



# A Greater Evil

What Likud's victory means for Palestine and Israel

BY AMIRA HASS

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**An Elusive Peace: Sectarian Conflict in the CAR** p. 16

**The Triad of Hate: Police, Media, and the Right** p. 20

**Mourning and the Muslim Body** p. 32

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# A New Feminism

THE MONTH OF MARCH has been Women's History Month in the United States since 1981. It was officialized in the context of second-wave feminism, particularly after the growing importance of Women's History Week over the previous decade. Much like the so-called Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, in February and September/October respectively, the United States government, in conjunction with civic organizations, tends to use Women's History Month not as part of the repertoire of an emancipatory project, but rather as a tool for reinforcing dominant ideologies and mores.

Womanhood is not a homogenous social caste, nor should it be treated as such, and the rise of third-wave feminism partially developed as a realization of this. Yet, the prevailing order, acquiescent to the fractional "victories" of first and second-wave feminism, seems to be sufficiently happy with the status of women today. And why wouldn't the elite feel as such? There are myriad examples of women in positions of not only influence, but of power as well. We need only look as far as Hillary Rodham Clinton, former United States Secretary of State, Senator, and likely Democratic presidential candidate; Melissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo!; Ursula Burns, the CEO of Xerox; or the media mogul Oprah Winfrey. Are these women feminists? No doubt they are—with the exception of Mayer, who has denounced feminism, stating that she doesn't "have sort of the militant drive" that the term engenders. But on the surface, she along with the others mentioned above are feminists in the sense that they are in favor of equal rights between men and women. This is of course the most superficial definition of feminism—the believed social parity between the sexes (gender parity is a different problem)—one which on the surface, most people, at least those who aren't out and out patriarchal chauvinists, can endorse.

It is this definition of feminism that allows for the persistence of structural sexism and misogyny in society. Very much like the question of race and class, the question of sex (in addition to the larger problem of gender) is far from a satisfactory solution in the United States. Are the aforementioned elite women oppressed under capitalism in this country? They most certainly are, Burns and Winfrey doubly so as they are of African descent, but they are also part of the

problem in the struggle for women's liberation. Feminism, as a core discursive and analytic category, is also an obstacle to the liberation of women, particularly if womanhood is presented as a monolithic social category with little to no differentiation. Of course certain individuals who describe themselves as feminists push against this notion, yet their work is a drop in the proverbial bucket. The fact remains that for the most popular swaths of the population in the United States, feminism simply means equality between man and woman. Equality, either *de facto* or *de jure*, is not sufficient for women's liberation, it is merely a reformist measure enacted to bring (certain) women into the fold, into the corridors of power and prestige. On the other hand, women's liberation endeavors to emancipate women from their decidedly subservient and subsidiary position to the man.

The terminology of women's liberation was undoubtedly more popular during the 1960s and 1970s, even if amongst a minority of people involved in the wider feminist movement. Today it is nearly nonexistent within popular parlance, and is also the case to a degree in academic as well as activist communities. Women's liberation in sum is the destruction of all social fetters which restrain women in such a manner that benefit men. Furthermore, the ideology of women's liberation does not assume that all women are, or should be equal. In fact they aren't and they shouldn't be. Similar to the idea that the best method of remedying racial disparities is to institute some sort of "Black capitalism," the current manifestations of feminism do not seek to unshackle women, rather the proponents of such ideas seek to ingratiate themselves and women in general within the predetermined and predefined structures of the capitalist socio-political structure in which we all live. This is more than a semantic or lexical variance, it is a question of program, strategy, and tactics. Women's liberation, therefore, is a distinct and divergent social project from that of feminism. If feminism is for (what is now only superficial) equality, women's liberation is for the drastic reorganization of sexual and gender relations with attendant concern to intersecting problems around race and class. The White working-class man is of more value to the project of emancipating women than any of the previously mentioned women. This isn't to say that women "need" men for their emancipation through

any sort of inferiority, but rather that certain women alongside certain men, those from the most oppressed sectors of our society (blue-collar workers, the working poor, migrant laborers, sections of the middle-class), are the only ones who through joint struggle can smash patriarchy rather than inserting a few token individuals into the existent matrix of power. The wholesale destruction of patriarchy, as opposed to mitigating its social ramifications, entails coming up against those that consider themselves as feminists. This is a battle of ideas that cannot solely be waged in the academy. It must be contested in the public sphere if there is to ever be hope of liberating not just women, but men and gender non-conforming people from the encumbrances, oppression, and ostracization inherent of social relation in the United States.

The failure of feminism in popular culture is evinced in numerous ways. The 2012 documentary *Invisible War* is a prime example. The film is about the incredibly high rates of sexual abuse and rape in the military and the culture that disavows its existence or tries to cover it up. While well researched, shot, and certainly worth watching, the film does nothing to interrogate the essential issues at the center of an imperialist military apparatus. Rather, it presents the instances of rape, sexual abuse, and sexism more generally as something that must be rectified if the United States military is to function. It does in fact function quite well and giving women “equality” in the U.S. armed forces does nothing to advance the cause for liberation. Women cannot currently serve in the Special Forces (Navy SEALs, Army Rangers, Delta Force, Green Beret’s, Marine Force Recon, Joint Special Operations Command, and etcetera), feminists would, and have called for them to be able to do so. Certainly it is historically proven that women are as equally effective in combat as men (Spetsnaz, Israeli Defense Forces, and Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces being some of many examples), and certain feminists support such measures in the interest of “equality.”

Yet, such support is predicated on the notion that criticizing the wider implementation of the military complex should not go beyond sexual equality at home or in the barracks. The 2014 CNN documentary film, *Lady of Valor* (a companion of sorts to the 2013 book *Warrior Princess*), which chronicles the sexual/gender transition of Kristen Beck, a former Navy SEAL (previously known as Christopher). The overall theme of this film is an exploration of Beck’s transition and how certain segments of the population denigrated her after transitioning. When Beck coldly

discusses killing Afghanis and Iraqis it isn’t so much of a concern, though when she experiences virtual and real-life hate, it is presented as a problem that needs redress immediately. Of course transphobia and transphobic violence need to be addressed, but to do so in a way that glorifies and cements the place of imperialist ventures is all that popular feminism in the United States seems to be able to muster.

The problem of feminism is not restricted to the confines of the United States either. Emma Watson’s 20 September speech in 2014 is case in point. The United Nations’ “He-ForShe” campaign is the ultimate manifestation of this sort of liberal feminism that is increasingly being popularized to the detriment of most women, all in the quest for some opaquely defined conception of equality. Not only does the very title of the initiative obliquely position women as lesser than men, she likens previous forms of struggle for women’s rights as tantamount to “man-hating.” Militant variations of feminism from the 1960’s through today are the social movements that have come the closest (they are still very far from success) to toppling the patriarchal system that is seemingly natural throughout the United States and the world at large. It is only through such “man-hating,” and by that Watson (and Mayer for that matter) means militancy, that misogyny as culture, as politics, and as social reality will be sacrificed upon the altar of liberatory “progress.”

The UN’s co-optation of International Women’s Day since 1975 is another example of the failure of the feminist drive for equality at the expense of liberation. Originally celebrated by New York socialists in 1909, the holiday became an official day for working women on the heels of the triumphant Bolshevik Revolution some ten years after. At the insistence of Alexandra Kollontai and Vladimir Lenin, International Women’s Day became a holiday across successive communist and workers’ states in the twentieth century. Originally called International Working Women’s Day, the original militancy of the celebration in the quest for women’s liberation has been stripped of its class and political content in the contemporary era. Like the advocates of feminism at the UN, many of those in the United States simply posit that women should be equal. Equal to what or to whom? Equal to what end? Women’s liberation, while not a panacea in and of itself to patriarchal cultures or thinking, is a sounder basis from which to continue the project of emancipation. Indeed, if the old maxim that the “last shall be first, and the first last” is to come to pass, something greater than feminist “equality” needs to motivate our struggles. ☹



# DSC Reps Balk, Fail to Condemn Racist Police Violence

## **Resolution on Police Violence Loses Vote in DSC plenary**

STUDENTS FROM THE SOCIOLOGY and Anthropology Programs put forward a resolution on police violence at the Doctoral Students' Council plenary on 20 March, which, after much debate, failed to pass. The resolution failed to achieve the forty-one votes necessary for a quorate majority. The resolution outlined a brief history of police violence and brutality, persistent racist practices and policies, and the institutionalized discrimination against minorities, in order to call for a severance of institutional affiliations between CUNY and the NYPD, particularly the provisions of the NYPD Leadership Program that offers cops full scholarships, covering tuition and other fees for four college courses, at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Despite the endorsements of a number of chartered organizations and program student associations, it failed to gather enough votes among the DSC representatives, the final tally being four short.

The debate on the resolution hinged primarily on the efficacy and necessity of the proposed measure. A substantial number of the representatives insisted on its necessity, arguing that in light of the history of police brutality and institutionalized racism, not only is the preferential treatment of police officers under the NYPD Leadership Program increasingly difficult to justify but the perpetuation of these institutional affiliations is tantamount to complicity on the part of CUNY and is reflective of its diffidence to hold the NYPD accountable for its

Above: DSC Representative Teresa Curmi.



actions, including for the numerous cases of violence and discrimination against CUNY students. The opposing faction was not convinced of the efficacy of the measure, some going on to say that the education that CUNY provides free of cost to the officers could serve as an effective channel for sensitization and change. Teresa Curmi, a representative from John Jay, insisted that the move was essentially “misguided and counter-productive,” and would further antagonize the police force on the CUNY campuses.

