelis, a pretty good prime minister." Stephens apparently does not know, or does not wish to acknowledge, that approximately one out of five Israelis is not Jewish—and that the vast majority are Palestinian Arab citizens. Only a lunatic would argue that Netanyahu has been a "pretty good prime minister" for these Israelis.

As a liberal, I applaud the *Times'* commitment to diversity of ideological opinion. One can only sympathize with the difficulty it faces in finding conservative columnists these days who adhere to even minimal standards of truth, fairness, and evidence. But I wonder: If these people wrote about Jews the way they write about Arabs, would we even know their names, much less be faced with the task of debunking them, repeatedly, with arguments obvious to anyone who does not share their prejudices? ■

her column after she quoted from a fake Twitter account to make her point. (The *Times* was already reeling from a tweet by Weiss that hailed the American-born Olympic athlete Mirai Nagasu for being an "immigrant.") Stephens, the pundit who once called anti-Semitism a "disease of the Arab mind," recently wrote a paean to Benjamin Netanyahu explaining that he is, "for Israelis, a pretty good prime minister." Stephens apparently does not know, or does not wish to acknowledge, that approximately one out of five Israelis is not Jewish—and that the vast majority are Palestinian Arab citizens. Only a lunatic would argue that Netanyahu has been a "pretty good prime minister" for these Israelis.

COMIX NATION

Seth Tobocman

A NEW CHANCE FOR MUMIA
 Story & Art : Seth Tobocman
 Legal info : Rachel Wolkenstein

1986 EX-MARINE RONALD CASTILLE BECAME PHILADELPHIA'S DISTRICT ATTORNEY. PROSECUTORS WORKING FOR HIM PUT MANY BLACK MEN BEHIND BARS. THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE GAVE HIM THEIR "MAN OF THE YEAR" AWARD.

MANY OF CASTILLE'S CONVICTIONS WERE APPEALED TO STATE COURT BUT IN 1994 CASTILLE BECAME A STATE SUPREME COURT JUDGE. SO JUDGE RONALD CASTILLE COULD RULE THAT DISTRICT ATTORNEY RONALD CASTILLE HAD BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG.

IN 2016, ONE OF THOSE CASTILLE DEFENDANTS, TERRANCE WILLIAMS, SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR KILLING 2 MEN WHO'D SEXUALLY ABUSED HIM AS A CHILD, CHALLENGED HIS SENTENCE IN U.S. SUPREME COURT.

CASTILLE CAN'T BE BOTH MY PROSECUTOR & MY JUDGE.

HEY! I WASN'T IN THE COURTROOM FOR THE WILLIAMS TRIAL. HUNDREDS OF CASES WENT THROUGH MY OFFICE, HANDLED BY MY PROSECUTORS.

TO PROVE THAT CASTILLE WAS "PERSONALLY INVOLVED", WILLIAMS PUT INTO EVIDENCE A DOCUMENT IN WHICH CASTILLE AUTHORIZED HIS PROSECUTORS TO SEEK THE DEATH PENALTY FOR WILLIAMS.

WILLIAMS DEATH SENTENCE WAS VACATED. THIS CASE ESTABLISHED THAT "PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT" IS THE CRITERION FOR PROVING JUDICIAL BIAS.

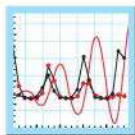
NOW OTHER CASTILLE DEFENDANTS WANT TO APPEAL THEIR CASES, AMONG THEM, MUMIA-ABU-JAMAL, A GREAT WRITER, FALSELY CONVICTED OF KILLING A COP IN 1982. MUMIAS TRIAL TOOK PLACE YEARS BEFORE CASTILLE BECAME D.A.

IN 1986, WHEN MUMIA FILED HIS FIRST APPEAL, DISTRICT ATTORNEY CASTILLE LET HIS PROSECUTORS INTO COURT TO LITIGATE MUMIAS CONVICTION. CASTILLE SAID "BUT MUMIA WOULD FILE MANY MORE YEARS LATER." IS A JUDGE, CASTILLE WOULD DENY MUMIAS MUMIA AGAIN. MUMIA ASKED HIM TO REUSE HIMSELF BUT CASTILLE INSISTED HE WAS OBJECTIVE.

TO PROVE CASTILLE'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT, MUMIA NEEDS ACCESS TO FILES POSSESSED BY THE DA'S OFFICE. JERRY BRANER, THE NEW D.A., IS A LIBERAL. SO WHY IS BRANER STALLING ON TURNING OVER THE FILES WHY IS CASTILLE OR BRANER'S "TRANSITION TEAM" AS MUMIA GROWS OLD IN PRISON.

THE LONG STRUGGLE TO FREE MUMIA REVEALS THE CORRUPTION OF THE SYSTEM. IF MUMIA CAN PROVE JUDICIAL BIAS HE MAY FINALLY GET A NEW TRIAL. JOIN US IN COURT AND IN THE STREET. IT'S TIME TO BRING THIS BROTHER HOME!

www.freemumia.com



THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

Holding All the Cards

Right now, the Supreme Court is deciding the future of our economy. The most important case, of course, is *Janus v. AFSCME*, which will determine the future of public-sector unions. But there's another, lesser-known case that could make it easier for giant corporations to control entire industries. *Ohio v. American Express* is a technical suit involving obscure credit-card fees. Yet the Court's eventual ruling could undermine our ability to curtail monopoly power.

Credit-card companies sit between businesses and consumers, running the networks that allow the two groups to interact and charging businesses fees for the use of these networks. Four companies—American Express, Mastercard, Visa, and Discover—dominate this market. The contracts between credit-card companies and businesses contain clauses that forbid merchants to steer customers to one card or another through the use of prices. In

This decision would put an undue burden on those trying to restrain monopoly power.

short, businesses can't offer you a better rate for choosing Visa over Mastercard, even if Mastercard offers them better terms, as a result of these private contracts. But in the case in front of the Supreme Court now, the state of Ohio argues that this is anticompetitive, because it prevents consumers and businesses from using prices to guide their economic activity.

American Express, meanwhile, argues that it can't be anticompetitive because it is an intermediary, or part of a "two-sided market." A concept developed by a handful of economists a little over a decade ago, the term tends to refer to markets where there's a strong intermediary that offers different services to two different groups at two different prices, and where the success of one side's experience depends on the experience of the other. In the case of credit cards, businesses use the market as well

as consumers. So the credit-card companies offer their networks for free to consumers, and charge businesses to cover the entire cost.

Here's the catch: American Express argues that Ohio has to show net harm to *both* sides of the market to make its case. This means, according to the company, that its actions squeezing businesses are fine as long as its cardholders benefit enough. But the case goes beyond those narrow confines: As the lawyers for Ohio and other states have argued, this structure exacerbates the lack of competition, since the businesses that use American Express don't pay the entire cost themselves. Instead, merchants raise prices on their products to cover these fees—prices paid by everyone instead of just Amex users.

But in focusing on this argument, we ignore history. These kinds of markets are not new: As the pro-competition Open Markets Institute argues in a brief supporting Ohio, the courts have looked at cases involving newspapers, telephone companies, and computer operating systems throughout the past century. All of these could be identified as two-sided markets, yet the courts were able to examine their anticompetitive behavior using the traditional standards.

Beyond that, the definition is so vague that firms could easily abuse it: Everyone from chicken processors to airlines could argue that limiting power on one side of their interactions could benefit those on the other.

But a more important reason for rejecting this argument is that it could prevent us from dealing with the large platforms that play an increasingly important role in our lives. Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Uber all have characteristics of a two-sided market. There's a debate on what role antitrust should have in leveling the competitive playing field in their markets. Yet if the Supreme Court decides in favor of American Express, it would place an undue burden on those trying to restrain monopoly power, because these companies could argue that they can't be abusive as long as they're helping some set of customers.

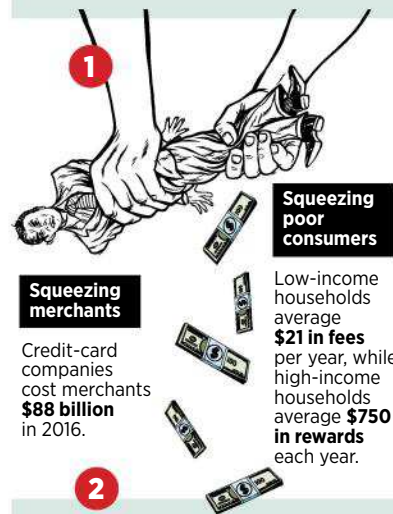
The parallels between the Populist era and our own are striking. Both featured an increasing concentration of wealth and power built on the new technologies revolutionizing society. Yet one of the major achievements of the Populist era was the use of public power to regulate unfair practices, codified in the Sherman Act and other antitrust laws. We can't afford to lose the capacity to do the same in our own era.

MIKE KONCZAL

Are Bigger Monopolies Even Possible? Yes

Four credit-card companies control 100 percent of the market. Yet in *Ohio v. American Express*, the Supreme Court will decide whether to enable more monopoly power.

Amex wants a free hand in a two-sided market.



2

A win for Amex could unleash anticompetitive practices beyond credit cards:



Blocking drivers from joining Lyft



Mining more consumer data



Squeezing sellers more

Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston; Open Markets Institute; The Nilson Report
Infographic: Tracy Matsue Loeffelholz

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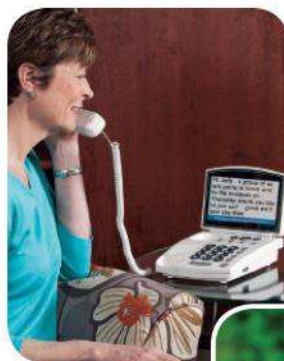
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RACE IN AMERICA

Still Separate, Still Unequal

In 1967, after riots had erupted in black communities across America, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened a commission to investigate the reasons for the unrest as well as what could be done to prevent it from happening again. The following year, the Kerner Commission delivered its verdict: "White racism" was the fundamental cause of "pervasive discrimination and segregation in employment, education, and housing."

Exactly 50 years after the commission declared that the United States was composed of two different societies, "one black, one white—separate and unequal," a report by the Economic Policy Institute indicates that there has been little progress in how black



Americans fare in comparison with whites. Indeed, by some measures, African Americans are worse off today than they were during the civil-rights movement.

While whites have made modest gains in homeownership since 1968, in 2015 the rate of black homeownership remained virtually unchanged, at just over 40 percent, trailing whites by 30 percentage points. Most shockingly, between 1968 and 2016 the share of black people in jail or prison almost tripled; it's now more than six times the white incarceration rate.

Psychologist Kenneth B. Clark summarized the predicament five decades ago: "It is a kind of *Alice in Wonderland*—with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction."

—Safiya Charles

In Punishment We Trust

Retaliation will not cure our social ills, but we're still fixated on it.

President Trump wants to execute drug dealers.

It's not a new idea. He's been floating it for a few weeks now, crediting it as a big idea he got from the Chinese president, Xi Jinping. (As we have already learned, President Trump holds autocrats in high esteem.) But the notion landed as one of Trump's more popular lines at a March rally in Moon Township, Pennsylvania, an almost entirely white region in the shadow of the increasingly vibrant metro area around Pittsburgh.

Pennsylvania ranked fourth in the nation last year for drug overdoses. Moon Township is nestled within the corner of the state that borders West Virginia and Ohio, which ranked first and second, respectively. No surprise, then, that talk of zero tolerance resonates strongly here. "Do you think the drug dealers who kill thousands of people during their lifetime, do you think they care who's on a blue-ribbon committee?" the president asked, to applause.

I was outside the rally before it began, searching, among the hundreds of people lined up in the parking lot of a local airfield, for voters in the upcoming special election. That was the nominal reason for Trump's visit: A conservative, anti-choice, pro-gun Democrat was threatening to upset a conservative, anti-choice, pro-gun Republican to take over a seat vacated by a conservative, anti-choice, pro-gun congressman who got caught pressuring his mistress to have an abortion. This uninspiring shift was taken by both parties as a profound political upheaval. So the president came to add his voice to the nearly \$10 million that the GOP and its allied political-action committees had spent to keep the seat. Which is to say, this wasn't a setting in which to expect fresh thinking about how we can face our demons together.

Still, the suggestion of imposing a death sentence for selling drugs produced a lot of shocked headlines, perhaps because the subtext was hard to miss. I spent more than an hour talking to the Trump faithful in that parking lot, and the only other people of color I saw the whole time were the black men hawking knockoff MAGA merchandise. (Hey, everybody's got their hustle.) And Trump has been clear from the start about

Kai Wright



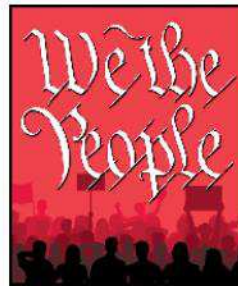
the people he means when he says "drug dealer": Mexicans. "We have to build a wall," he reminded his audience in Pennsylvania. "For people, for gangs, for drugs. The drugs have never been a problem like we have right now."