A third position also emerged in the debate, when a faction of the representatives, while claiming to endorse the general philosophy of the resolution, proposed an amendment to eliminate all sections in the resolution that pertained to the institutional ties with the NYPD at John Jay. That

is to say, they offered to endorse an amended resolution that would say police brutality is bad, which makes it not much of a resolution but more of a sympathy note. While this proposed amendment did not gain much mileage, one does get a sense of the grounds on which the resolution lost out in the vote.

## **MTA Fares Increase, Again**

THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY'S proposed hike in the fares for the subways and buses in the city has taken effect on 22 March. The cost for a single-ride on the subway has shot up from \$2.50 USD to \$2.75 USD, the seven-day unlimited pass from \$30 USD to \$31 USD, and the one-month pass is now \$116 USD as opposed to the previous sum of \$112 USD. The fares for the ex-

press buses have bumped up to \$6.50 USD, and the seven-day MetroCard for the express bus is now \$57.25 USD. This is the fourth price hike that has been implemented by the MTA in the past five years, and for those still rationalizing behind the rhetoric of inflation, this escalation in commuter fares has been double the rate of inflation.

These hikes are symptomatic of the deep fiscal crisis that the MTA is grappling with. In October of last year, it proposed an estimated budget of \$32 billion USD for the 2015-2019 capital improvement plan aimed at a radical overhaul of the subway system, including purchase of new cars, reconstruction of certain stations, and renovation of tracks, switches, and signal systems that are over half a century old. Anyone taking public transport to work on a regular basis can vouch for the necessity of these measures, what with the trains suffering frequent breakdowns in the mildest of snowstorms and the cars more often than not teeming with such crowds as to make it impossible to even board. However, of this proposed estimate, the MTA is facing a serious shortfall of \$15 billion USD that it is trying to raise itself, and the fare hikes are a step in that direction.

What is most disconcerting is that this state of affairs has been brought about by the general apathy of the federal, state, and city governments with regard to the issue. While the New York Governor, Andrew Cuomo, discrediting the estimates of the capital plan as “bloated,” offered a measly \$1.15 billion USD to the MTA for five years, the New York City Mayor, Bill de Blasio, has acceded to a budget of \$40 million USD per year, less than half of the \$100 million USD that the city previously contributed. The renewed assault on the living standards of the average New York commuter, this added financial strain on the predominantly lower and middle-class

commuters of the subway, has been necessitated by the entrenched indifference of the political classes to matters that must in fact be their principal consideration.

As the *Advocate* went to press, the MTA divulged that it expected it will have a \$1.9 billion USD budget surplus over the next four years.

## **PSC Holds National Adjunct Awareness Week**

SPEAKING OF ESCALATING COSTS of living, CUNY faculty and staff have not received a pay raise in over five years, with negotiations between the administration and the Professional Staff Congress for a new labor contract in lieu of the one that expired in 2010 still at an impasse. Despite consistent demands from the PSC for a fair economic offer and speedy settlement of a contract that has been long overdue, the administration has shown little urgency in the matter. In an intensification of its efforts, the PSC organized a National Adjunct Awareness Week (NAAW) from 23-27 February, a grass-roots program geared towards making “the university community more aware of the PSC’s contract demands on behalf of part-time workers, to increase adjunct membership in the union, and to educate adjuncts and continuing education teachers about their rights and benefits.”

Adjuncts, graduate students, and faculty across CUNY campuses held town hall meetings and organized teach-ins, with some of the lecturers directly addressing issues of academic labor and “adjunctification.” At the Graduate Center, in addition to distributing leaflets highlighting the labor conditions of adjuncts that warrant the call for action, the PSC also collaborated with the CUNY Adjunct Project to drop a banner on the face of the building that foregrounded the fact that adjuncts, while constituting approximately 60% of the CUNY faculty,

earn only about 29-38% of what full-time faculty members earn per course. The PSC, along with the Modern Language Association and the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, have put forth a demand, among others, for a raise in the minimum salaries of adjuncts to \$7000 per course, amounting to about 68-81% of what full-time faculty make for the same.

It must also be noted that the exploitation of adjunct faculty and part-time workers is a concern that is endemic to the neoliberal university, and the NAAW in CUNY emerged as an offshoot of and in solidarity with a larger social movement, the National Adjunct Walkout Day (NAWD), observed on 25 February on various campuses across the country.

The staff union’s decision to withhold from a mass walk-out was compelled by the stipulations of the New York State’s Taylor Law of 1967, which prohibits public employees from going on strikes, penalizing those who do with fines of two days’ wages for every day of work missed. In this continuing struggle for a fair settlement, while it is imperative to respect the union’s decision to abstain from a form of collective action that would have had considerable repercussions for its members and commend its productive negotiation around these impositions of the state in the form of the NAAW, it is also important to not lose sight of the inherently conceited and oppressive quality of a law that stifles possibilities of political intervention.

A state that outlaws civil disobedience has little regard for positions outside the realm of obedience, and as long as there is obedience, there can be little hope of the state engaging in earnest with these positions. And while awareness is crucial for political action, it is not action itself, and a call for action must, at some point, invariably come to heads with the word of the law. 🗳

# The People's Tribunal on Police Violence and Structural Racism

**Opening  
Session  
April 2, 2015  
6-9 PM**

**National Black Theater in Harlem,**  
2031 5th Ave, between 125-126th St.  
#2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 train to 125th st. station  
Free and open to the public



Countless cases of police brutality, murder, and systemic abuse have shown the world that the legal system in the US protects the interests of the rich and powerful and is unable deliver real justice. Since we cannot rely on the courts, we must put the police on trial and  
**LET THE PEOPLE JUDGE.**

For more info or to get involved:  
<https://www.facebook.com/peopletribunal>  
[peopletribunalnyc@gmail.com](mailto:peopletribunalnyc@gmail.com)  
212-633-6646



On April 2, the People's Tribunal On Police Violence & Structural Racism will hold its opening session in Harlem, NYC. Over the coming months, at community hearings and assemblies, the Tribunal will hear testimony from the victims of police and state violence, raising and amplifying the voices of those who have been most affected.

The Tribunal will combine first-person testimony with insights and analysis from activists and community groups, connecting patterns of police violence to larger systems of state-sanctioned repression, racism, and social control. These hearings will lead to a final deliberative session where the police and the Department of Justice will be judged, and concrete solutions to the problem of police violence will be proposed.

The April 2nd event will serve as an introduction to the tribunal, and as a call to groups and individuals to come together around the city and the region to organize local Tribunal hearings. Victims and activists will speak, followed by a town hall during which the assembled audience will make its voice heard. The event will end with breakout groups to enable participants to continue the process and to help shape the Tribunal. Join us on April 2nd 2015 to amplify the voices those directly impacted by police and state violence and hold those responsible accountable for their crimes.

**Sponsored by the People's Power Assembly (PPA) Peoplespower.net**  
The PPA meets every Wed. at 7 PM,  
147 W 24th St, 2nd fl. NYC  
Meetings are democratically organized and open to all.



# Flush the TPP

**amy goodman with denis moynihan**

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AND the Republicans in Congress are united. Yes, that's right. No, not on Obamacare, or on the budget, or on negotiations with Iran, or on equal pay for women. But on so-called free-trade agreements, which increase corporate power and reduce the power of people to govern themselves democratically, Obama and the Republicans stand shoulder to shoulder. This has put the president at loggerheads with his strongest congressional allies, the progressive Democrats, who oppose the TPP, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership, one of the most far-reaching trade agreements in history. TPP will set rules governing more than 40 percent of the world's economy. Obama has been negotiating in secret, and the Democrats are not happy.

The battle lines are being drawn over the TPP and TPA. If you are confused, well, that is exactly what many of the most powerful corporations in the U.S., and around the world, are counting on. Trade policy is arcane, complex and long the domain of economists and technocrats. But the real-world implications of these dry texts are profound. President Obama wants to pass the TPP, which is a broad trade agreement between the U.S. and 11 other countries in the Pacific Rim: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. In order to expedite the process, President Obama is seeking the second acronym, TPA, or Trade Promotion Authority, also called "fast-track." Fast-track gives the president authority to negotiate a trade deal, and to then present it to Congress for a yes-or-no vote, with no amendments allowed. A growing coalition is organizing to oppose TPP and the president's request for fast-track.

The TPP negotiations have been held in secret. Most people know what little they do because WikiLeaks, the document disclosure and whistle-blower website, released several chapters more than a year ago. Members of Congress also have been given limited access to briefings, but under strict secrecy rules that, in at least one instance recently, include the threat of imprisonment if details leak.