That last part is true-ish, but stoking xenophobic anger will only make it worse. Drug overdoses have been rising notably since the early 2000s, and have climbed sharply in the past five years thanks to the opioid crisis. These "deaths of despair," as Princeton University researchers Anne Case and Angus Deaton have termed them, are part of what's producing a dramatic spike in white mortality. Of course, as many others have noted, black and brown people have been dying for decades of the despair that so often accompanies drug addiction and the illicit drug trade. The irony is that no community has gotten the help it needs because we are all harmed by the same compassion deficit: We treat social ills with cops and prisons and death sentences rather than with the range of health-care tools—physical, emotional, and mental—that may actually solve the problem.

It's not drugs alone. I've spent the past several months producing a podcast in which young people from around the country talk about their experiences inside the criminal-justice system. They are largely black and Latino, and their stories will be familiar to those who have followed the discussion about things

like the school-to-prison pipeline and broken-windows policing. But the core challenges these youth face—untreated mental-health crises that turn domestic disputes into violent conflicts; the scarring of abuse and neglect, which can lead to drug or alcohol use; the fog of addiction in which irreversibly grave choices are made—would also be familiar to the frightened and frustrated people of Moon Township.

Instead of building systems to help the kids



No community has gotten the help it needs, because we are all harmed by the same compassion deficit.

I've met, we've found ever more ferocious ways to punish them and to exact vengeance on behalf of anyone they've harmed. Across the country, our thinking has been confined by an instinct to lash out at our demons with rage.

And so the president wants to execute drug dealers. "The only way to solve the drug problem is through toughness," he asserted at the rally. Of the many lies Trump uttered that day, this may have been the most demonstrably false. From heroin in the 1960s to crack in the '80s to meth in the '00s and fentanyl now, we have repeatedly tried and failed to fix "the drug problem" through toughness. Epidemics come and go, and the novel ideas about treatment and prevention that we manage to inject into the public debate go with them. The steadily ramped-up punishment infrastructure remains in place, however. We are still trying to unwind the draconian drug laws passed by cities, states, and

Congress in the wake of the crack wave.

So although Trump's call for capital punishment is explicitly racist, he's hardly on the fringes on this one. As James Forman Jr. details in *Locking Up Our Own*, his sobering history of the black community's own evolution in thinking about crime and punishment, there's a long tradition of understanding black drug dealers as race traitors who deserve only the harshest treatment. As one librarian turned vigilante told *The Washington Post* amid DC's heroin boom in the late '70s, "It's time we took retaliatory measures."

The frustration is understandable. In black communities for decades, in places like Moon Township now, help is sorely needed but never comes. It's enough to make you want to lash out in rage. But we can execute every drug dealer in America, and the demons will still be there. ■

We have repeatedly tried and failed to fix "the drug problem" through toughness.

SNAPSHOT / VICTOR R. CAIVANO

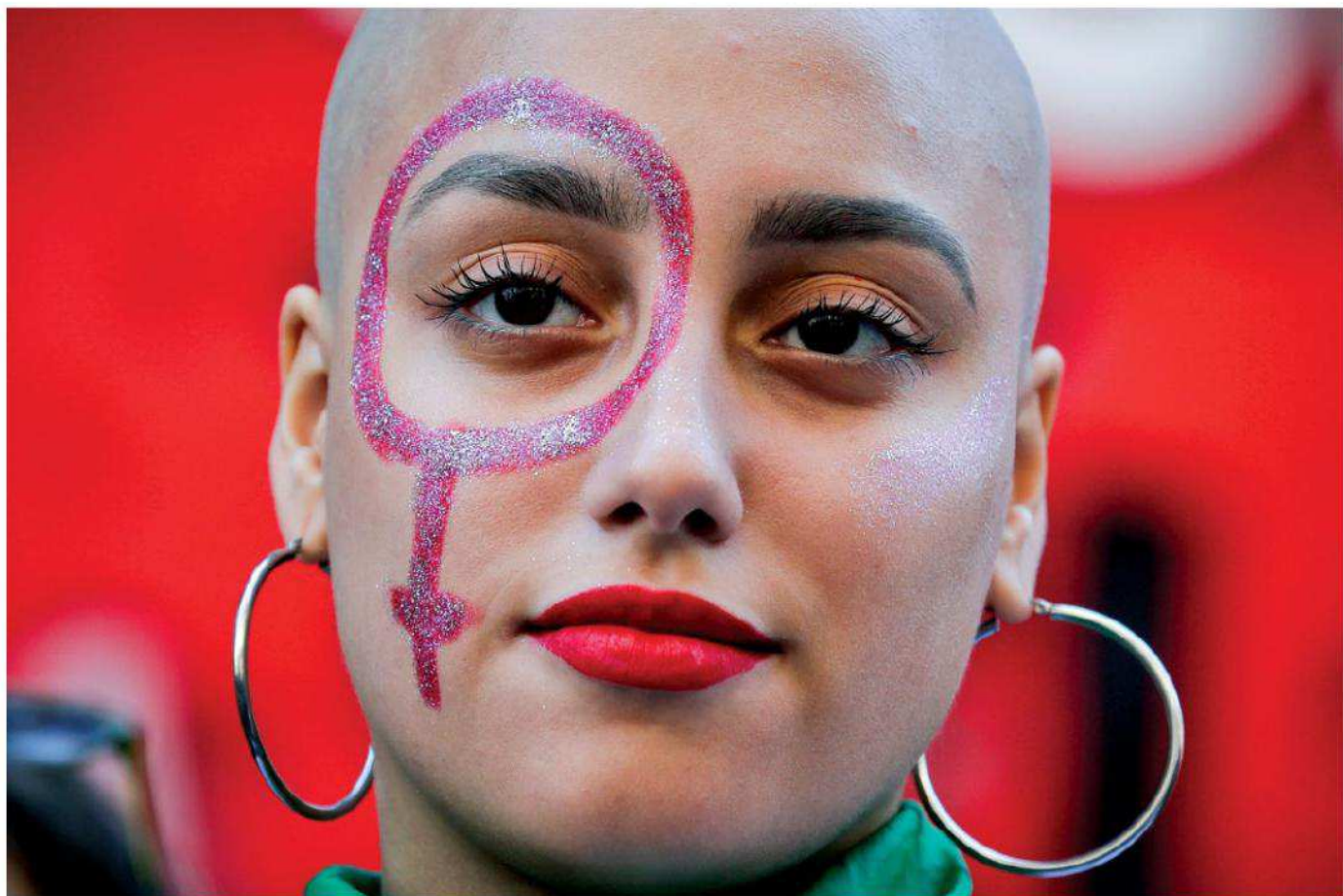
Her Choice

After the presentation of a bill that would legalize elective abortion in Argentina, a pro-choice activist with a Venus symbol painted on her face listens to a speech outside of Congress in Buenos Aires.

Calvin Trillin Deadline Poet

GARY COHN, POPULIST

His goal was to make an adjustment in taxes
That feathered the nest of the Goldmans and Sachs.
His mission accomplished, his White House tour ends
With many more millions for him and his friends.



AP PHOTO

FOR TRUMP, CRUELTY IS THE POINT

JULIANNE HING

The White House's immigration policies are designed to maximize suffering.

In November 2017, a 39-year-old woman arrived in the United States after fleeing with her daughter from the Democratic Republic of Congo. “Ms. L.” (as she would later become known in court documents) made it all the way to the US-Mexico border and there, as is her lawful right, pleaded for asylum. She cleared a so-called “credible fear” interview establishing that she was legitimately afraid of persecution if returned to her home country. But her troubles were far from over.

A few days after their arrival in the United States, Ms. L.’s then-6-year-old daughter was taken from her by immigration officials. Her daughter was soon transferred to a Chicago facility, while Ms. L. remained locked up in San Diego at the Otay Mesa Detention Center. The two have been separated for four months and have spoken only a handful of times by phone. The American Civil Liberties Union sued the federal government over these practices in late February. “When the officers separated them, Ms. L. could hear her daughter in the next room frantically screaming that she wanted to remain with her mother,” the ACLU complaint reads.

The government’s separation of parents from their children, the ACLU argued, violated asylum laws as well as the due-process rights of Ms. L. and her daughter. In early March, after a public outcry, Ms. L. was abruptly released, but her daughter remains in custody. It’s still unclear when or even if they’ll be reunited.

Ms. L.’s story is not unique. For more than a year, the Trump administration has discussed adopting, as official policy, the practice of separating parents from their children. “I would do almost anything to deter the

“Ms. L. could hear her daughter in the next room frantically screaming that she wanted to remain with her mother.”

—from the ACLU’s lawsuit against ICE

people from Central America getting on this very, very dangerous network that brings them up from Mexico,” said John Kelly, then head of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), speaking on CNN in March 2017.

There was perhaps even a hint of compassion in Kelly’s remarks. But snatching a child away from her mother’s arms in order to discourage others from attempting the same journey is undeniably cruel. And while this practice affects a small minority of the people subject to immigration enforcement—these are the freshest of newcomers and not yet among the estimated 11 million undocumented people already in the country—it is deeply representative of how the Trump administration treats immigrants and other marginalized populations.

Yes, there is Trump’s rhetoric: We all remember the “shithole countries” remark. He also recited a hateful anti-immigrant fable at the most recent Conservative Political Action Conference involving a menacing snake that kills a kindhearted woman. And he has repeatedly delivered



speeches portraying immigrants as bloodthirsty gang members. Very often, when he does speak about immigrants, he speaks only about the MS-13 gang. “[Gang members] have transformed peaceful parks and beautiful quiet neighborhoods into bloodstained killing fields,” Trump said last summer. “They’re animals.” His racist animus toward immigrants is one of the few subjects on which he can string together coherent sentences.

But his administration’s actions are even worse. Without needing to change any laws, the White House has used the threat of gang violence and the need to protect national security as pretexts for draconian immigration policies. Yet the real aim has always been something else: to inflict maximum suffering as a means of pushing out unwanted newcomers as well as those whose extended presence in the country may threaten white supremacy.

The administration has singled out California, home to the biggest immigrant population in the country, for daring to challenge this agenda. In early March, the Justice Department sued the state over three laws it passed last year. The first law limits the immigration-enforcement work that police departments and public agencies in the state can do for the federal government. The second bars employers from consenting to a raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on their businesses without a warrant and requires them to give employees a heads-up when the federal government performs an immigration audit on them. And the third gives the state attorney general the right to inspect any detention facility where immigrants are held while they await a court date or deportation. By passing these laws, the Justice Department argued, California had overstepped its bounds, since only the federal government has the right to regulate immigration enforcement. States that show compassion for immigrants will not be tolerated.

In addition to ICE agents staking out courthouses, school drop-off corners, and even hospitals—violating the agency’s own guidelines about not making arrests in “sensitive locations”—agents have also arrested or deported at least four outspoken immigrant-rights leaders in what activists call a calculated stroke of political retaliation. Recently, ICE arrested another, activist Alejandra Pablos, at a regular Tucson, Arizona, check-in on March 7.

Because of this fear of ICE, some immigrants have sought sanctuary in houses of worship. There are 36 people currently housed in sanctuary, according to a report released in January. But sanctuary is not a reprieve from the pressures of the Trump administration. Indeed, it’s a kind of imprisonment, a seclusion from the outside world in which one can lose contact with family and friends.

IN JUNE OF LAST YEAR, TRUMP PROPOSED ANOTHER rule change. “We also want to preserve our safety net for struggling Americans who truly need help,” he said in a speech in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. “But others don’t treat us fairly. That’s why I believe the time has come for new immigration rules, which say that those seeking admission into our country must be able to support themselves financially and should not use welfare for a period of at least five years.”

At the time, Trump’s statement was a head-scratcher. Undocumented immigrants are already barred from access to public assistance, food stamps, student loans, and Social Security. With some minor exceptions, even legal permanent residents must have their green cards for at least five years before they are eligible, and then only on a state-by-state basis for some public benefits. No mat-

ter: The trial balloon had been floated. By February of this year, Reuters reported on a rule being drafted that would allow immigration officials to consider whether a person had used public benefits—even if it was entirely legal, such as participating in Head Start for their US-born children—before deciding whether to grant a green card.

By March, *The New York Times* reported, immigrant families had already started to drop out of food stamps, food banks, and nutritional programs for pregnant women and their young children. “The rumor mill is rampant, and the fear is palpable,” said Lisa David, president and chief executive of Public Health Solutions, a food-stamp provider in New York City. “The stakes for what could happen in the future are incredibly high, and people just aren’t willing to take that risk.”

These programs are crucial lifelines, but this is how the Trump administration operates. The message is clear, and it’s being received: Immigrant families will have terrible choices imposed on them.

There’s a name for this approach: attrition through enforcement, or the enactment of policies that make life in the United States so difficult for immigrants that they choose to leave on their own. GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney called it “self-deportation,” which helped cost him the election. Trump said so himself. “He had a crazy policy of self-deportation, which was maniacal,” Trump said in 2012. “It sounded as bad as it was, and he lost all of the Latino vote.” Today, as president, Trump has made this same “crazy policy” the cornerstone of his immigration agenda.

“People aren’t going to stop coming unless there are consequences to illegal entry,” a Homeland Security official told *The Washington Post*, explaining the department’s rationale for separating parents and children at the border. But eight human-rights advocates and legal-service providers, in a complaint filed with the Department of Homeland Security in December, pointed out that such policies have no bearing on migration flows. They cited a study that examined the migration rates of children from Central America from 2011 to 2016. According to the complaint, the study found that “no U.S. policy—whether it be deterrence or not—has a statistical impact in the migration of a child. Instead, the study found that the single biggest indicator of a child’s migration was the number of homicides” in their home country: The more homicides that occurred, the more likely a child was to flee. (And bear in mind that homicides in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador are a useful proxy for other kinds of violent crime that often go unrecorded, such as kidnappings and extortion.) The study could even quantify it: For every 10 homicides, six additional children would migrate.

Under Trump, the country has embarked on an enforcement policy that willfully causes suffering and that doesn’t even factor into the decisions of desperate people trying to escape dangerous situations. Moreover, its stated reasons—to protect national security and the rule of law—are a ruse. Like so much else with this administration, the US immigration agenda is now being driven by a disdain for the most vulnerable communities among us. ■



The message is clear, and it's being received: Immigrant families will have terrible choices imposed on them.



JOHN NICHOLS

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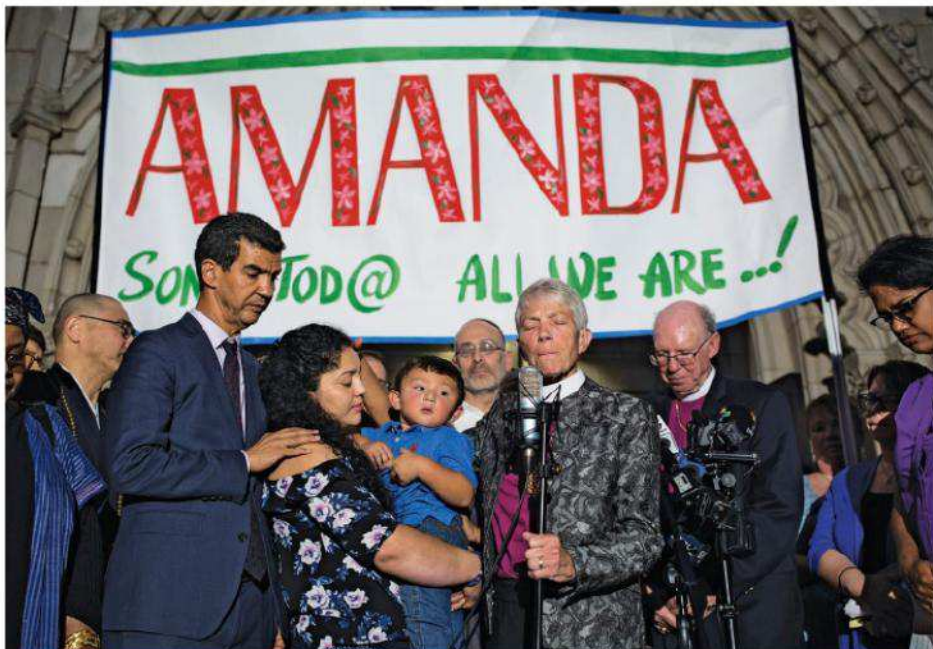


LAILA LALAMI

209 DAYS WITHOUT SUNLIGHT

For Amanda Morales, seeking sanctuary in a Manhattan church seemed to be the only way to keep her family together.

Photos by Cinthya Santos Briones
Reporting by Laura Gottesdiener
and Malav Kanuga



↑ Amanda, now 34, stands in front of a thicket of media to announce her decision to take sanctuary. She is flanked by interfaith leaders and New York City Councilman Ydanis Rodríguez. Activists hope that publicity will help protect her from immigration agents. “It’s very hard for me to be in front of the cameras,” Amanda says. “I panicked when I saw all the journalists.”

“I did it for my children. I can’t leave them. I can’t be separated from them.” —Amanda Morales

◀ Congregation members bless Amanda at a Sunday mass. “Amanda is the force of our community, the face of many mothers who are being deported and separated from their children,” says the Rev. Luis Barrios. “We bless Amanda with our hands and souls.”

The last time Amanda Morales walked outside—breathed the air, observed the sky, felt the pavement beneath her feet—it was summer: August 17, 2017, to be exact. The day was sparkling, the temperature hovering in the low 80s, and if Amanda’s life hadn’t been upended a few weeks earlier by a deportation order from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), she might have spent the afternoon working at the factory where she made guitar and cello strings, or enjoying some backyard time with her three children, Dulce, Daniela, and David. Instead, Amanda and her kids found themselves trekking

▶ New home: The whole family sleeps in the church’s library, a space that Amanda and congregation members transformed by installing bunk beds and elevating the library’s books—*The Pentagon Papers*, *The Final Speeches of Malcolm X*—to the highest shelves.





◀ “We never thought we were going to live in a church,” says Dulce. “I feel like there are ghosts and that they see me. But I also like it. It’s beautiful.”

Dulce, Amanda’s oldest child, “cried and cried” their first night in the church, she says. She still misses her home on Long Island and her father, who had to stay behind to keep his job.



“Imagine, I’ve been here for so long, and I don’t know how much more time it will be.” —Amanda Morales

⤴ When immigration agents told Amanda that she would not be allowed to stay in the country, she had a full life here: a job, a home, a husband. Her children were growing up safe and happy. Back in Guatemala, one of her cousins had just been murdered. “I had two weeks to decide what I was going to do,” she says.



Holding on tight: Daniela, 8; Dulce, 10; and David, 3, stand by their mother.

from their home on Long Island to a 104-year-old Episcopal church in Upper Manhattan with clothes, toys, and a pet fish. The church was about to become their new home.

In moving into Holyrood Church—Iglesia Santa Cruz, Amanda joined a small but growing fraternity of immigrants, mostly undocumented, who have taken sanctuary in places of worship to avoid deportation to their native countries. The operating theory is that the federal government will not arrest people inside a church (or synagogue or mosque). It's an idea that dates back to the original sanctuary movement of the 1980s, but it's seen a resurgence in recent years, expanding in unhappy tandem with President Trump's crackdown on immigrants.

For the past seven months, the walls of Holyrood Church have performed their role well: They have kept Amanda safe. They have spared her deportation to Guatemala, where she fears her life will be in danger from gangs—the reason she fled in 2004—and they have allowed her to remain with her kids, all US citizens. They have surrounded her with a vital community that, under the leadership of the Rev. Luis Barrios, has transformed the church into a rare refuge from an increasingly hostile world.

Still, it has not been easy. Because Amanda cannot leave the church without risking arrest, she lives a life of virtual captivity. She sees the sun only indirectly, filtered through windows. And she has never visited her daughters' new elementary school. Now that the asylum case she filed recently has stalled, a stubborn despair has settled around her. "I'm so worried," she says of the possibility of having to return to Guatemala. "You know I'd be in danger. It terrifies me."

Throughout all the ups and downs, Amanda has been brave and generous enough to let us document her life in Holyrood, to capture her attempt to build a new home in a church whose walls may—or may not—prove strong enough to keep her family together. The result is a multimedia series, appearing mostly on TheNation.com, called "Finding Sanctuary," a story about the consequences of political cruelty, but also a story of resistance and decency. ■



Daniela and Dulce balance on the sanctuary rail inside the chapel of Holyrood Church.

"I like this church, but I miss our house. There, we have a big yard with chickens."

—Amanda Morales



◀ Since August, David has grown increasingly clingy, forever grasping at Amanda's legs or demanding to be cradled. "He spends all day with me. He never peels himself away."



▶ "There are times when me and my son are here alone in the church... and I walk out into the hallway and I see the loneliness there, and inside me. And my son asks me, 'What's wrong, Mommy?' I tell him, 'Nothing.'"

▶ Amanda throws a surprise party for Dulce's 10th birthday. It's the first of three birthdays the family celebrated in the church; the others were Amanda's 34th and David's third. Daniela will not turn 9 until this summer, but she already knows what she wants her present to be: home.





◀ As the weeks have become months, Amanda's despair is visceral: "Every day I say to myself, 'When am I going to leave?'" Last night was a very difficult night. I felt like dawn would never come.... I felt like I couldn't even breathe. I felt so alone, and so sad."



Dulce dreams that her mother's case will be resolved, that she will "get the papers for the United States" so that the family can return home.

⤴ Congregation members rally around Amanda, sharing stories, recipes, and the latest news. Some have become dear, trusted friends.



⤴ Amanda celebrates Christmas dressed as one of the Magi. Weeks later, Reverend Barrios preached: "They told us the struggle would be between those who believe in God and those who do not. But they lied. The struggle was, and has always been, between those who practice justice, and those who do not."

To read more of the multimedia series "Finding Sanctuary," go to thenation.com/special/sanctuary.

Cintha Santos Briones is a documentary photographer and photojournalist. Laura Gottesdiener is an independent journalist and producer at Democracy Now! Malav Kanuga is an urban anthropologist.



Since August, Amanda has left the church only a handful of times: once for an emergency root canal, another time to feel the winter's first snowfall. "I was here for part of the summer, the fall, the winter, and now spring is coming," she says. "Soon summer will come again, and I don't want to be here imprisoned."

Human Rights Are Not Enough

We must also embrace the fight against economic inequality.

by SAMUEL MOYN

"I think that, if this world has a future, it is as a socialist society."

—Zdena Tominová, Czech playwright and dissident, speaking in 1981

IN 1981, THE PLAYWRIGHT ZDENA TOMINOVÁ, on an extended visit to the West from her home in communist Czechoslovakia, traveled to Dublin to give a lecture. A critic of her country's political regime, she was the spokesperson for Charter 77, one of the first dissident organizations to turn human

rights into an international rallying cry.

Tominová, however, surprised the crowd. She explained that, growing up as a beneficiary of the state's communist policies, she felt grateful for the ideals of her youth and their politics of material equality. "All of a sudden," she remembered of the leveling of classes she witnessed as a child, "I was not underprivileged and could do everything." This was striking, coming from a woman who'd seen the suppression of the Prague Spring reforms in 1968 and who'd had her head pounded into the pavement for her membership in Charter 77.

But even when government officials urged her to flee the country to avoid imprisonment, Tominová remained true to her generation's socialism. "I think that, if this world has a future, it is as a socialist society," she told her Irish audience, "which I understand to mean a society where nobody has priorities just because he happens to come from a rich family." And this socialism was not just a local ideal: "The world of social justice for all people has to come about." Tominová made it clear that socialism should not be used as an alibi for the deprivation of human rights. But by the same token, for her nation and for the world, the emergence of a human-rights framework should not serve as an excuse to abandon the fight against inequality.

Today, Tominová's speech looks ironic: Her human-rights ideals became common sense, but the socialist ones cratered. Data show that texts were overwhelmingly more likely to use the word "socialism" than "human rights" until the late 20th century. The terms' relative popularity switched right around the end of the Cold War in 1989. As the notion of human rights spread, people found it easier to identify with strangers across borders. Yet at the same time, the liberalization of markets, the reliance on free trade, and the mission of governance to institutionalize both created vast gulfs of inequality. Human rights became our highest moral language even as the rich seized ever more power and wealth.

Some 40 years on, we should reassess how the human-rights movement fits into the growth of this new political economy and redefine our sense of justice to counter the triumph of free-market ideology and the explosion of inequality. We should also ask how we can revive Tominová's vision, which combined human rights with a broader sense of social welfare without abandoning one for the other.

THE CENTRAL PREMISE OF HUMAN RIGHTS TODAY—THAT individuals intrinsically have nonnegotiable entitlements—stretches back centuries. But the unique vis-

ibility of human rights as an international language of justice has few precedents in history.

The original purpose of human-rights claims, when first asserted in Europe in the late 18th century, was to justify revolutions and build sovereign nation-states. Rights were about negotiating the meanings and prerogatives of citizenship, and they largely operated within state borders. This remained the case through the 1940s, when many people around the world were fighting for citizenship outside of empire. The United Nations passed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 that was chock-full of economic and social rights, but only for those with citizenship.

Thirty years later, human rights became the mantra of globally minded organizations like Amnesty International, which focused not on a broad set of economic and social rights but on human survival. Likewise, advocates renounced the use of violence to achieve justice, and instead relied on appeals to international law and a strategy of naming and shaming wrongdoers. The trouble is that this transformation in the politics of rights occurred at the same time as the hollowing out of the welfare state in the very nations whose citizens went on to found and fund human-rights movements. The ferment of human-rights claims helped free East Europeans and Latin Americans from dictatorship, but it couldn't stop their countries from embracing market fundamentalism and inequality. A new cosmopolitanism surged, but local forms of social democracy entered into crisis.

From Karl Marx on, some on the left have claimed that either the idea of individual rights or the contemporary human-rights movement (or both) works in the service of capitalism. Yet human rights did not bring about the neoliberal age, despite sharing a moral individualism



and often the same suspicion of collectivist projects like nationalism and socialism. It was also not the job of human-rights activists struggling to invent a new brand of global concern to save the left from its failures and mistakes. It is hardly fair to treat human rights as a scapegoat for the reversals of progressive politics. Indeed, there is no reason to think that a human rights that stigmatizes “superficial” abuses could not coexist with a more “structural” politics.

Furthermore, the human-rights movement has brought scrutiny not merely to state violence around the world but to the profound failures of states to treat their citizens equally no matter their gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Activists have also started to prioritize economic and social rights, from employment to housing to food. And, in fact, for all their sins, neoliberal policies have helped to fulfill some of the wildest dreams of human-rights advocates: China’s marketization, for instance, has brought more human beings out of poverty than any other force in history. But without reflecting on why human-rights movements have been able to coexist so comfortably with neoliberal regimes, there is no way to redirect our politics toward a new agenda of economic fairness.