The TPP would be an expanded version of earlier trade agreements, like NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, involving the U.S., Canada and Mexico. NAFTA went into effect on Jan. 1, 1994, and was so harmful to the culture and economy of the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico, that they rebelled on that very day, in what is known as the Zapatista Uprising. Attempts to create a global trade deal, under the auspices of the World Trade Organization,

provoked one of the largest protests against corporate power in history, in Seattle in late 1999. Thousands of protesters locked arms and literally blocked delegates from getting to the ministerial meeting. As unexpected solidarity between union members and environmentalists flourished in the streets, despite widespread police violence, the WTO talks collapsed in total failure.

The TPP, if passed, would implement trade rules that make it illegal for governments to create and enforce regulations on everything from environmental standards, to wage and labor laws, to the duration of copyrights. A law prohibiting the sale of goods made in sweatshops in Vietnam could be ruled illegal, for example, as a barrier to trade. Or certification requirements that lumber not be harvested from old-growth forests in Malaysia could be overturned.

Grassroots activists are organizing against the TPP and fast-track ... Now people must raise their voices, in unison, and demand to be heard.

Lori Wallach of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch program is one of the leading critics of TPP:

"It's a delivery mechanism for a lot of the things [Senate Majority Leader Mitch] McConnell and the Republicans like. So, for instance, it would increase the duration of patents for Big Pharma and, as a result, give them windfall profits but increase our medicine prices. It could roll back financial regulation on big banks. It could limit Internet freedom, sort of sneak through the back door the Stop Online Piracy Act, SOPA," Wallach explained. "It would give special privileges and rights for foreign corporations to skirt around our courts and sue the U.S. government to raid our treasury over any environmental, consumer health law that they think undermine their expected future profits, the so-called 'investor-state' enforcement system."

The TPP, she went on, "was started by [President George W.] Bush, but instead of turning it around and making it something different, the Obama folks picked it up and, frankly, have made it even more extreme."

Grassroots activists are organizing against the TPP and fast-track. They work on diverse issues ranging from human rights and Internet freedom to fair trade, labor rights and the environment. The moneyed interests have the ear of the president, so they need only whisper. Now people must raise their voices, in unison, and demand to be heard. 🗣️

Amy Goodman is the host of "Democracy Now!," a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,300 stations in North America.



## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Doctoral Students' Council seeks candidates for the open position of editor-in-chief of *The GC Advocate* student newspaper.

The editor-in-chief shall determine editorial policies while respecting the following priority: *The GC Advocate* shall primarily serve CUNY graduate students as their general forum and as a source of news and information pertaining to their rights and educational, cultural, and professional interests.

The editor-in-chief independently determines editorial policy for the *Advocate*.

**Responsibilities:** The successful applicant must be highly capable of independent work. In addition to other duties related to running a successful newspaper, the editor-in-chief shall be responsible for:

1. hiring associate editors, freelance writers, photographers, and consultants;
2. collaborating with associate editors, and freelance writers as well as the DSC Co-Chair for Business and the paper's printers;
3. ensuring the general content, production schedule, and fiscal well-being of the newspaper;
4. producing a minimum number of issues in accordance with the operating budget;
5. maintaining the *GC Advocate* website;
6. ensuring distribution to CUNY graduate students; and
7. ensuring meetings of the *Advocate* Advisory Board.

**Qualifications:** Applicants must be matriculated Graduate Center students in good standing.

**Remuneration:** The rate of pay is equal to one-twelfth of the minimum salary for the title of Graduate Assistant B per issue (approximately \$900/issue for 6 issues per academic year). In addition, the new Editor-in-Chief will be provided with office space and a budget to pay consultants and buy supplies.

**Duration:** The new editor-in-chief will serve from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, with the possibility of reappointment, and will be paid upon the publication of each issue of the paper.

**Contact:** Interested candidates should forward a cover letter and resume to the DSC Co-Chair for Student Affairs, Amy Martin ([ccsa@cunydisc.org](mailto:ccsa@cunydisc.org)), by April 2, 2015.

## LAYOUT EDITOR

*The GC Advocate* currently seeks a new Layout Editor to join the Editorial Committee. The Layout Editor works with the rest of the Editorial Committee in preparing the content of each issue of the *Advocate*, and is responsible for the look and feel of the publication.

### Responsibilities:

1. Lay out the articles and other copy as provided by the other editors, applying the *Advocate* in-house styles.
2. Find and lay out appropriate, print-quality photography and graphics to illustrate articles as necessary, in consultation with the other editors.
3. Determine whether the copy and art as planned is over or under the necessary page count, and resolve the discrepancy in consultation with the other editors.
4. Prepare cover art using straight or composite photo artwork.
5. Assist other editors in proofing the initial draft and providing callouts, captions, and missing headlines.
6. Finalize the *Advocate* and certify it ready for press.
7. Coordinate publication with the printer.
8. Prepare content in the issue for reuse on the website.
9. Discuss and develop revisions to layout concepts and style sheets in coordination with the other editors.

**Qualifications:** The Layout Editor must be a matriculated student at the Graduate Center, CUNY (preferably a PhD student). Previous experience in graphic design is necessary. Previous experience in journalism or print media is not required, though it is helpful.

**Required Skills, Knowledge, and Labor:** Applicants for this position should be familiar with and have practical experience applying basic principles of graphic design, and ideally should be conversant with InDesign and Photoshop. Total hours vary from issue to issue, with the bulk of the work done on two production nights, the latter being press night. On average the Layout Editor can expect to work 15-20 hours per issue.

**Remuneration:** The Layout Editor is paid per issue at the rate of a Graduate Assistant B (GAB).

**Duration:** Becomes available with the Fall 2015 term.

**Contact:** To apply, please send a C.V. or Resume, along with a letter of interest, and samples of past work to [gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu). Also, please "cc" Gordon Barnes at [gbarnes@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gbarnes@gc.cuny.edu).



# Ayotzinapa Caravan Comes to New York

## cuny internationalist club

Six months after police attacked students from the rural teachers' college of Ayotzinapa, in Mexico's southern Guerrero state, upheaval continues over the abduction (forced "disappearance") of forty-three students, which followed the killing of six and wounding of twenty-five people on the night of 26 September. Strikes by teachers and students, mass marches and rallies have highlighted the crisis of the Mexican regime, whose escalating militarization is "Made in the USA." While the press in the United States highlights the involvement of drug traffickers, an in-depth report in Mexico's widely-respected *Proceso* magazine (14 December 2014) has conclusively demonstrated that "Federal police and members of the Army joined municipal police in the September 26 attack on the Ayotzinapa teachers' college students."

On 22 March, a rally was held in New York's Union Square to greet the "Ayotzinapa 43 Caravan" of family members and representatives of the kidnapped students. This followed a public talk at the Graduate Center by Ayotzinapa teacher and Caravan leader Professor Felipe de la Cruz Sandoval. The rally featured banners denouncing this and other state massacres in Mexico's recent history, photos of the forty-three "disappeared" *compañeros*, and a display of empty shoes evoking the missing. After the name of each of the disappeared was read out, the crowd shouted "*¡Presente!*" Among those attending was a New York-based relative of Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideño, one of the abducted students. As he held up a picture of Jorge Antonio, he explained that he himself now lives here, personifying the human link between the struggle in Mexico and the vital immigrant component of New York's working class.












The CUNY Internationalist Clubs mobilized students and adjuncts to attend the rally. As our comrades in Mexico have emphasized, the attack in Guerrero resulted from the onslaught against public education ordered quite literally by Washington and Wall Street. A report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development singled out the rural teachers' colleges as "bastions of radical groups, showing a high level of conflictivity and a very significant potential for mobilization." Similarly, it was the World Bank that ordered the attempt to impose tuition at Mexico's National University, which was defeated by a ten month strike and occupation (including the formation of workers defense guards). Resistance to the onslaught on public education sparked the 2006 upheaval in Oaxaca, physical blocking of standardized tests by striking teachers there and in Michoacán, and a nationwide teachers strike in 2013. The Guerrero massacre sought to terrorize all who would continue such resistance in defense of the right to education.

At the Union Square rally, Lucio of the Internationalist Group told the crowd: "The attack on education is part of the overall capitalist ruination brought down on workers, peasants, students, indigenous people, women, Black people, immigrants, and all the oppressed. I am one of those uprooted by the North American Free Trade Agreement, which destroyed the Mexican peasantry; so many of us live and work here now for this reason...The same capitalist system that carried out the massacre in Guerrero killed Eric Garner and Sean Bell in New York, and Michael Brown in Ferguson. This is an international struggle."

For more information and to get involved in the struggle, write: [cunyinternationalists@gmail.com](mailto:cunyinternationalists@gmail.com). 



# Keeping the Lights On

## The cost of “Experiential Learning”

**stephanie vella and cecilia maria salvi**

LATELY, THE CURRENT BUDGET negotiations in Albany seem to be on everyone’s minds, as we wonder what Governor Andrew Cuomo’s proposed budget could mean for the future of the City University of New York. It seems as if the conversation is going on right under our noses, and that, despite the activism of student and faculty organizations, public education will continue to experience drastic cuts and setbacks.

The University Faculty Senate, the governance body in which both tenure-track and adjunct faculty are represented, is currently discussing what the budget negotiations could mean for the future of the CUNY system, and has highlighted a number of concerns. Of particular note is a portion of Governor Cuomo’s proposed budget that mandates an “Experiential Learning” requirement for graduation for all students at SUNY and CUNY, which is problematic in a number of ways. First, it sets a precedent for legislative control over curriculum, stripping that authority from faculty or even administration. Second, the proposed budget provides no means by which to fund such a requirement. Third, this requirement would likely force students to participate in low or non-paying internships for which they would have to pay for course credit, and would thus place an additional financial burden on students, more than half of who come from households earning less than \$30,000 USD a year, this according to a recent CUNY survey. For these reasons, the UFS unanimously voted in favor of a resolution opposing the Experiential Learning requirement at the February plenary and has submitted an open letter, co-written with the SUNY Faculty Senate, to the Albany legislature to voice their concerns. The Faculty Senate at Lehman College has also passed a resolution opposing the Experiential Learning requirement.

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OF ADDITIONAL CONCERN IN Governor Cuomo’s proposed budget is that it intends to tie ten percent of the CUNY and SUNY budgets to performance-based reviews as

opposed to enrollment. On 26 February, USS delegates and constituents participated in Higher Education Action Day in Albany, and presented a joint platform along with the Professional Staff Congress, that called for, among other things, rejecting performance-based funding and instead investing in full-time faculty. This proposal again presents a legislative incursion into faculty governance and a move towards further liberalization of public higher-education. It affects the University’s ability to hire staff and plan curriculum. Moreover, it could lead to the pushing out of students who, historically, come from working-class backgrounds, and incentivize the acceptance of higher achieving students solely to meet statistical benchmarks. It bears highlighting that seventy-five percent of CUNY’s student body is made up of people of color, and over forty percent are first-generation college students.

Cuomo’s proposed budget also freezes the CUNY and SUNY budgets for mandatory costs, forcing the universities to pay their utility bills (and other mandatory expenses) with a proposed \$300 USD tuition increase, as opposed to using such an increase to fund additional faculty lines or resources for students. This proposed tuition increase has been called “moderate” by President Chase Robinson, but continues the worrisome trend in higher education of passing costs on to students, which has steadily risen since the University ended free tuition in 1976. Ironically, one of the programs that would lose all funding would be CUNY’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which Barack Obama cited in his promotion of two years of free tuition at community colleges as an “effective” example of “promising and evidence-based institutional reforms to improve student outcomes.” He notes the financial support students receive, such as tuition and book fee waivers, transportation assistance, and academic advising are key in allowing students to complete their degrees in a timely manner. Innovative



programs such as these are threatened by the draconian cuts in Cuomo's proposed budget.

Moreover, there is neither any evidence that tuition increases have historically improved education at CUNY, nor any guarantee that it would do so in the future. In 2011, CUNY and the Cuomo administration negotiated a multi-year plan for incremental tuition increases of \$300 USD per year known as the CUNY Compact. One of the primary justifications for this plan was that the increases in tuition could be used to create additional faculty lines. In reality, however, as UFS Executive Committee member and professor at Borough of Manhattan Community College, Kay Conway, noted in a detailed report at the December UFS Plenary, in the 2009-2010 academic year, there were 6,800 full-time faculty members across CUNY, while in 2012-2013, there were 6,802. Thus, one of the stated purposes of the tuition increase only resulted in a net gain of two full-time faculty members over a three-year period. With the additional cuts to CUNY's mandatory budget expenses proposed by Cuomo, tuition increases would not directly benefit students by improving resources or faculty-to-student ratios, but would instead go towards literally keeping the lights on. Students will pay more for larger class sizes, and adjunct faculty will continue to work with inadequate

resources, job security, and compensation.

The budget which recently passed the New York State Senate as the "Brighter Future" Budget Plan offers a number of incentives for undergraduate and graduate students. It raises the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to \$100,000 USD, doubles the tuition tax credit to \$800 USD, and allows recent graduates to deduct one hundred percent of their loan interests. But in light of all the issues highlighted above, these all seem like stopgap measures that do not attempt to address the structural issues most of us at the Graduate Center face as both students and adjuncts—chronic underfunding, and the exclusion of working-class and international students as well as students of color.

In all, the budget leaves little hope that legislators understand or are able to address the changing needs of students in public universities. If recent trends continue, adjuncts will be taking on more of the burden and students will have less access to education. In his most recent address to the Board of Trustees, Chancellor James Milliken stated that "[CUNY's] top priority remains the resolution of collective bargaining with our faculty and staff". Even though Milliken and Robinson have both expressed support for adjuncts, it seems very unlikely we will see this resolution if CUNY is struggling to keep the lights on. Ⓐ

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# Cyclical Chaos

## The Central African Republic's troubled past and uncertain future

denise rivera

**I**N MARCH 2013, THE President of the Central African Republic, Francois Bozize, fled the country to seek asylum in the neighboring countries of Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon. When he seized power in March 2003, it was not through a presidential election. He was able to successfully orchestrate a coup d'état and seize Bangui, the capital, while then President Ange-Felix Patasse was out of the country. Since its independence from France in 1960, the Central African Republic has endured five coups, indicative of the persistent instability and violence that the civilians have had to endure. Transitioning from one form of government to another can be politically and socially exhausting. With tensions plaguing an already unstable government, rebel soldiers were successful in taking control of the capital and the presidential palace in the spring of 2013. The brimming confidence that Bozize displayed when he assumed power was soon completely vanquished. While he succeeded in finding safety, this event would precipitate a bloody civil conflict.

A peace agreement was reached in 2008 to recognize the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity as a political party, and have its military members become part of the Central African Republic Army. It united with other groups who sought similar objectives to form a coalition called the Séléka, meaning alliance. The Séléka became increasingly critical of the Bozize presidency, as they protested against the inefficiency of his government, the postponement of elections, and his failure to meet the demands of the peace agreement. In retaliation, they raided and took control of villages and towns in the northern and eastern part of the country. In August 2013, the Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, replaced Bozize as president, and tried to disband the Séléka coalition, but failed to do so. Soon, the Anti-Balaka, a Christian militia group, emerged in opposition to the Séléka, and eventually took control of the western part of the Central

African Republic. At the same time, the Lord's Resistance Army was moving into the southern part of the country. With a president not fulfilling his promises, an insecure government not providing for its people, and powerful rebel forces invading from all sides of the country, it proved to be a classic recipe for disaster that flung the Central African Republic into a brutal civil conflict that still continues to this day.

The Central African Republic is a country that suffers the stigma and vulnerability that comes with the label of being called a third-world nation. Despite being landlocked, this country does have some important natural resources. Like other third-world nations, the Central African Republic relies heavily on its agricultural sector, producing crops such as cotton, coffee, and tobacco. It also contains other valuable resources such as timber, gold, and diamonds. These valuable commodities are bound to attract some global attention. Yet who would want to invest in a landlocked country that is susceptible to abrupt and unstable changes in government? With a poor transportation system, high unemployment, opposition groups fighting the government, and groups within the government fighting each other, beneficial economic development is frankly invisible for this nation. The Séléka is currently in control of many gold and diamond mining areas, forcing workers to labor for little pay without any health insurances. It also illegally smuggles gold







and diamonds to independent traders and other neighboring countries (Chad, Sudan, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo), and the miners, being the most vulnerable, stand to lose the most if they dare refuse to comply to Seleka's demands.

Outside actors such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have sought to address the Central African Republic's vulnerable economic situation. Even France sought to give humanitarian aid in order to ameliorate the dire situation that Central Africans are currently living in. Whether it is out of true humanitarian devotion or the colonial apologist position that most European nations find themselves in, the foreign aid given to the Central African Republic never reaches those who need it. Not even the IMF and WB policies can assist in giving Central Africans some

form of prosperity. Due to the current conflict, the national health care system of Central African Republic has collapsed. Doctors Without Borders consider the deleterious situation in the Central African Republic as a "crisis on top of a crisis." Central Africans barely have safe access to health clinics, and even if they do, most of them have been closed down. Medicine is frequently looted, as reports indicate, thus making it impossible for many civilians to get treatment. The hospitals and healthcare clinics that remain open are in a grave position of exhausting their medical treatment supplies as hundreds of civilians seek medical attention. One of the most threatening diseases that Central Africans are disproportionately affected by is the human immunodeficiency virus, and it has been estimated that about 2.5 million Central Africans are in urgent need of medical assistance.

The outcome of this civil conflict is irrevocably detrimental to the population. Central African women live under constant fear for themselves and their families. There have been eyewitness accounts of looting, kidnapping, disappearances, rape, torture, and murder. Children are the most vulnerable victims of this situation, especially when they are currently being recruited to become soldiers. It is reported that about one million Central Africans are victims of displacement. Most of them seek asylum in neighboring countries such as Chad and Sudan. Due to the atrocities committed by the Séléka, a vigilante opposition force, the Anti-Balaka, meaning anti-machete, came into being. What makes this a sectarian conflict is that the Séléka is predominantly Muslim while the majority of those in the Anti-Balaka are Christian. Muslims are considered a minority within the Central African Republic population. With the rise in political tensions within its government, this also lead to cultural tensions amongst the civilians enduring violent conflicts. Members of the Anti-Balaka seek vengeance against the Séléka by targeting Muslims, raiding villages controlled by the Séléka, and destroying mosques. It is easy to condemn the Séléka for terrorizing innocent people, just as it is to condemn the Anti-Balaka for committing the same atrocities as the Séléka. Yet the measures taken by the Central Africans reveal the anger and frustration they have towards a volatile government that no longer protects them and the rebel forces whose belligerence constantly endangers their freedoms.