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, THE IDEA OF LIBERTIES AS INHERENT TO AN individual was strongly linked to classical liberalism and the rule of markets. This meant that a rights-based rhetoric was mainly used to justify free contracts and private property. It’s no wonder Marx concluded that human rights often served as an apologia for the narrow protections of capitalists.

Yet during the mid-20th-century heyday of social democracy, human rights were recast as part of a politics that sought to create more equality within national communities. If the notion of human rights made little initial impact because there were so many other idioms—including, of course, socialism—that pursued this aim, at least it showed that the idea was flexible and amenable to revision.

Then neoliberalism came, and the human-rights movement has undoubtedly been affected. Human-rights law and politics never reverted to the narrow protection of contracts and property, but they were lifted out of their midcentury alliance with redistributive politics and condemned to a defensive and minor role in pushing back against the new political economy.

The classic examples of global rights activism, organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, dropped the emphasis on economic and social rights proclaimed by the UN’s Universal Declaration and converted the idea of human rights from a template for citizenship into a warrant for shaming state oppressors. And while human-rights movements gingerly took on economic- and social-rights advocacy after the Cold War, they never attacked the hierarchy of wealth erected by neoliberalism. With only rare exceptions, material equality is not something that human-rights law and movements ever set out to defend.

The results have been grievous and spectacular. Great advances were made when it came to establishing a sense of global responsibility and status equality, but at the high price of economic fairness at every scale. Human-rights law lacked the norms, and human-rights movements the will, to advocate for a serious redistributive politics. Even in theory, with their focus on ensuring a bare floor of material protection for individuals in a globalized economy, human-rights movements did nothing to prevent the obliteration of a wealth ceiling. With the decline of the welfare state, human-rights movements both failed to attack the victory of the rich and struggled to cope with the poverty

of the rest. The political and legal project of human rights became a companion to the rise of inequality, which paved the road to populism and further rights abuses.

THAT HUMAN-RIGHTS IDEALS HAVE SPREAD across the world in tandem with neoliberalism does not mean we should blame—let alone ditch—those high ideals. Instead, it means that human rights only makes sense as one partner in a new politics of fair distribution.

Today’s galloping inequality has helped drive the rise of populist leaders, who have hardly been friends of human rights. It is tempting in response to double down on human-rights strategies. And it is honorable to climb the ramparts to indict the grim outcomes when regimes slide into evil, and to keep hope alive for the weak and vulnerable living in penury. Indeed, despite the fact that human rights have accompanied and helped prettify neoliberalism, the lesson is surely not that activists should stop denouncing repression or withdraw their pressure on behalf of people living in abject circumstances.

Human-rights activists do need to think twice, however, about the circumstances of their success in defining good and evil so powerfully around the globe. As for the rest of us, we must recognize the limits of human rights, and admit *our own failure* to contribute bold visions and projects outside of the rights framework. Human-rights movements were latecomers to the era of distributional concerns. Even when they did take an interest, they set a low bar, focusing only on saving the worst off from destitution. Human rights are not to blame for inequality, but we need to face our responsibility for treating them as a panacea.

Inequality is a problem that human-rights movements are unlikely to solve on their own. Advocacy organizations today barely make a dent in the political evil, and they lack the features of unions and other local actors that have attacked inequality successfully in the past. But we can keep the benefits of the human-rights movements of the past 40 years while rejecting neoliberalism.

Since it cannot reinvent itself with new ideals and tools, the human-rights movement should stick to what it does best: informing our concepts of citizenship and stigmatizing evil, without purporting to stand for the whole of “global justice.” Meanwhile, those of us who donate to and sympathize with Amnesty International and other such organizations must keep human-rights movements in their place, and not mistake a part of justice for the whole.

A larger community within which egalitarian agitation can emerge may not be part of the history of the human-rights movement, but it must become its future. Looking forward allows us to recall past alternatives for the movement—possibilities for which Tominová longed—before human rights were taken hostage by our neoliberal times. Tominová, after all, was a human-rights activist, but she was not merely one.

Ultimately, human-rights movements can work to extricate themselves from their neoliberal companionship, even as others restore the dream of equality in both theory and practice. Until we supplement human rights with other ideals and projects, we will leave the very global justice we seek unfulfilled and under threat. ■

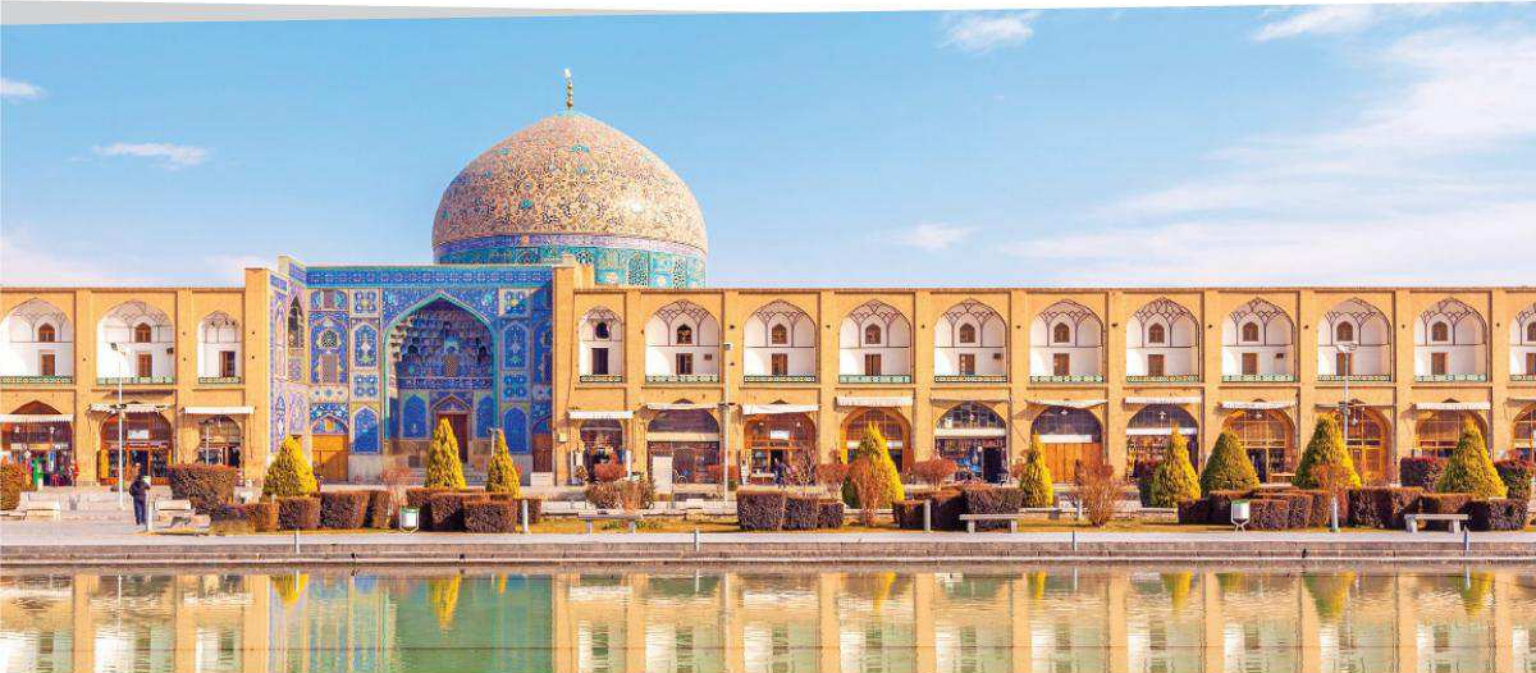


Human-rights movements did nothing to prevent the obliteration of a wealth ceiling.

Samuel Moyn teaches law and history at Yale. This essay is adapted from Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World (Harvard).



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SYRIA BURNING: OUR THIRTY YEARS' WAR?

The intervention of outside powers could leave the region as devastated as Central Europe in the 17th century.

CHARLES GLASS



ACOUNTRY HOUSE IN THE HILLS WEST OF DAMASCUS SYMBOLIZES FOR ME THE FUTILITY OF SYRIA'S WAR, SEVEN YEARS OLD THIS SPRING. A friend had saved for years to build the chalet, where he and his wife and children enjoyed weekends and holidays. Rebels broke into the empty house at the war's outset to fire from the roof at Syrian soldiers. The troops responded with automatic weapons and mortar rounds that set the house ablaze. The rebels fled, the house burned, and neither side offered compensation.

I noticed on regular visits to Damascus the evolution of my friend's perspective. He directed his anger first at the soldiers for overreacting, then at the rebels for invading his house without permission or the possibility of defending it. As the war progressed, he chose to forget the house, just as he tried to ignore the war. That house represents Syria, its inhabitants at the mercy of forces they cannot control. My friend lingers on in Damascus to run the family business, but his wife and children have joined the mass exodus of Syrians overseas.

Many Syrians among the 5 million or so who escaped hope to return when the war ends. It should be over, but it isn't. Instead, Syria's skies have become a shooting gallery for Kurds hitting Turkish helicopters, Israelis downing Iranian drones, a Russian Su-25 succumbing to jihadi surface-to-air missiles. On the ground, Syria has long since slipped into the Lebanese trap of shifting shapes, altering alliances, and outside interference.

Lebanon's civil war lasted 15 years, a precedent that points to another eight for Syria. The antagonists in Lebanon at the outset in April 1975 were the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Christian Phalange Party. No one then foresaw that Israeli tanks would roll into Beirut seven years later, or that US Marines and America's Mediterranean fleet would become part of the equation. In Lebanon, the conflict evolved into a hydra-headed monster to become, in Hobbes's famous phrase, a war of all against all: right against left, Syrians against Muslims, Christians against Syrians, Israelis against Palestinians, Palestinians against one another, Druze against Maronites, Israelis against Shiites, and Shiites and Druze against Americans, ad infinitum. The fighting ended with a foreign-brokered agreement in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in 1989. Along the way, 150,000 out of 3 million Lebanese died; many more suffered physical and psychic wounds; and perhaps a quarter of the population fled.

Lebanon then, like Syria now, confirmed Nuremberg prosecutor Hartley Shawcross's observation: "It is the crime of war which is at once the object and the parent of the other crimes: the crimes against humanity, the war crimes, the common murders." The defeat of the rebels in Aleppo, Syria's commercial center, in December 2016, along with the Assad regime's subsequent territorial gains and the impending elimination of the Islamic State's territorial base in Syria and Iraq, implied a denouement. Yet the war is flying along on its second wind: Turkey is attacking the Syrian Kurds; the United States has promised to establish a 30,000-strong Border Security Force of Kurdish warriors and Arab tribes in the northeast to "contain Iran"; Israeli Prime Minis-

ter Benjamin Netanyahu is raising the stakes, declaring, "We will act if necessary not just against Iran's proxies but against Iran itself"; and some voices in the West demand not reform and reconstruction, but renewed war.

"Phase one is over," a Syrian security source, who studied his craft in Russia, told me. "Phase two is sharing the cake." Most of Syria's populated areas—the Mediterranean coast and the spine from Damascus north through Homs and Hama to Aleppo—are now in government hands. "The government is on two paths," the security source added. "One, it is building up the areas it has, providing electricity, water, schools, and all that. Two, it is taking back the areas it can." Two of the areas that the Syrian Army—aided by its Russian, Iranian, and Lebanese allies—is determined to take are Idlib province, where most of the rebels have concentrated as they lost other regions, and Eastern Ghouta on the Damascus outskirts. The government has launched a major offensive in Eastern Ghouta to defeat the rebels there or force them to join their colleagues in Idlib. The United Nations estimates that 400,000 civilians are trapped in Ghouta's villages and towns, prevented by government siege and rebel policy from leaving. Other areas outside government control, while vast, contain a small percentage of the population. "What do people in Damascus care about Manbij or Afrin?" the security source asked. "They can live without them."

The battle in Afrin, a northern province that the war had left untouched until Turkey's invasion in January, does not affect daily life in Damascus and has nothing to do with regime change. Turkey is attempting to crush Afrin's US-supported Kurdish fighters and deny their colleagues in the Kurdistan Workers' Party access to the border. Afrin is an isolated Kurdish pocket, separated from the main Kurdish areas of the northeast by regions under government and jihadist control.

"We were talking to the Kurds before Turkey came in," said a Syrian senior official. "We offered to bring in our army. They said no. Now they are begging us to come to Afrin." The Syrian Army began by permitting weapons and fighters to traverse its territory on their way to Afrin; it later joined the Kurds in the anti-Turkish campaign. "Even if we have differences with the Kurds, they are Syrian," explained Fares Shehabi, a member of Syria's parliament for Aleppo. If and when Turkey's Orwellian-sounding Operation Olive Branch drives the Kurdish, and possibly Syrian, military forces out of Afrin, the Kurds are

bracing for further Turkish attacks in the northeast. The United States, which has troops with the Kurds about 80 miles east of Afrin in the Arab town of Manbij, will be forced to choose between its NATO ally Turkey and its Kurdish surrogates. Past experience—from Henry Kissinger's abandonment of the Kurds to Saddam Hussein's murderous onslaught in 1975 to last year's defeat of the Kurds in Kirkuk—indicates that US policy favors larger powers over Kurdish surrogates. Contradictory assertions from both Ankara and Washington have yet to make

"It is the crime of war which is at once the object and the parent of the other crimes."

—Hartley Shawcross, Nuremberg prosecutor

Syrian agony:
The Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, December 2016.



clear whether the two sides will, as good NATO allies, cooperate or fight each other for Manbij and the rest of the northeast.

SYRIA'S FATE, LIKE LEBANON'S FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI invasion of 1982, has fallen into the hands of foreigners. Russians, Iranians, Americans, and Turks, and to a lesser extent Saudis and Qataris, are determining the course of events there. In Sochi, Astana, and Geneva, Syrian supporters and some opponents of the government argue about their future—but Russia and the United States make the significant decisions. Syria is little more than a host to conflicts between Turks and Kurds, the United States and Iran, Israel and Hezbollah, and the big one: the United States and Russia.

Rather than encourage US-Russian agreement to end the war, the deep thinkers in Washington and Mar-a-Lago are urging the United States to wade deeper into the swamp. Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA analyst and Bill Clinton's director for Persian Gulf affairs at the National Security Council, is one of the few commentators to admit that Syria is a means to an end. In a strongly argued series on the American Enterprise Institute's website, Pollack advocates using Syria as the most effective arena to hurt Iran. There are, he writes, "(1) places where they [the Iranians] are vulnerable and where we can cause more harm to them than they can do to us, [and] (2) places where our allies are vulnerable and need help to fend off an Iranian challenge." Noting that "Syria is the best example of the first category," Pollack suggests "ramping up American covert assistance to the Syrian opposition to try to bleed the Assad regime and its Iranian backers over time, exactly the way that the United States backed the Afghan Mujahideen as they bled the Soviets in Afghanistan—or as the Russians and Chinese did to the United States in Vietnam."

For the Trump administration to follow Pollack's advice, it would need to ignore the consequences of the examples he cites. The Russians and Chinese bled the United States in Vietnam, but the benefits to them were few. The United States is now doing at least as well in Vietnam as either Russia or China. "U.S.-Vietnam bilateral trade has grown from \$451 million in 1995 to nearly \$52 billion in 2016," notes the State Department on its website. "In 2016, Vietnam was America's fastest growing export market." In Afghanistan, the mujahideen proved more failure than success for both Afghans and Americans. Although the Soviets withdrew, the mujahideen's relentless civil wars reduced Kabul to rubble, brought in the Taliban to impose order, and produced Al Qaeda and its 9/11 attacks. If this is what Washington wants out of Syria, it's on the right track.

The urge to hit Iran in Syria calls to mind an argument made, and heeded, 16 years ago, that "the option that makes the most sense is for the United States to launch a full-scale invasion of Iraq to topple Saddam, eradicate his weapons of mass destruction, and rebuild Iraq as a prosperous and stable society for the good of the United States, Iraq's own people and the entire region." Americans know where that advice led the country. The author? Kenneth Pollack.

By the time the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648, the French, Danes, Swedes, and Ottomans had all joined the fray. When it ended, 8 million people were dead. Syria has lost half a million to date, but the continued squabbling of outside powers threatens to dwarf that number and leave the country—and possibly the region—as devastated as Central Europe in the 17th century. ■

Charles Glass, ABC News's chief Middle East correspondent from 1983 to 1993, is the author of Syria Burning: A Short History of a Catastrophe (Verso). The Alicia Patterson Foundation provided assistance for his research on Syria.

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Books & the Arts.



THE FACTORY IN THE FAMILY

The radical vision of Wages for Housework

by SARAH JAFFE

In 1975, women in Iceland went on strike, from their domestic responsibilities as well as their day jobs. The strike, organized by women's councils across the country after the United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's Year, saw some 25,000 women in the streets of Reykjavík alone. In the strike's aftermath, Iceland elected

Europe's first female president, and the country formally outlawed gender discrimination in 1976. Iceland's gaps in pay and education became among the world's smallest.

To the women of the Wages for Housework movement, the Icelandic strike was a salutary example of their politics in action. Internationalist, anti-capitalist, and feminist, the movement argued that by focusing on women's unpaid labor inside the home—child care, cleaning, emotional support, even

Wages for Housework

The New York Committee 1972–1977

Edited by Silvia Federici
and Arlen Austin
Autonomedia. 280 pp. \$25

sex—activists could highlight more fundamental inequalities based on gender. And the best way to do so was to refuse to do that kind of work. As the International Feminist Collective (IFC), which launched the Wages for Housework campaign, wrote in a press release: “We

Sarah Jaffe is a reporting fellow at the Nation Institute and the author of Necessary Trouble: Americans in Revolt.

don't want just to demonstrate our strength but to use it and increase it to get what we want.... We are tired of our work and of not having any time of our own."

That press release is just one of the trove of documents collected in the new book *Wages for Housework: The New York Committee 1972–1977: History, Theory, Documents*. Published by Autonomedia and edited by Silvia Federici, one of the core members of that committee, and artist and scholar Arlen Austin, *Wages for Housework* is one of those rare books that takes the reader inside the theory and practice of a radical movement, reproducing posters and flyers, photographs, internal strategy papers, and media clips along with previously published articles.

Wages for Housework helps to recover a movement that had modest origins but spread around the world within several years. From the gathering in Padua, Italy, that launched the international campaign in 1972 to the spin-off groups like the New York Committee, the women of *Wages for Housework* made arguments and demands that were well ahead of their time, helping to fill in the gaps overlooked by the mostly male left and the mostly liberal mainstream feminist movement, both of which have long excluded the home and the processes of social reproduction from their activism and thinking.

As the IFC's launch statement (which served as a founding document for the New York Committee) put it:

We identify ourselves as Marxist feminists, and take this to mean a new definition of class, the old definition of which has limited the scope and effectiveness of the activity of both the traditional left and the new left. This new definition is based on the subordination of the wageless worker to the waged worker behind which is hidden the productivity, i.e., the exploitation, of the labor of women in the home and the cause of their more intense exploitation out of it. Such an analysis of class presupposes a new area of struggle, the subversion not only of the factory and office but of the community.

To demand wages was to acknowledge that housework—i.e., the unwaged labor done by women in the home—was work. But it was also a demand, as Federici and others repeatedly stressed, to end the essentialized notions of gender that underlay why women did housework in the first place, and thus amounted to nothing less than a way to subvert capitalism itself. By refusing this work, the *Wages for House-*

work activists argued, women could help see to "the destruction of every class relation, with the end of bosses, with the end of the workers, of the home and of the factory and thus the end of male workers too."

In a moment when women's protests and talk of class struggle are both resurgent, the intersectional analysis that *Wages for Housework* put forth (years before Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term) is more relevant than ever. It noted that to ignore women's wageless work is also to ignore that of so many others, from the slaves who built the United States to those who still labor basically unwaged in prisons: "In capitalism," as the *Wages for Housework* committee members wrote in 1974, "white supremacy and patriarchy are the supremacy and patriarchy of the wage."

But *Wages for Housework* also sought to improve women's lives in more immediate ways, through struggles around health care and reproductive rights, Social Security, and the criminalization of sex workers, and it showed the possibilities of radical action even in the most conservative of eras.

Wages for Housework was critical of the understanding of work both on the socialist left and in mainstream feminism. It criticized liberal feminists for embracing work as liberation, for turning away from reproduction as an issue or viewing it narrowly through the lens of abortion rights, and it criticized socialists for overlooking the work that occurred off the factory floor. In the 1980s, members of the New York Committee, which had disbanded in 1977, put out *Tap Dance*, a journal reproduced in this volume and strikingly similar to the zines that were published only a few years later during the Riot Grrrl movement, which criticized feminism that had turned too polite and directed too much of its energy toward lobbying, petitioning, letter-writing, and legislating at the federal level. "This is like facing the rising flood water with a tea cup," the group wrote, a sentiment hard not to sympathize with today.

There are plenty of collections by the women of *Wages for Housework*—Federici's *Revolution at Point Zero* and Selma James's *Sex, Race and Class* are great entry points—but the gift that this one gives is a glimpse into the day-to-day workings of an activist movement. Drawing inspiration from Italian workerism and Detroit's League of Revolutionary Black Workers, *Wages for Housework* understood the nuclear family not as "natural" but as a hierarchical structure particular to a certain period of capitalism. As men's wages

continued to rise and, in the second half of the 20th century, more married working-class women made homemaking their job, their husbands effectively became their bosses and their work a supposed labor of love. Moreover, that ideological conception shaped the wages that women were paid if they did take jobs outside the home.

In order to challenge these artificial divisions of life into work and home or work and love, the women of the New York Committee organized in the places where rank-and-file workers (homemakers) had strategic power. This could be particularly tricky, since housework was necessarily isolated. But they developed a new set of tactics, including strategic outreach to the media, gaining coverage in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Life* magazine, and more, as well as creating their own pamphlets and leaflets, designed to be accessible to everyone they reached (materials in Spanish, materials targeted at particular groups, etc.). The New York Committee opened a Brooklyn storefront where meetings could be held and where women from the community could drop in; the committee also set up promotional tables at local events like the Atlantic Antic, selling *Wages for Housework*-themed pot holders and distributing information. Its members also frequented supermarkets, laundromats, and other "places where housework has to some degree already been socialized," treating them as the rare shop floors for workers mostly isolated in the home. They wrote of marches and demonstrations as measures of their strength, what Jane McAlevey and other labor organizers call "structure tests." They helped to organize four international conferences to bring the network together.

In the documents, one finds tension as well as collaboration among the *Wages for Housework* activists, especially concerning questions related to the group's structure and leadership. The group's members believed in organizing autonomously; while they would join other struggles in solidarity, they would do so only on their own terms. They also struggled to find a model for organization that agreed with their ideals; they rejected hierarchical structures and vanguard parties, but they also tried to avoid fetishizing "spontaneity," and they pointed out the problems with consensus-based decision-making. Federici writes of the tension "between reformism and radicalism, between the wage as compensation for housework and the wage as subversion of this work.... But it was in learning to balance these contradictory sides of the wage that our group was formed" (emphasis hers).

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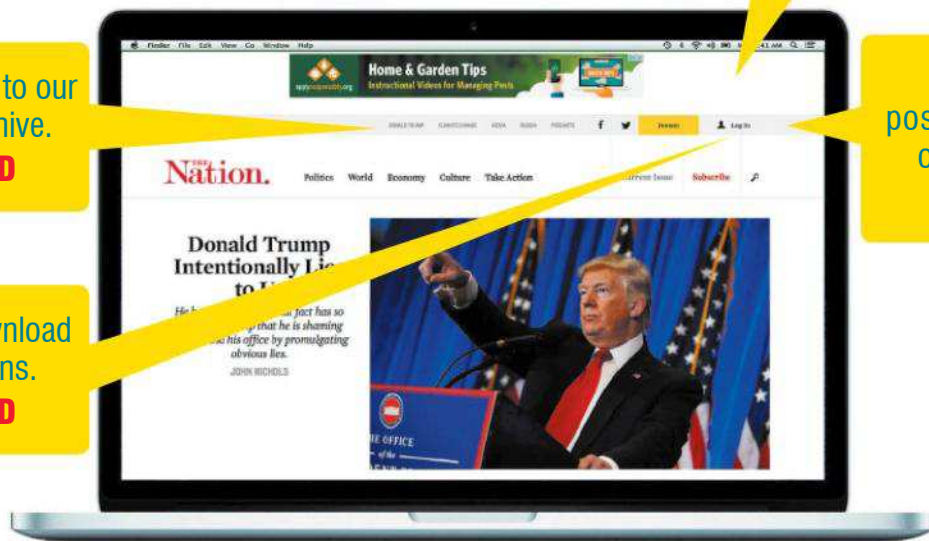
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In keeping with the idea that Wages for Housework's perspective could be brought to bear on various struggles rather than a single specific one, the New York Committee became involved with labor campaigns at waged workplaces like the Maimonides Community Mental Health Center, where some of the group's members were employed as unionized workers. They demanded improvements for *all* women in the facility—including the women patients. In this struggle, as in others, they wrote of resisting the “blackmail” that told them they should work out of love—a counterpart to the blackmail they faced at home.

Wages for Housework organizers also became involved in the struggle around welfare, in solidarity with welfare-rights organizations and the black women who often headed them. The framework that sprang from these efforts was a precursor to what is today called reproductive justice: an analysis created by black women organizers that, as the legal scholar Dorothy Roberts writes, “includes not only a woman's right not to have a child, but also the right to have children and to raise them with dignity in safe, healthy, and supportive environments.”

This broader definition of reproductive freedom was based on an understanding that biology should not be destiny—a key idea in much of Wages for Housework's activism. To refuse women's role in the home was to challenge the very idea of gender binaries. While mainstream feminists turned away from reproduction in these years to focus on the workplace, Wages for Housework activists insisted that the issues were linked. “We refuse work as a labor of love and the identity (‘femininity’) that capital has imposed on us,” the group's 1974 *Theses on Wages for Housework* insisted. Femininity, like housework itself, is a skill learned by women, not a natural part of their being. And devaluing women's skills has served to maintain capitalism.