The response from the international community in addressing this civil conflict has been unconvincing. The situation in the Central African Republic has barely received any coverage in the mainstream media. In April 2009, the United Nations Security Council agreed to open a UN peacebuilding office to monitor the civil insecurity prevalent in the Central African Republic. In May 2010, the UN Security Council sought to withdraw its UN force from the Central African Republic in order to address the unstable situation of refugees due to the conflict in neighboring Darfur—the UN force would return in October 2013. The African Union has also faced difficulty in addressing this situation. The AU's Peace and Security Council is composed of African leaders, and operates much like the UN Security Council. Unfortunately, this young regional organization faces a lot of dissension amongst African leaders, even as they compromise and struggle to reach a consensus as to where to deploy the Standby Brigades (AU army) in order to effectively counter the civil unrest that plagues several African nations. Human Rights Watch has also reported instances of abuse by AU peacekeepers. The delayed responses from the United Nations and the African Union reveal the flaw in international and regional organizations pooling their resources to

address a civil conflict in such a manner.

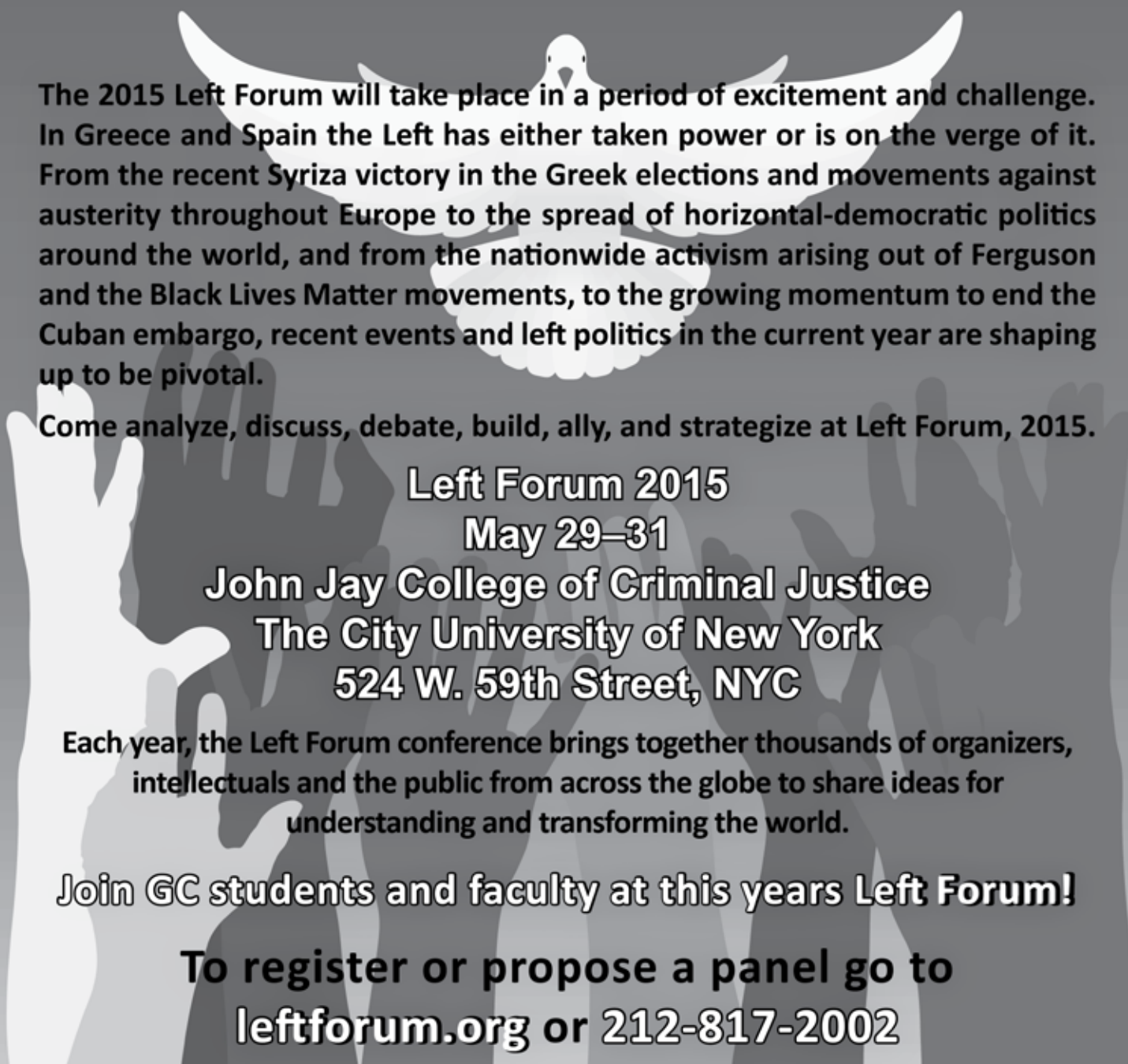
The most active engagement with the critical situation in the Central African Republic's comes from France, its former colonizer. In April 2009, France deployed its troops to help regain control of Bangui from rebel forces. In December 2013, France initiated Operation Sangaris, which dispatched 1,600 more troops to assist with airport protection and medical aid. The French President, Francois Hollande, even pleaded with the European Union to provide more troops on the ground in the Central African Republic.

In January 2014, Michel Djotodia resigned as president due to his failure to stop the sectarian conflict, and Bangui mayor, Catherine Samba-Panza, took over as interim president. Earlier this year at a UN Headquarters news conference, members of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic proposed to establish a war crimes tribunal to fully investigate and prosecute war criminals. Earlier this March, a delegation from the UN Security Council travelled to the war torn country to meet and collaborate with government officials and non-governmental groups in order to find a peaceful resolution to end the civil conflict and set up a stable government. International response appears to be gaining momentum, but at a gradual pace.

The Central African Republic is no stranger to bloodshed and mayhem. A campaigner on conflict resources named Manar Idriss stated, "Central African Republic's history is marred by a legacy of political instability, weak institutions, and predatory rule." Although it is no longer being governed as a colony, this country now appears to be governed by political disorder and confusion. The ethnic tensions between Central African Christians and Muslims seem to divide the population, revealing the lack of political will for popular sovereignty to unite and work together in deciding and forming an effective form of democracy. International responses to civil conflicts will always come under scrutiny as they seek to provide beneficial measures to have a struggling nation transition to democratization. This process will always be risky, as is evidenced in other countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather than just focusing on pacifying this civil conflict, the international community should also discuss and provide resources for building schools and universities, providing access to education to all children, implementing job training programs, building hospitals and medical clinics, creating fair and objective economic developmental policies that will meet the interests and needs of the country, and prospects for infrastructural projects like bridges, sewage systems, roads, etcetera. Although this solution may be too optimistic, it may just help the Central African Republic to become acquainted with a stranger known as peace. ☺

# leftforum 2015

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# Scumbags Work Together

## The NYC Black Lives Matter movement and its enemies

**ashoka jegroo**

THE MOVEMENT TO END state violence against people of color and to end systemic racism is no straightforward endeavor. It is not a gift that falls gently from the sky like manna from Heaven. It is a struggle. Like all movements against oppression, New York City's Black Lives Matter movement has not gone uncontested. The simple yet radical assertion that "Black lives matter" has attracted the ire and derision of those who'd rather keep America's racial hierarchy exactly the way it has always been. And this is the case for liberal, multicultural New York City no less than the rest of the United States. But who are these enemies of free society? What forces have decided to act as obstacles on the road to liberation? The answer—the usual suspects.

"Cops, TV, Neo-Nazis! All the scumbags work together!" goes a popular Greek anarchist chant. And it is precisely this chant that contains a truth that has seemingly gone unrecognized by Americans in general and New Yorkers specifically. The enemies of NYC's Black Lives Matter movement are the same enemies of all struggles for liberation—the police, the mainstream media, and the right-wing.

And more often than not, all these "scumbags work together," sometimes openly, and at times through sheer convergence of interests. The duty of those who wish to demolish White supremacy is to recognize these antagonists for what they really are, and to treat them as such.

This article seeks to accomplish at least part of that duty, specifically pointing out the adversaries of NYC's Black Lives Matter movement, and outlining the ways they each fight against liberation as well as the ways they collaborate with each other to do so.

### *The Cops*

ASIDE FROM TRIGGERING THE Black Lives Matter movement through their reckless use of force on Black victims, the police, as they always have throughout history, have also been the first line of defense against any movement against oppression. The very nature of their job requires the police officer to be the protector and guardian of established racial and class hierarchies. From the beginning, NYC's police have performed this job wonderfully while even duping some protesters to think otherwise.

The Black Lives Matter protester who actually thanks police for "protecting" their rights during an action is seriously misguided. They are not at the protests to protect us. They are there to monitor and control us. Some have pointed to Commissioner Bill Bratton and the New York Police Department's laissez-faire approach to protesters shutting down bridges and roads as proof of their good will. This view is severely mistaken. During those tense days after the non-indictments of the men who killed Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the police simply had no choice but to take a hands-off approach. Bratton, as he himself stated, did not want New York to experience "what Ferguson or Berkley are experiencing," namely burning, looting, and clashes with police. Mass arrests were out of the picture for a state that is still reeling from the financial toll of the mass arrests during Occupy Wall Street. Historical and social circumstances, not any adherence to morals or liberal principles, are what kept the police from being as brutal as they would have liked.

And yet, despite their apparent tolerance of protests, the cops, in many instances, still resorted to force, indiscriminately unleashing their batons, pepper spray, and LRADs



(Long-range Acoustic Devices) on protesters. Even at their most benign, the NYPD still remain an inherently violent and oppressive organization. As things calmed down during the winter, Bratton and the NYPD continued their fight against anyone opposed to their violence. Bratton announced, perhaps prematurely, that a new, heavily-armed police unit would be trained to deal with “disorder control and counterterrorism protection capabilities...for dealing with events like our recent protests, or incidents like Mumbai or what just happened in Paris.”

Later, after outcry and outrage erupted across social media, the NYPD had to dilute the commissioner’s statement if not retract it, as it announced that there will, in fact, be different, not-so-heavily-armed task forces deployed in each borough, trained to deal with protests. “They’ll handle the demonstrations and protests,” said NYPD Chief of Department, James O’Neill. “They’ll also be able to respond to any sort of civil disorder. They’ll also be able to respond to city-wide mobilizations. Nonetheless, Bratton’s initial conflation of the protests with terrorism should illustrate the mindset of the police. To them, the Black Lives Matter movement does cause terror.

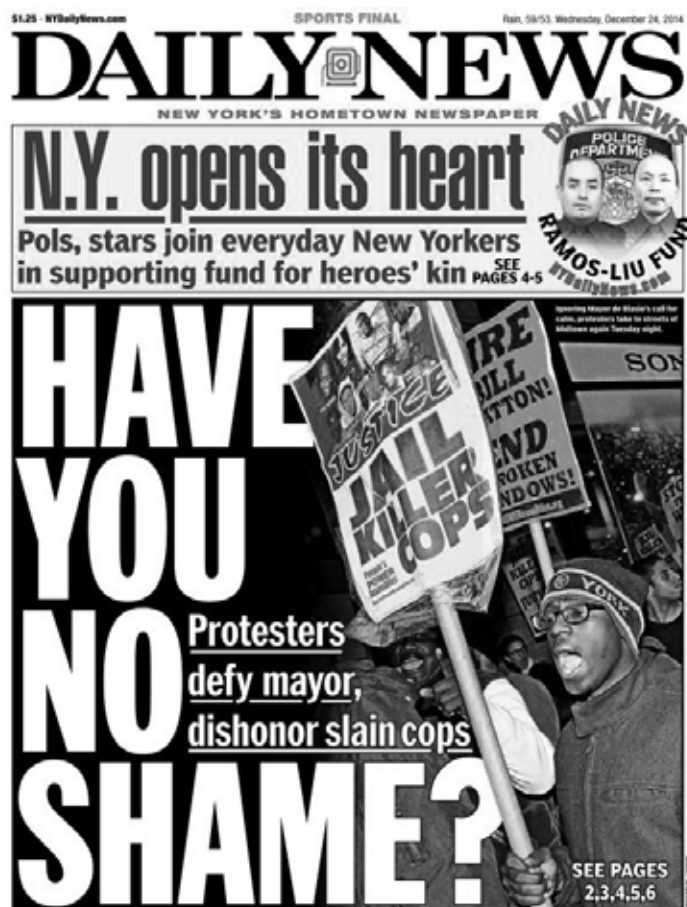
Now, Bratton and the NYPD are demanding that 1000 new police officers be added to their ranks. The largest paramilitary force in the United States is not large enough apparently. This also comes after *Capital New York* reported that edits made to Wikipedia.org articles on Eric Garner, Sean Bell, and other victims of police brutality could be traced back to NYPD IP addresses. So in addition to attempting to re-write history and euphemize their brutality, the NYPD wants money and resources to increase their numbers.

## The Media

HOWEVER MUCH THEY MAY tout their mythical objectivity, the mainstream media outlets never stick to “just the facts.” They are no neutral observers, especially when it comes to their coverage of NYC’s Black Lives Matter movement.

Whether it’s the *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, CNN, or MSNBC, mainstream media outlets, despite whatever right-wingers claim, have merely acted as the establishment’s bleeding heart apologists. Their criticism of police is only for use as literary device. A “few bad apples” are often needed to cook up a good story of police redemption and social progress.

The media mourns the violence inflicted upon Black bodies only after they have been filled with bullets. Until then, the brutality that people of color are routinely subjected to at the hands of the police is not only considered inevitable but is sanctified and glorified. The media tells us that these good men and women in blue are the only thing



keeping us from being harassed, beaten, and killed. Meanwhile, the police harass, beat, and kill us daily without any consequence.

During the now infamous NYPD slowdown in late December 2014 and early January 2015, The *New York Times* editorial board, considered to be one of the police’s most ardent critics, could only muster up the strength to criticize the police for not doing their jobs. The number of arrests had dropped substantially, and parking and traffic tickets, the kinds of low-level offences used by the Ferguson Police Department to systematically extract revenue from Black residents, were down by more than ninety percent.

The *Times*’ editorial board became apoplectic when this situation, in which poor people and people of color were briefly given a break from the police state they experience all the time, had extended for more than a week. They even suggested that the police, by not subjecting people to the usual amount of violations of their rights, were actually guilty of civil rights violations. For the *Times*, this situation was “madness” that had to stop. “The problem is not that a two-week suspension of ‘broken windows’ policing is going to unleash chaos in the city,” the *Times*’ editorial board informed us. “The problem is that cops who refuse to do their jobs and revel in showing contempt to their civilian leaders are damaging the social order all by themselves.”

And as the protesters should realize, the social order,

with all its oppressive hierarchies, matters much more to the mainstream media than Black lives do.

The *New York Daily News* proved this when supporting, after the killing of Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's rather illiberal request for protesters to abstain from demonstrating until the two officers' funerals had passed. When protesters defied the mayor's request and continued with their #ShutDown5thAve march, the *Daily News*, the next day, asked protesters on their cover: "Have you no shame?" A dark irony coming from journalists, alleged defenders of our freedom of speech, shamelessly imploring protestors to not exercise their own freedom of speech.

Even the so-called liberal media is no friend of the Black Lives Matter movement. One should not forget that it was MSNBC, supposedly one of the more sympathetic media outlets, that helped prop up Al Sharpton as one of the leaders of the movement. MSNBC, ironically aided by the right-wing, placed their employee, Sharpton, a former FBI snitch and opportunist par excellence, at the head of a movement founded on a radical critique of police. This tactic of placing co-opted leaders at the head of potentially radical movements is a textbook example of how revolutionary rage is stymied. As Malcolm X noted, the so-called leaders like

Sharpton aren't there to inspire us, they're there to control us and keep us passive.

And though each mainstream media outlet has, in their own ways, helped preserve the current social order and its systemic oppression of black and brown people, they all collectively engage in the glorification of the police as an institution, and in the euphemizing of their violence. For the mainstream media, the police officer is almost always given the benefit of the doubt, and their victims are almost always demonized as criminals and thugs.

This is especially the case with the *New York Post* and Fox News, both owned by Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp. But these two outlets, along with their readers and supporters, are more properly lumped in with another enemy of the movement—the right-wing.

## The Right Wing

CONSERVATIVE ICON WILLIAM F. Buckley famously stated that a "conservative is someone who stands athwart history, yelling 'Stop!' at a time when no one is inclined to do so." And true to this role, the right-wing today wants to step in the way of progress and scream "no further!" Many of them would even rather go backwards. As the good old days of open White supremacy are slowly coming to their



end. And the Right correctly realizes that the police are the ones who, with brutal violence, defend society against the progress they fear.

The *New York Post* and Fox News, which are merely the mouthpieces of the Right, have clearly recognized NYC's Black Lives Matter movement as a force for progress and the advance of history. As a result, these two outlets, as well as other factions of the right-wing, have done all they can to discredit and dismantle the movement. For these media outlets, every Black Lives Matter protest in NYC is merely an angry mob trying to defame the always-innocent police. The editor of the conservative *National Review*, Richard Lowry, in an op-ed run in the *Post*, couldn't heap enough scorn upon the protesters after the Millions March for daring to block traffic and interrupting New York City's usual orgy of consumerism. He even derided the protests for involving "coercion and illegal acts." The police who attempted to arrest Eric Linsker on the Brooklyn bridge for the nefarious crime of throwing trash, on the other hand, were only "there to ensure that the protesters' civil rights weren't violated," according to Lowry. In other words, the cops who beat, taser, pepper spray, and use LRADs on protesters are only trying to defend their (the protestors that is) freedoms. But the protesters demonstrating against actual violations of civil rights at the hands of police are the bullies committing "illegal acts." In the vein of Malcolm X's thinking, if you're not careful, the *Post* and Fox News will have you loving the oppressors and hating the oppressed.

To their credit, the protesters have realized this and have acted accordingly. During the #ShutDown5thAve march, protesters loudly chanted "Fuck Fox News!" as a Fox News correspondent attempted to report from the protest, forcing them to go off air. There was also a small demonstration outside of the NewsCorp building on 2 January.