The attacks on women who received Aid to Families With Dependent Children gave Wages for Housework an opportunity to test this argument—welfare was, after all, a form of state payment for child-rearing, and an attack on women who made use of it was thus an attack on all women who were forced to bear the burden of reproductive work without pay. The National Welfare Rights Organization and other groups that fought to broaden the AFDC program inspired their organizing and prompted the founding of Black Women for Wages for Housework in 1976. The recognition of this area of struggle by mainstream feminism would have helped to make it more accessible to

working-class women, in particular black women, as well as some women otherwise drawn to the anti-abortion right.

The insistence that welfare was a burden on the working class rather than a wage for essential caring labor produced by women in the home relied on the stigma attached to people who had long been wageless, an idea that, Federici argued in a 1975 document, was “*an essential aspect of racism and sexism and a reinforcement to both...*” (emphasis hers).

Inspired by welfare-rights activists, the Wages for Housework organizers took up a series of other reproductive issues related to poor women, including forced sterilization. Real reproductive freedom, they argued, was more than abortion rights; rather, it was, as a 1975 pamphlet noted, “The power to decide whether or not we want to have children, when, how many, and under what conditions.”

One of the most controversial elements of the campaign, and the one that the press often seized on for prurient interest, was the idea that sex is part of the housewife's work, the most intimate duty expected of her in order to keep her man satisfied and ready to go to his day job. If there's one thing that middle-class women want to be called less than “housewife,” it's “prostitute”—and yet the Wages for Housework campaign emphasized that sex, in a system where women were economically dependent on men, could never be entirely freely chosen. It's worth remembering, in the service of this argument, that before 1979 most definitions of rape in the United States explicitly excluded spouses. Beyond that, as Lily Rothman noted not long ago in *Time*, “saying ‘no’ to one's husband was usually grounds for him to get a divorce”—or, in Wages for Housework's terms, to fire his recalcitrant employee.

Of course, for many if not most people, sex is the ultimate thing that should be done for love, not money. In challenging this idea, Wages for Housework struck at a deep-seated taboo. As Federici wrote, “To admit that sexuality is work is difficult for women, because if this too is work then nothing is left and we seem to be condemned to a profound loneliness.” But this was an important point for the group; it added to the debates of the time about heterosexuality's compulsory nature and how power shapes sexual relations. “We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create what will be our sexuality which we have never known,” Federici declared in “Wages Against Housework.” It also brought

Wages for Housework activists into solidarity with sex workers, in campaigns that ranged from Californian legislative battles to the occupation of an Anglican church by the English Collective of Prostitutes.

The New York Committee also had a ringside seat for the onset of austerity politics in the United States during the New York City fiscal crisis of the 1970s, including cuts to social services and an increased disciplining of the public-sector workforce that often hit women the hardest, since they both used social services and staffed the public-sector workforce disproportionately (not to mention also dealt with the emotional fallout of the crisis at home). The “labor of love” framework was a useful tool in that moment, to demand that public-sector workers do more with less out of a love for their jobs, their clients, their families. At the same time, as more women entered the waged workplace, they took the “labor of love” framework with them—a feminism that anticipated Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* and assumed that women's new labors of love would be in climbing corporate ladders and finding fulfillment on the job.

In these moments, Wages for Housework argued, mainstream feminist desires to crack the glass ceiling wound up just piling more work on women's shoulders. In *Tap Dance*, composed at the height of the Reagan era, some members of the now-defunct New York Committee acidly noted that, contrary to the dreams of both left and right, Americans were going to face not reindustrialization but rather a downward spiral of layoffs and cuts to public-sector programs, as well as less demand, less production, and, importantly, less “socialized reproduction.” Women would have to bear the brunt of this, entering into the waged workforce while, as the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild noted, doing a second shift of housework. Instead of collective liberation, this meant that everyone was now subject to even more work.

Domestic-worker organizer Ai-jen Poo has noted that the challenges workers face in the 21st century are increasingly those that paid domestic workers faced all along: isolation, irregular hours, exclusion from labor laws. One might add that they are also the challenges that women have faced all along. As Federici and Nicole Cox, another Wages for Housework activist, pointed out in 1975, the “self-management” and “workers' control” touted by managers attempting to soothe restive workers and cut workspace costs had “always existed in the home.” Even if

work was privatized, individualized, and personalized, that didn't make it less work; it just meant "a bit more of the factory in the family (higher efficiency and productivity of housework) and a bit more of the family in the factory (more individual concern, responsibility, identification with work)."

The logic of temporary labor has always been gendered. The very first temp agencies were designed around women earning "pin money" with a part-time gig, the so-called "Kelly Girl" who was convenient for a boss to hire (and fire) when needed and who would still be home in time to cook dinner for her husband. In this way, while the labor of poor women was devalued with the stigma of the lazy welfare mother, the labor of middle-class women was devalued as a hobby for their entertainment. Kelly Services still exists, though its marketing is no longer gendered and the company now provides plenty of workers to assembly lines as well as secretarial desks. Even more notably, its ideology has been adopted via a thousand apps through which people can hire a temporary worker to clean their house, bring them dinner, or drive them home. The gig economy has even been called "the Internet of stuff your mom won't do for you anymore," making the housework connection crystal clear.

Federici and Cox seemed to anticipate this too when they wrote that the wage was used to obscure the length of the working day and to artificially compartmentalize "work" as the time spent on the shop floor or in the office instead of also in the home. These days, as more and more people work from home and carry a smartphone wherever they go, the lines have become increasingly blurred. "The time we consume in the social factory, preparing ourselves for work, or going to work, restoring our 'muscles, nerves, bones, and brains' with quick snacks, quick sex, movies, etc., all this appears as leisure, free time, individual choice," they wrote, and it is easy to add "quick tweets, quick Instagrams" to that list.

In a collection like this, it's certainly possible that the editors have simply left out all the less prescient-seeming documents, but to read *Wages for Housework* in 2018 is to wish that the movement's arguments had won the intra-left and intra-feminist debates decades ago, especially since they're the very same debates we're still embroiled in today. The results of the 40-year experiment in labor discipline that has marked the neoliberal era are clear, but it is shocking how many of them were visible from a Brooklyn storefront in 1975. And

reading *Wages for Housework* in the midst of the #MeToo moment, one understands afresh what it means to say that our conditions in the home, the expectation that we "naturally" like the way we're treated, have slipped into the waged workplace. The poster on the cover of this collection proclaims: "We want wages for every dirty toilet, every indecent assault, every painful childbirth, every cup of coffee, and every smile, and if we don't get what we want we will simply refuse to work any longer!" As the journalist Kristen Gwynne recently noted concerning her own #MeToo moment, "Even if the people who did target me were punished, I still feel like I deserve

some sort of compensation. I don't want them to release a public apology—I want them to send me a check."

What would the compensation be for every indecent assault reported in the past few months? At a conference last year at which Federici, Austin, James, and many others spoke, Sara Clarke Kaplan—a noted scholar of slavery—silenced the room when she turned the frame of *Wages for Housework* over and called it a reparations demand. What would reparations look like for all of this? When you begin to add up the bill, you understand why the organizers of the *Wages for Housework* campaign considered their demand a revolutionary one. ■

Translating an Autopsy, or To the Man Autopsied Into 99 Pages

Please know that I read them all and could not weep, afraid to compromise the task I was handed: to reconstitute this you in the Spanish tongue. Know that I aimed to honor what the body told, to tell the Mexican police of the pages with the rudimentary outline of a male body the size of an action-figure with wounds marked X on your torso, evidence of the knife, pages with the coroner's notes a jumble of semi legible jargon of anatomy atomized into dorsal and proximal, posterior and anterior, inches and centimeters of distance and depth conquered by the killer's thrum and slash, pages with the crime scene scribbled into a living room couch soaked through, blood crusting the floor and telling of drought, splatters on the wall dripping every synonym of pain, pages with interviews of neighbors who saw the many men who came and went, the rumor of your inclinations for one, the one who may have been the one who fled to Mexico, pages with hands, even your hands, even the cut and pierce of your hands, telltale signs of the struggle against annihilation, flesh screaming mercy, your hands and the word *manos* recalling the word *hermanos*, which is how you may have seen each other once before the first kiss.

JOSÉ A. RODRÍGUEZ



WHAT'S HAPPENING

John Ashbery as art critic

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Everyone knows that the death of John Ashbery took away a great poet. Fewer people realize that we also lost an outstanding art critic. It's understandable: Ashbery often made light of his *violon d'Ingres*, perhaps in order to ward off the cliché—true enough, as clichés often are—that the New York School into which he was uncomfortably pigeonholed consisted of poets involved with the art world.

Parts of this essay appeared on artercritical.com after John Ashbery's death.

Or maybe he just recognized poetry as the higher calling.

The poet Stephen Paul Miller recalls that, after several hours drinking red wine together, Ashbery told him, “All my art criticism’s crap except what I said about Brice Marden.” That was in 1977, when they were preparing a piece that was supposed to be published in *Interview* magazine. The conversation was never published—bumped, Miller says, in favor of a feature on Desi Arnaz Jr. That in itself would count as an Ashberian occurrence, a strange slippage to

be savored according to the same sensibility that could appreciate a sestina about Popeye and Olive Oyl or a series of rhymed couplets, titled “The Songs We Know Best,” that the poet said had been composed to the beat of the 1978 pop hit “Reunited” by Peaches & Herb. (One commentator called this “tantamount to learning that many of Emily Dickinson’s poems can be read to the tune of the *Gilligan’s Island* theme song.”) Ashbery’s insistence that *everything* could be material for poetry, a leveling tendency in his thinking, should also make us wonder about his (and

our) propensity to make a strict hierarchical division between his poetry, widely accepted as important, and his art criticism, mostly not taken too seriously.

Even David Bergman, the editor of Ashbery's 1989 volume of selected art writing, *Reported Sightings*, followed the poet's lead in playing down the importance to him of his day job:

In 1960, when John Ashbery accepted a friend's offer to replace her as art critic for the Paris *Herald Tribune*, he was merely seeking employment in a city where Americans found it both difficult and necessary to earn money in order to live. Little did he know that the job would lead "as one thing followed another" into a career in which for the next twenty-five years almost without interruption he worked as a "sort of art critic" for such different journals as *ArtNews*, *Newsweek*, and *New York*.

But Ashbery was well aware that the sequence of such accidental happenings—one thing following another, as they always do—is as much as we have of what used to be called "destiny." Prose follows poetry as poetry follows prose.

Ashbery's art criticism was important on its own, and for his poetry, however much he might have minimized it—"as though to protect / What it advertises," to quote his most famous and least typical poem, "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," which was named after the painting by the Italian Mannerist Parmigianino. Why "to protect"? Because language, and propositional language in particular, poses a danger to emotional truth, whose paradoxical essence it is to mislead through appearance. Thus, for instance, "Bonnard's pleasure is really something else: to name it would be to see it vanish."

The commonality between Ashbery's poetry and his art criticism, first of all, is an inimitable tone, which one can discern as clearly in the critical prose as anywhere else in his oeuvre—even in his translations. This tone—"of tenderness, amusement and regret," as Ashbery characterizes Parmigianino's gaze in the self-portrait whose description constitutes Ashbery's own self-portrait—is the essence of his poetry, but also of his idea of art. Admittedly, it occurs more fitfully in the criticism than in the poetry, where it is practically the whole substance, at once a way of conveying something and the matter to be conveyed. As a jobbing reviewer working

on deadline, Ashbery could turn out considerable quantities of merely intelligent observation about whatever the subject of his assignment was, but this usually allowed (or forced?) the poet to show his hand at least in a stray sentence or two. Yet along with some fairly ordinary writings, which at the same time are never less than elegant, there are other pieces that clearly meant more to him, in which he was working out the aesthetic principles that would both carry through his poetry and inform his appreciation of painting, drawing, and sculpture.

Ashbery's idea of art was indebted to Surrealism, and Bergman rightly begins his collection of the poet's criticism (organized by theme rather than chronology) with a section on "Surrealism and Dada." But the sense of Surrealism that Ashbery worked with was his own, not André Breton's. For Ashbery, it was basically the realization that art is at its best when it is, in his words, "the product of the conscious and the unconscious working hand in hand." His prose accordingly cultivates its tone of unruffled common sense—and often the substance, not just the tone—precisely as a way of staying open to what he would call the "irrational, oneiric basis" of art.

It is this interpenetration of the banal and the enigmatic that accounts for Ashbery's singular tone. An example: Of Joseph Cornell, he writes, "But the galleries which showed him had a disconcerting way of closing or moving elsewhere, so one could never be sure when there would be another Cornell show." The statement is ordinary and factual enough, and, overtly at least, has nothing to do with the artist's work; it concerns merely the vicissitudes of his public career. Yet it sets off unexpected associations, and becomes almost an allegory about the art that it pretends to leave unexamined. The simple fact that galleries are typically rather transient businesses somehow becomes an unexpected symbol for the more significant mysteries of the ungraspable form that the representation of reality takes on in the hands of an artist like Cornell. Much like the galleries that showed them, Cornell's boxes intimate their own disappearance. That fated vanishing points to metaphysical questions: Do things really exist? If so, will they still be here a minute or a day or a year from now? Can we ever know enough to make such questions anything more than moot?