But along with the right-wing media, right-wing politicians like former mayor Rudy Giuliani, and right wingers on the streets and online have made their own attempts to smear the movement. Giuliani has always been a notorious apologist for police brutality. It was under his watch that Amadou Diallo was shot forty-one times, and Abner Louima was brutally sodomized with a plunger at the hands of

the NYPD. He defended the police in the midst of these two acts of brutality, and today he is still willing to defend police violence. But in addition to claiming that Eric Garner was merely "a criminal" who "wouldn't be dead today" had he not "resisted arrest," Giuliani claimed that the protests were simply about an irrational hatred of police.

"The protests, even the ones that don't lead to violence—a lot of them lead to violence—all of them lead to a conclusion: The police are bad, the police are racist," said Giuliani. "That is completely wrong. Actually, the people who do the most for the black community in America are the police."

This ridiculous line of thinking ultimately trickles down into the masses, and appears again in the form of right-wing trolls at protests and on social media. These are the people who scream "don't resist arrest" at protesters chanting "Black lives matter!" They are the people who derail the conversation by insisting that instances of violence within communities of color is the real problem, rather than the police who systematically commit violence against people of color. And so, from the media and political personalities at the top of the right-wing hierarchy to the poor saps at the bottom who parrot right-wing talking points, the entire right-wing has mobilized against the Black Lives Matter movement. But what is to be done?

## **Fight Back!**

IN THE END, ALL these scumbags work together. They all fight the same war against NYC's Black Lives Matter movement. They merely operate on different fronts though they also overlap. The media helped police look for the protesters who assaulted two cops on the Brooklyn Bridge while attempting to de-arrest Eric Linsker, essentially doing the police's work for them. The right-wing helps organize support for the police in the form of pro-cop rallies and lobbies for the policing of communities of color. The NYPD helped out the right-wing by openly feuding with Blasio, and supporting so-called "tough-on-crime" policies.

If NYC's Black Lives Matter movement is to continue as the weather gets warmer, the protesters must realize that these antagonists will not go away on their own. The cops, the media, and the right-wing are attacking the movement from all angles. The movement must be defended.

Protesters must realize that cops aren't there to protect their rights, the media (even the so-called liberal media) are there only for a story, and the right-wing wants nothing less than the indefinite continuation of oppression. Changing the rhetoric of the protests or de-intensifying the tactics used will not turn these enemies into allies. The protesters must simply accept these opponents and learn to love the battle against them. Only then can we hope to clear these obstacles from the path to liberation. Ⓐ





# A Pilotless Plane with Two Right Wings

## Israel and Palestine after the elections

Amira Hass, for a time the only Israeli journalist living and writing from with Occupied Territories, writes a regular column in *Ha'aretz*, and is the author of *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land under Siege*, and *Reporting from Ramallah: An Israeli Journalist in an Occupied Land*. *Diary of Bergen-Belsen* is Hass' mother's diary, a unique, deeply political account of the final year inside the notorious concentration camp. Hass has written a substantial introduction and afterword which addresses the meaning of the Holocaust for Israelis and Palestinians today. In 2009 she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Women's Media Foundation.

On 18 March, Hass spoke to a crowd of approximately one hundred gathered at the Graduate Center. She spoke about the Israeli elections and what they might tell us about the direction of Israeli policy, Israeli society, the relationship between the United States and Israel, as well as the next steps in the struggle for Palestinian liberation. The event was sponsored by the GC–International Socialist Organization, with co-sponsors including Brooklyn for Peace, Haymarket Books, the Social and Political Theory Student Association (SPTSA), and the Critical Palestine Studies Association. The talk was collectively transcribed by Tahir Butt, Laura Durkay, and Erik Wallenberg.

### amira hass

NOTICE QUITE A few people have become depressed, at least I got it in writing from one of my friends here, she's depressed because of the results of the elections—even though no one, I assume, expected a real revolution, or that the joint Arab List would get forty percent of the vote and Meretz twenty.

So I'll give you some more reasons to be depressed, if I may. There are 200,000 votes of soldiers which are being counted now—the results will be known tomorrow or soon after tomorrow. Usually, as in the past years, the soldiers' votes add one or two seats to the Right-wing, and usually it is at the expense of the other camp. So very often, because of the proportions, it might take another seat, for example, from the Joint List [of Arab parties], or even from Meretz.

Another piece of news that I got from a friend is that Ayelet Shaked—the secular representative of the religious party, *HaBayit HaYehudi*, the Jewish Home, aspires to be Minister of Home Security (also translated as Home Front Defense in the United States). And she is the person that during the war on Gaza (July and August 2014) posted an article written by a colleague of hers, who has by now died of natural causes, and he was a minister as well from the same party, and very well-liked by secular Israelis—Uri Orbach—and he wrote a post that was immediately taken away because of its content. Orbach's article actually calls for the extermination of Arabs, families and children, because they're so “dangerous.” She posted it on Facebook during the war itself, and she now wants to be the Minister of Home Security.

And another piece of news that I saw in *Ha'aretz* today is



that in the breakdown of the votes of Israeli military pilots and Israeli Air Force—because they live together with their families, so they have ballots there, which are counted—about thirty-five percent voted for the Zionist camp, for Labor, which Netanyahu calls the Left-wing. But of course they are not the Left-wing. This has been the ruling party or the ruling bloc for many years before, and are predominantly pro-Labor. Thirty-three percent voted for Labor, or the Zionist camp, twenty-five percent of those pilots voted for Likud, nine percent for Jewish Home, and Meretz got six percent. Those pilots, even though we see they are leaning more towards the Right-center bloc and not the “Right-Right bloc,” are those who execute all the Israeli orders in wars. I mean, those are the people who bombed Gaza so intensively during the last wars, and have obeyed the orders of the Israeli military command and the Israeli government. These are the people who executed orders not to distinguish, or to distinguish very poorly, between civilians and combatants.

And yet their clear inclination is not with Netanyahu. These people are more likely to be Ashkenazi, or “the white tribe” as it is now often written, or often said—people who represent generations of privileged Jews. And they arouse many bad sentiments among the other parts of Israeli society, which are not Ashkenazi, which are not “the white tribe” or seem to be part of “the white tribe,” which have not had the same privileges in housing, education, and so forth, and do not come from the aristocratic families. But the outcome is almost the same. All vote for a system that has been there for at least the last fifty years—that preserves Israeli control over the Occupied Territories, preserves everything possible to prevent a solution to evolve, to be created, to the conflict; anything to prevent a Palestinian state.

I had a talk a week ago with one of those representatives of the Ashkenazi tribe, the military tribe. I was asked to meet with a person—I can’t say their name—a commander who is going to have an important role in the West Bank. And I do this partly for my curiosity—it’s not that I think I can change much—and partly for a way to say what I think. He did not want to consult or gain information, but he said he wanted to know something about the situation

in order to not make mistakes or (to find out) what good he could do. This is an officer, a commander. I said the best thing that he, and people like him—I assumed that he was not a pro-Netanyahu or pro-Likud guy—can do is just take off their uniforms—politically, openly, and resign. But of course, this was out of the question. Then I mentioned some crazy roadblocks that completely blocked the way of certain villages, and just now, I saw a piece of news that one of those that I mentioned to him is going to be removed so that the village can be opened. These are what I call my *Judenrat* suggestions—sorry, but this is my cynical way of portraying, sometimes, my interventions.

He did not protest what I said. I mean, he knew who he was talking to. He did not protest, he was not angry, he did not start to argue. He listened. And the main thing that I told him was: Your role is to protect the project of colonization. And you will do everything possible to—I mean, you



are ordered to protect this project. It’s not protecting the Jews, it’s not protecting the security of Israel, but to protect colonization—which is not just colonization, but is about the deprivation of Palestinians of their own rights to land and water and other resources, as well as freedom of movement. And in that sense this mission of his, to protect the project of colonization, was not invented by Netanyahu, and was not invented by Likud. On the contrary, the first ones to create it were Labor. So in that sense, the system of protecting the settlements and developing them, is a pilotless plane. It is like a drone—a big drone—that works. It doesn’t need

Netanyahu or Herzl. It's there. When you look at the documents, the forms, of the main bureaucracy of the Israeli colonization project, the Civil Administration, they are forms that have been produced over the years by an army of legal experts, Arabists, and commanders. And now, it's all digitized and you can find it online, or you can find it in books, or in print from the sixties and seventies, but it's all the same forms, and it's all based on military laws that were all there from the beginning—from day one after the 1967 war, that the military legal bureaucracy knew how to produce.

It's amazing some times to see how far-sighted they were



in 1967, when they had certain laws that up until today are the basis of everything. Of everything! For example, there was a law, I think from 1968, which canceled all local planning institutions in the West Bank, and transferred the planning authority to the higher echelon where only Israeli Jews in the military, and later on also settlers, are represented. So from the start, from 1968, when everyone says, “Oh, they didn’t think of annexing the occupied territory; it was still territory for bargain,” they knew how to deprive the local communities, Palestinian communities, of any planning authority. From the start, they knew how to get control of the water resources—water resources that were run by municipalities. So they put their hands on the distribution of water from the start.