Ashbery is sensitive to the way that art often seems to point to nonexistence as the hidden truth of existence. That's where its affinity with poetry lies. I call a witness: the philosopher Alain Badiou, who once wrote that "Any poem brings into language

a power—the power to fix for eternity the disappearance of that which presents itself, or the power to produce presence itself as Idea by the poetic restraint of its disappearance." But that idea of evanescence, like all those that assert the most potent fascination over certain minds, loses its charm when spelled out, as I've just so indiscreetly done. Its force is in the intimation more than in the explicit reference. Ashbery quotes de Chirico quoting Schopenhauer: "To have original, extraordinary, and perhaps even immortal ideas, one has but to isolate oneself from the world for a few moments so completely that the most commonplace happenings appear to be new and unfamiliar, and in this way reveal their true essence."

Such isolation has nothing necessarily to do with social estrangement or any sort of definitive withdrawal from contact with others (though Ashbery does manifest sympathy with the lost and lonely ones of art, such as John F. Peto or Patrick Henry Bruce). Instead, as Schopenhauer says, it can simply be a vital moment of distance from everyday life. Whatever the artist takes on as the matter of his art, as Ashbery says of the "narrow limits" of Brice Marden's monochromes, "will be transcended only inwardly while outwardly remaining much the same."

This sense of the inward distance that art implants or discovers—who knows which?—within the quotidian may have something to do with Ashbery's distrust of art criticism, above all his own. Because it is not poetry—that is, because it always seems to be stating rather than intimating—criticism always seems to be on the side of the commonplace and the ordinary when it should pay equal homage to the bizarre. If his 1972 essay on Marden was the only one of his writings on art that didn't seem like "crap" to Ashbery—at least on one drunken day in 1977—it was probably because that essay was the one in which he'd managed to contradict his own position as a critic by proclaiming Marden's greatness: "To create a work of art that the critic cannot even begin to talk about ought to be the artist's chief concern," the critic declares.

Ashbery's understanding of the essentially commonplace nature of the artistic effects that de Chirico called "metaphysical" allows him a rare vision of the unity of modern art. This unity, in his view, cuts across even the most heavily defended stylistic boundaries, including those between art and adjacent cultural fields: "Surrealism has become a part of our daily lives," he explains, and "its effects

can be seen everywhere, in the work of artists and writers who have no connection with the movement, in movies, interior decoration and popular speech.” No wonder he sees it as “the connecting link among any number of current styles thought to be mutually exclusive, such as Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and ‘color-field’ painting. The art world is so divided into factions that the irrational, oneiric basis shared by these arts is, though obvious, scarcely perceived.... It is still what’s happening.”

Although the essay on Marden in *Reported Sightings* is straightforwardly titled “Brice Marden,” its original title in *ARTnews* was “Grey Eminence.” In his introduction, Bergman explains that, “following the usual journalistic procedure, editors rarely allowed Ashbery to title his own articles”—and so this is why, as editor of the book, Bergman gave them merely “simple descriptive titles.” However, when the Marden piece was published in 1972, Ashbery was the executive editor of *ARTnews*, and might well have had more say over the titles of his own articles than did other contributors to the magazine.

At first glance, that title—a wittily over-

literal rendition of the French phrase *éminence grise*, meaning someone who exercises influence from behind the scenes—might at first seem a clever but inconsequential play on the fact that Marden’s paintings at the time were, indeed, mainly gray. But there’s more to it than that. Ashbery writes of the painter’s grays that “each seems to be the product of every color on Marden’s palette except one; and although these colors have left no visible traces of themselves, they nevertheless burn insidiously in the non-color that has replaced them.” In other words, each specific gray used by Marden, in Ashbery’s view, is animated precisely by a hidden power, a color that exerts its force through its absence.

The importance of that idea to Ashbery—that integrating the irrational and oneiric with mundane reality is still “what’s happening”—is also hinted at by the dramatic placement of that phrase as the conclusion of his essay “The Heritage of Dada and Surrealism,” which was published in *The New Republic* in 1968. “What’s happening” means more than simply “what’s current,” “what’s going on,” “what is of the moment,” though it certainly means those things too, and it’s

typical of Ashbery to evoke such a commonplace, everyday phrase: “What’s happening, man? *Qué pasa?*” It also means “what’s impending” or, as the poem “As One Put Drunk Into the Packet-Boat” has it, “the thing that is prepared to happen.”

The same phrase, albeit uncontracted, occurs in the same position at the end of the piece on Marden. There, Ashbery is speaking about the surfaces of Marden’s paintings, and he quotes the artist’s own description of a paradoxical quality that he’s noticed in them: They look, Marden says, “like they are absorbing light and giving off light at the same time”—protecting what they advertise, one might say. Ashbery goes on to explain this effect of simultaneously absorbing and emanating light by saying, in the essay’s final sentence: “Which is to say that they aren’t, like so much of today’s art, allusions or comments, however oblique, on ideas that are elsewhere: they are themselves what is happening.”

The subject of that sentence, “they,” refers to “Marden’s surfaces,” but the force of the statement seems to apply to the paintings themselves. The paintings and their surfaces are being equated, and with good reason: Even though a painting is always much more than its surface, that surface is the area or plane of communication between everything that the painting does or does not show and the person who perceives (or fails to perceive or refuses to perceive) it. Ashbery’s articulation of the inarticulability of Marden’s surfaces, whose colors “can’t even be described, let alone paraphrased,” encapsulates an important sense of how invisibility is essential to what is most radically visible.

Ashbery praised Marden for “showing the complexities hidden in what was thought to be elemental,” and it was by working in the same direction himself that he arrived at the “original, extraordinary, and perhaps even immortal” perceptions that, in his poetry, seem to have come so easily. Art historians have not willingly followed him there. Consider again his heretical idea that all the main artistic tendencies of his time stemmed from Surrealism. Sure, everyone acknowledges the roots of Abstract Expressionism in Surrealist ideas of automatic writing, and it only takes a little nudge to begin seeing the dreamlike qualities of the chromatic fluidity in the work of a color-field painter like Jules Olitski. But Ashbery’s assertion of a Surrealist basis for Minimalism is likely to raise eyebrows.

Surprisingly, he insists on an art history

Courage

Stillness until six, the yards and porches
giant toy sets for the street cats.

Each sleep a baffling practice
for leaving you behind
entirely, even if we’re touching hands.
For the innocent mind, which it will, wanting out.

Sun re-spreads
among the bungalow façades;
like a memorial on the bank of a river,

shoes in pairs, some children’s,
lead to the front doors.

NATE KLUG

that is not cyclical or dialectical but linear—much more so than Clement Greenberg's conception, in fact. "The pendulum has not swung" from an ostensibly irrationalist Romanticism to a more objective and hard-headed art of the real, Ashbery insisted, and in fact "the history of art proceeds in orderly fashion, in a straight line." This straight line is one that, in Ashbery's eyes, passed through something as mundane (and as tangential to any mundane consensus about the mainstream of art history) as a still life by Jane Freilicher, one of Ashbery's favorite painters. Yet his words also resonate with Donald Judd's praise of Frank Stella's paintings: "The order is not rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another." One thing following another is Ashbery's sense of Surrealism, and of history.

Ashbery was always frank (but gentle) in expressing his reservations about anyone's art, and he was not averse to ranking artists of similar tendency. But he never went in for criticism of the destructive or denunciatory type—and he knew that Breton was being ridiculous in belatedly pretending to exclude Max Ernst from the Surrealist canon "because he had received a prize from the Venice Biennale and thus become an unhealthy example of success which might have a corrupting effect on Surrealist youth." My guess is that Ashbery's implicit faith was that all modern art was aiming at something similar, though in very different ways. His sense of the essential unity of artistic endeavor meant that he never felt the need to defend art against the danger of its being led in the wrong direction. Art's inherent tropism toward the unity of the dream and reality, rational and irrational, was stronger than anyone's resistance to it. And so any given artist's failures or inadequacies could only be isolated, personal in import, with no further consequence to get upset about.

That sense of essential continuity also explains why Ashbery could discern a "metaphysical similarity" between artists as different as Joseph Cornell and Sol LeWitt. He could have quoted LeWitt's famous statement that the conceptual artist is a mystic, not a rationalist, leaping to conclusions that logic can't reach, but he didn't need to. He drew instead on the experience of the art itself: "Cornell's art assumes a romantic universe in which inexplicable events can and must occur. Minimal art, notwithstanding the cartesian disclaimers of some of the artists, draws its being from this charged, romantic

atmosphere, which permits an anonymous slab or cube to force us to believe in it as something inevitable." A massive, room-filling Minimalist object, in this view, was the unacknowledged heir of Magritte's room-filling apple.

At this point, we might feel obliged to ask: To what extent can we accept Ashbery's idea of the implicitly Surrealist (and therefore Romantic and Symbolist) essence of modern art as, not necessarily inevitable, but at least credible, given that so many of its protagonists might have been working on the opposite assumption? Ashbery's linear history is, strictly speaking, antihistorical. Its recurrent interplay between dream world and reality can account for differences within a historical continuum, but not for historical change—unlike Greenberg's notion of self-criticism, which promises progress toward a goal of perfect clarity. And then there's the question of why a similarly Surrealist or Romantic structure of feeling should have arisen during such a different time and set of circumstances as the 16th century with an Italian Mannerist like Parmigianino. Does Ashbery's fascination with the unconscious of the everyday offer an insight into the essence of art, or is it just an *idée fixe*?

As Ashbery the poet writes:

Each person
Has one big theory to explain the
universe
But it doesn't tell the whole story
And in the end it is what is outside
him
That matters, to him and especially
to us
Who have been given no help
whatever
In decoding our own man-size
quotient and must rely
On second-hand knowledge.

The properly Surrealist answer to the question of whether Ashbery's theory is plausible or fantastic, of course, would be: both. Only an idiosyncratic, rationally untenable fixation has the potential to fathom reality. Philosophy proclaims that whatever is real is rational—taking its working hypothesis for a result—but art says that what is irrational is also real. Wittgenstein defined philosophy as "a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert on us." Art, antinomian by definition, sees resistance to that fascination, and seduction by it, as being one process—the only one by which forms of expression can be known.

It might be argued that the charged

atmosphere necessary to see Minimalism in this way is something that Ashbery brought with him and imposed on recalcitrant works, and that the inevitability of the Minimalist object was entirely historical and discursive and had nothing to do with Cornell's romantic universe. Certainly I don't think Judd or his friends would have appreciated Ashbery's explanation of their art, which was very different from their own. But maybe Ashbery knew them better than they knew themselves. How could anything so flatly empirical, as Judd imagined his work to be, have so quickly become the major influence, in turn, on works as uncanny as those of Robert Rauschenberg? As Ashbery said of Rauschenberg's earthworks, "the romantic artist's traditional *folie des grandeurs* is carried to dizzying new heights." In praise of Carl Andre's sculpture, Ashbery cited "its implicit admission that all this may be a put-on, may not be worth your while. The poignancy of this situation heightens our response to a Newman, a Rothko, or an Andre."

Of course, Ashbery's poetry was likewise often suspected of being a put-on or not worthwhile. It's somehow telling that "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," first published in 1974, is a kind of experiment within his oeuvre, an attempt to write the sort of essaylike poem that he would never have otherwise written and still have it be entirely his own, not an imitation of someone else's style. It succeeded in convincing many of the skeptics that Ashbery wasn't a put-on.

One of the poem's points of origin lay in an assignment, a decade earlier, for the *New York Herald Tribune* (international edition): a review of a show of Parmigianino's and Correggio's drawings at the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre. But an ear for words and phrases, rather than an eye for subjects, tells us that the poem's roots are spread further out in Ashbery's art criticism. Consider Parmigianino's hand, "thrust at the viewer" in the poem's second line—it's thrust by the painting, by the way, and not by the depicted painter, who's simply resting it on some unseen surface, relaxed as can be. Then reread the 1967 essay in which Ashbery rightly cites Robert Rauschenberg as being among those whose art profitably derived from that of Cornell (and thereby, he says, passed the influence on to Judd, LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Ronald Bladen)—the lesson being "the same in each case: the object and its nimbus of sensations, wrapped in one package, thrust at the viewer, here, now, inescapable." That thrust—Ashbery's, Parmigianino's, Rauschenberg's—remains inescapable. It's still what's happening. ■



BRIGHT SONGS FOR DARK TIMES

MGMT's and Poliça's new albums offer us both solace and a sense of alarm

by BIJAN STEPHEN

You can't talk about MGMT without mentioning their experimental phase. Fresh off the high of 2007's *Oracular Spectacular*, their first major-label album, and its three genre-defining singles, "Electric Feel," "Time to Pretend," and "Kids," they released the unorthodox *Congratulations* and *MGMT*, which managed to squander all of their banked goodwill. To *Rolling Stone*, lead singer Andrew VanWyngarden confessed that most everyone wrote them off after *MGMT*. "They were like, 'Oh, they have no pop juice left in them. It's not happening again.'" Well, it is: On *Little Dark Age*, MGMT swing back to their synth-pop roots, and it sounds like no time has passed since the dorm-room brilliance of 2007.

This might be, in part, because *Oracular Spectacular* and *Little Dark Age* have both been shaped by periods of worldwide unrest. In the mid-2000s, it was the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the ups and downs of the Bush presidency—a vaguely apocalyptic moment, when young people were contemplating the consequences of never-ending war. Now it's the age of Trump, full of an altogether new set of anxieties, though the prospects for the future seem as grim.

For VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser, the other half of MGMT, 2007 must have felt a more cynical time than ever, and *Oracular Spectacular* reflects that. "Weekend Wars" is a song about growing up written in the language of wartime—"Once

when I was too lazy to bathe / Or paint or write or try to make a change / Now I can shoot a gun to kill my lunch / And I don't have to love or think too much"—and "Kids" is about making room for the future by conserving in the present. "Control yourself / Take only what you need from it," they sang then; at the time, the critic Robert Christgau summed up the mood of the album in a single, tidy sentence: "Like Vampire Weekend, only as synth-dance rather than indie-rock, they convert a quality liberal education into thoughtful, anxious, faux-lite pop." That existential anxiety led the band to use fantastical, psychedelic music as a refuge.

A decade on, the apocalypse now seems closer than ever, and the old formula still

works. VanWyngarden said that half of *Little Dark Age* was written before Trump was elected president and that some of the happier, more frivolous parts came afterward, as a burst of sanguinity after “evil took over the world.” The latter category includes “Me and Michael,” a catchy song with ambiguous lyrics, and the single “Little Dark Age,” which isn’t actually that happy at all and describes what sounds like a deep journey into the self, like “Weekend Wars” before it. “Breathing in the dark / Lying on its side / The ruins of the day / Painted with a scar / And the more I straighten out / The less it wants to try / The feelings start to rot / One wink at a time,” goes the first verse. It’s classic MGMT: The synths are syncopated and full, and there’s a propulsive backbeat that enlivens the otherwise simple melodic line.

Other songs depart from this formula. “One Thing Left to Try” is a bit too dark (it’s a song about suicide), while “TSLAMP,” on the other hand, is a bit too glib (it’s about how much time people spend looking at their smartphones). “She Works Out Too Much” is about a heterosexual relationship coming to an end because it’s too much work—and because the man doesn’t work out enough. The single “When You Die” is another song about life’s end, although it’s more menacing, almost as if the narrator is attempting to reconcile with death by embracing the macabre. “You die / Words won’t do anything / It’s permanently night / And I won’t feel anything / We’ll all be laughing with you when you die,” VanWyngarden sings. While *Little Dark Age* is more grounded than *Oracular Spectacular*, they share the same genetic code. VanWyngarden and Goldwasser are in their mid-30s now; their music has grown up some, but the world hasn’t kept up.

Poliça formed in 2011, about a decade after MGMT got together, and despite the groups’ having similarly bureaucratic-sounding names and similar musical references, Poliça moves in a much different direction. Their 2011 debut album, *Give You the Ghost*, was a bass-heavy trip through a dark, intricately rhythm-dreamscape; the songs were abstract, referencing drinks, drugs, mothers, motherhood, death, and men. The voice of Channy Leaneagh, the group’s lead singer, was smeared near the bottom of the mix, down below the drums and bass. The result was claustrophobic and intensely compelling, conjuring a world through her brood-

ing mood.

The group has spent its last two albums becoming less sonically and emotionally crushing, with Leaneagh’s voice moving closer and closer to center stage. Poliça’s subjects have also mutated into more political forms. *Shulamith*, the follow-up to *Give You the Ghost*, was named after Shulamith Firestone, the writer and activist who was a central figure in the radical phase of second-wave feminism. *Shulamith* isn’t explicitly political, though it delves deep into the politics of love. “I don’t want a diamond ring / Found a man, and he’s found me / It’s a pact like a lion’s den / You come out, but you can’t come in,” Leaneagh sings on “Tiff.” “Go ahead and play for keeps,” goes the chorus.

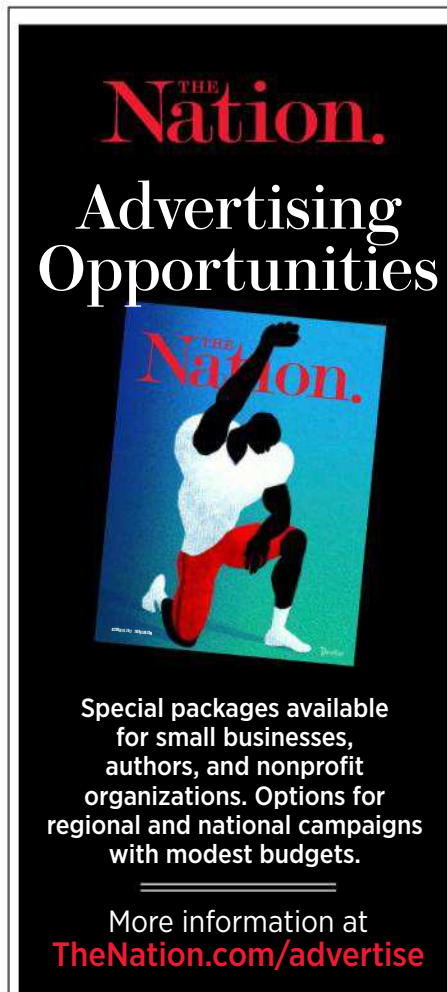
On *United Crushers*, Poliça’s third studio album, the arrangements skewed more pop—you could now hear Leaneagh’s voice clearly—and her lyrics grew more explicitly political; the album came out in March 2016, just about four months before Trump was crowned as the Republican Party’s presidential candidate. That also happened to be in the midst of nationwide protests against police brutality. “Keep it cooking, all the cops want in / Brim brim when we lose they win / Saying hands up, the bullet’s in / God was si-silent / Bed of nails / Chains that sail / Ash and rope / Pay my bail,” goes the song “Wedding.”

Poliça’s latest, *Music for the Long Emergency*, pairs the band with the Berlin-based orchestral group *stargaze*, and the result is another despairing political album. Of its seven tracks, only one, the 10-minute dirge “How Is This Happening,” is directly about Trump’s election. As Leaneagh explained to *Consequence of Sound*, “I felt it coming and I didn’t expect better from our broken electoral system...BUT still everyday it’s like ‘what the fuck, why isn’t that an impeachable offense?!?!?’” Yet the song is emblematic of the newfound anger that infuses the album’s new sonic direction. Leaneagh’s vocals are now front and center, and the bass has dropped out some, replaced by *stargaze*’s beautifully arranged woodwinds and string section.

While the song’s lyrics are simple, mostly a series of searching rhetorical questions—“How is this happening? / How we can’t breathe? / How we can’t see?”—their repetition brings home Leaneagh’s feeling of disbelief. And like MGMT, she spends much of the rest of the new album answering the implicit question provoked by this sense of shock: We have to live in the meantime, but how?

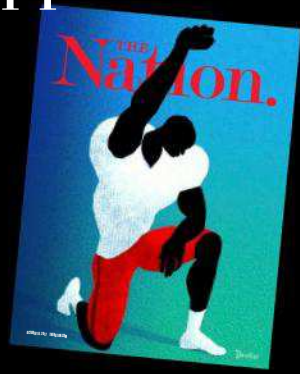
Little *Dark Age* and *Music for the Long Emergency* reference the Trump era in their titles, and both are attempts to respond to the puzzle of how to live on our roiling political sea. That similarity makes for a similar unevenness. “Cursed,” from Poliça’s album, sounds like what you’d get if you ran Zack de la Rocha’s rap through a NutriBullet and then layered the mush with distorted synths. “Days That Got Away,” off MGMT’s album, is a spacey lament for youth that’s merely OK—like an unsatisfying day at the beach.

Both groups’ ambitions are admirable, however. Their albums succeed ultimately because they’re not perfect and they’re not total protest music. With the reality-show story lines and pace of scandals coming out of the White House, it’s easy to focus on the news exclusively, to the detriment of everything else in your life. *Little Dark Age* and *Music for the Long Emergency* do the essential work of reminding us how to live—that there’s more to life than our edge-of-the-seat anxieties and the latest sordid tale. Even activists need to rest. ■



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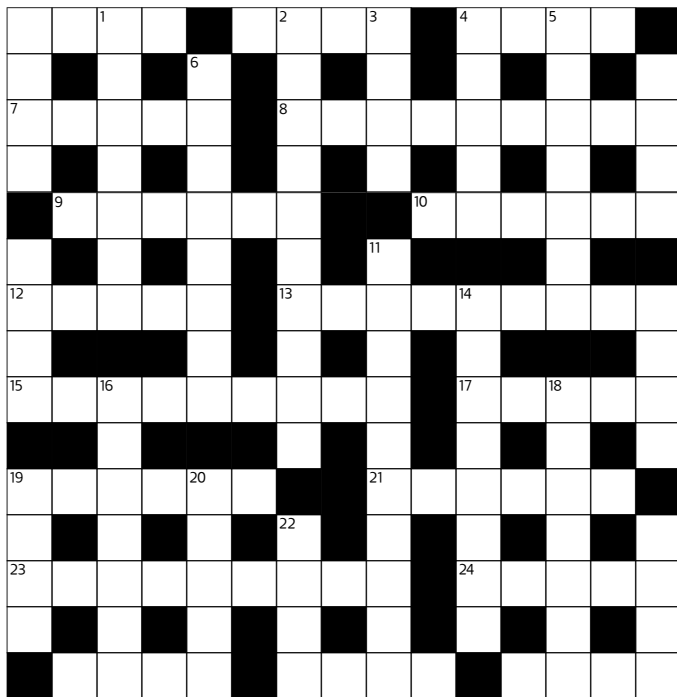


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ACROSS

- 7 Carol devours Vonnegut's first book (5)
- 8 Paradise is quiet, and almost madly angelic at the outset (7-2)
- 9 Credit card gets you texting large illustration (6)
- 10 Each perimeter entry consists of two of these, and has a definition in the implausible to-do list below (6)
- 12 Oversized kimonos lacking front and back of netsuke (5)
- 13 With a small switch, put fear into (intimidate) one that cannot be criticized (6,3)
- 15 Land, sad as the sky (5,4)
- 17 Heroic Spaniard taking possession of channel (1-4)
- 19 Things stay cold here, west of Finnish mountain crest (6)
- 21 Beginning to toast hot grain a few times (6)
- 23 Move briskly amid a swell substitute for grass (9)
- 24 Woman with incredible zeal embracing the author (5)

DOWN

- 1 Bill's popular sin: eating doughnut (7)
- 2 Fitfully struggles, missing front of wooden arch (10)
- 3 For the human race, a father and a mother (4)
- 4 Skill when assimilating board-game slang (5)
- 5 Foolish despot with nothing on jerk (7)
- 6 Writer's apartment including car service (8)
- 11 Like some research in wild, scenic setting for one healthy comeback (10)
- 14 Dated, buggy code set involving segment of RAM (8)
- 16 A piece of gold to hear what a piece of gold might do (7)
- 18 Composer raised glass with Chianti, oddly (7)
- 20 Start to luxuriate in blood-soaked splendor (5)
- 22 Name on a tower without top or bottom (4)

TO-DO LIST

- Excavate whale legs
- Conceal agreement letters
- Fuel feeble criticism
- Dry black baton

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3459

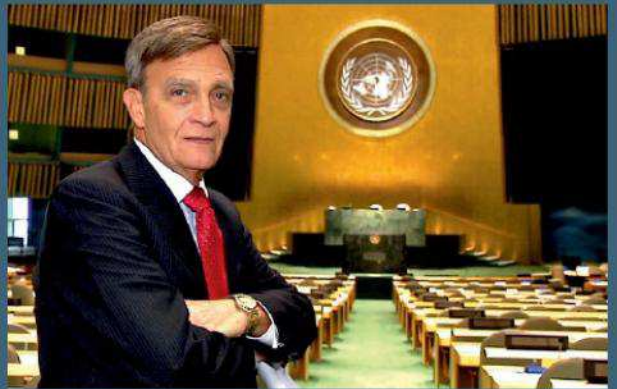
ACROSS 1 S(ERIE)S 4 S + CRUNCHY
 10 A BUSH (ELAND) A PECK
 11 GRAM + MAR 12 L(ILYP)AD (*L-ply* anag.) 13 TAB + ER(NACL)E 15 T + REF
 18 R + ARE (rev.) 20 MONTE + VIDEO
 23 D + EVE + LOP 24 A-[me/F]-RICAN
 25 PHO(TO)URN + A-LIST 26 2 defs.
 27 CY + GNUM (rev.)
 DOWN 1 S + LAUGHTER 2 "rue" + BARB 3 EP + HEM + ERA (rev.)
 5 CAN(DLEL)IT (*Dell* anag.)
 6 U + SABLE 7 C(HE)APER
 8 Y(OK)E + D 9 2 defs.
 14 A(MORP)HOUS[e] (*prom* rev.)
 16 FO + OTNO + TES (rev.)
 17 "ovaries, E" 19 R + A(V)IOLI
 21 anag. 22 ALM(O)S + T 23 anag.
 24 AW + R[o]Y



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WITH **BILL MILLER**

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Bill Miller is an accredited journalist at the UN for the Washington International and has written extensively on UN issues.

He is the Principal of Miller and Associates International Media Consultants, which created the Global Connection Television concept.

Bill developed an interest in international issues and the UN when he served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. In his first year he worked as a community developer in a remote rural area; his second year he was Professor of Social Work at the Madre y Maestra University in Santiago, the country's second largest city.

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