So the system, this plan, has been there since 1967. That’s why we have not heard Labor, the main opposition to Likud, particularly during the last election campaign, speak against the wars that the Likud governments have launched against

the Palestinians. They were part of the severe, the brutal repression of the Second Intifada. Also the First Intifada. They do not object to the wall, to the Separation Wall. They have never objected to the disconnection of Gaza from the West Bank, which, for me, is one of the main proofs of how, from the start, during the Oslo period, Israel did not mean to go forward with the project of a two-state solution, because disconnecting Gaza from the West Bank violates the basic idea of a two-state solution, which is based on Gaza, the West Bank, and the 1967 borders. And they do not really object to the settlements. They might say one thing or the other

against “outposts”—against the so-called “illegal outposts,” which are not more illegal than the settlements, only they’re not “officially authorized.” But they are in favor of keeping all the big settlements intact.

So there isn’t much of a difference in the main aspects between Likud and Labor—or when it touches the core problem of our existence there—there isn’t a big difference between the Right-Right wing and the Center-Right wing in Israel, which is mistakenly called Left-wing. And indeed, Netanyahu keeps calling it Left-wing—and the Left-wing has become a monster. It’s one of the most derogatory terms you can use in Israel.

Just a month ago I went to cover a little activity of a Palestinian group to the east of Jerusalem, in Abu Dis. The Israeli Civil Administration, or, this pilotless plane, is planning to enlarge a township for Bedouins. The township has existed there since the end of the 1990s, where groups of Bedouins were forcibly expelled from their place in order to allow the expansion of Ma’ale Adumim. Now they want to expel more Bedouins, and they want to enlarge this township—which is a township in the sense of being very miserable. And there were some bulldozers of the Civil Administration and the army coming to prepare the land for starting the construction, but Palestinian activists were disrupting and protesting there for several weeks already. And I wanted to ask one of the drivers of the bulldozers a question, if he was employed by the Civil Administration. And he said, “I’m not talking to a leftist.” So a leftist is a real (monster), and he was not of “the white tribe,” of course.

And having said all that—and really, I’ll stress it again

and again, the system was created by Labor, and perfected by Labor over the years, and then taken over by the Right-wing. But still, when Labor had the chance, they did not change it. And still, it is scary. And still, the results of yesterday are scary. They're scary because what's worse is not better—what's worse is worse, and can lead to something even worse. To have an Ayelet Shaked as Minister of Home Security is really, really frightening. Because the one thing that you could say about Labor is that they—maybe now more than before understand there are some limits. And with the Right-wing winning in such a way, Netanyahu is winning for the third consecutive time, and for the fourth time [overall], and after much talk in the past few months that he was going to lose, or to decline dramatically, this victory is sweeter to him, and he feels stronger.

They are already promising to continue their attack on the legal system. Now, I cannot say that the Israeli legal system, judicial system, or the Israeli High Court, have intervened in a courageous way against this project of colonization—not at all. They, lately, were obliged to issue some resolutions regarding unauthorized outposts built on private land. But they never challenged the right of Israel to have enormous, huge settlements on private land that was legally—“legally”—expropriated in the 1970s, or what is called “state land,” which is as much Palestinian land as private land is. The Likud Party is the party which unleashed all kinds of racist laws or bills during the last three or four years against Arabs in Israel, against the rights of Israeli citizens. That's where the High Court did try to stop them at a certain moment. Now, if they really break the authority of the High Court, or the dominance of the High Court, they will be freer to make progress, if I may use this term, against the rights of Arabs.

They are, in spite of their social position, talking against the elite. Netanyahu excels at talking against the elite, as if he's not coming from the elite. So, he excels at it. Nevertheless, he really created a real plutocracy in Israel, where twenty or thirty rich families control the economy, and where workers' rights have been eroded consistently over the years.

So it is frightening. And if my depressed friend here was a bit dismayed at my introduction, then I do think there is reason to be depressed. I thought about it...some say the Israelis are brainwashed, and I have a natural resistance to this term. They're not stupid, they're not going to be brainwashed so easily. So it's not about brainwashing. The main explanation that I can give for this is that so far, under this system, this project, this pilotless plane, the Israeli Jews assume or understand that they profit from it, and that a change will affect their privileges as Jews—even those Jews who are certainly not privileged in the Israeli Jewish society.

In poor cities, in poor neighborhoods, they vote for Likud. So maybe they are afraid of a big change.

This system of having the colonization project in the West Bank, not only in Israel proper, is our substitute for the withered-away welfare system. Israel had a welfare system until the 1970s or the 1980s. It had a fairly good welfare system, where education and health were services given to people regardless of their income. In many ways we had a trend of Israelis who got Nobel Prizes, especially a woman, Ada Yonath, a chemist, and she said it openly—she's left-leaning—she said, “I would have never reached where I reached if not for the education system in the '50s and '60s,” which does not exist today. So these Israelis are now offered a substitute to the welfare system in the West Bank, because the settlements, the colonies, offer to the average Israeli an opportunity to upgrade their conditions. You go to the main settlements, like Ariel, like Ma'ale Adumim, you don't find ideological settlers there, but you find people there who could not afford a flat, or any housing in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem or the vicinity. And now they are nearer—they have a very good system of roads which connects them to the main cities, and they get all kind of tax exemptions, etcetera. Also, this produces the control over the West Bank, and the maintenance of this situation guarantees, especially, a whole strata of Israelis who benefit directly—their career is dependent on the occupation.

And I'm speaking here about the military and the security system which develops all the expertise, based on the fact that we permanently have to contain the unrest which the occupation produces. So because there is occupation, we produce the tools to contain it, and these tools give us an important role now in the world. It's not by accident, it's not by coincidence, that our main export now is security expertise. It's about \$10 billion USD a year now, or something like that, and it's been growing over the years. So there is a segment of society, the military—it's not the majority of course, but it's very important and crucial in Israeli society—that are going to all have positions either in politics later when they retire, or in big private companies in the corporate world. They can be hired outside to serve in armies. So there is an inherent fear in Israelis to change this situation which seems like the natural order of things. I'm trying to figure out myself, the reason why so many people vote for a party which is not only against the Arabs—this goes without saying—but to a party and coalition which is by definition against the rights of workers, against the rights of minorities, and may be only liberal in regard to the gay community.

Now these results were not a surprise to Palestinians, most of the Palestinians believe that there is no difference between Likud and Labor. That's where I argue with them—okay, there is no difference, but also, there are the



slight things that might make life now even worse. It's very interesting what the position of Mahmoud Abbas was for the past two years. He's not stupid, and he's been confronting Netanyahu and this pilotless plane of colonization over the past years. And he's very firm—Abbas is very firm that Palestinians should not fall into the trap of another so-called armed struggle. Some see him as a traitor because he's not glorifying the armed struggle, or even tries to curtail attempts at armed struggle, and also because of his criticism of Hamas for having engaged in the wars with Israel in the last six years. But he has a logic that I think represents what I said before as well, because he knows that worse can become worse. And especially now, in the shadow of what is happening in Syria and Iraq, he fears brutalization that is irreversible, and he assumes that one should contain now all the anger and the need for revenge, and wait until maybe international circumstances are different. Unfortunately, his message is not seriously heard by people or understood, because he's a dictator. He's even more of a dictator than Arafat was. And because he's very alienated from his own people. So his very logical message and mission are not well accepted among Palestinians and especially among the young generations, not that they have better solutions now. The Palestinians suffer from a very "split-body" form of politics.

In that sense, the only good thing about the elections in Israel is that the Joint Arab List showed that the people can make a decision to overcome their natural animosity, which exists between Islamist and communist, between nationalist and socialist. They understand that they are in a danger of being wiped out from the Israeli political arena and they found a way to defy this wish of the Israeli Right-wing, led by Avigdor Liberman, the immigrant. Though we are all somehow immigrants. In that sense, they might inspire the Palestinians on the other side of the Green Line. But still people are hoping all the time for change, because the Israelis, as those elections show, are not intending to change the status quo, maybe to worsen it, but not to change the status quo. The world is yet to be seen. I don't see the world running now because of Netanyahu's victory and cutting all relations with Israel. Or using sticks that were not used before. I think the Israeli military strategy and economic role is important enough for the West for them to digest this election. I might be mistaken.

I believe in the power of oppressed groups, any oppressed groups, to start and make a change. The situation is not the fault of oppressed groups. But these are the groups who have an interest in changing the status quo, to change the reality. And this is what has been missing in the last years. There are attempts to change it, to make Palestinians less a passive onlooker or victim of this Israeli repression but to make changes in the strategy, to start making changes in

their practices, in leadership, in political structures. It needs a lot of debate and debates are not easy now. There are not many venues for open debates. The Palestinian legislative council doesn't meet for a great reason, for Fatah would not let it meet, Abbas would not let it convene, and of course, Israel has arrested many representatives in this parliament. There is animosity between Fatah and Hamas. It seems there is a cultural war between the two segments of society. But at the same time, they are also the ones who are being threatened permanently by the Israeli project of colonization.

There are groups and thoughts that are being formed. They are still raw. It is still not being channeled into one leadership that is known and is respected. I can give you an example. There has been, for the past ten years, groups of Palestinians who constantly confront the army in villages, in the West Bank, and have demonstrations and defy the Israeli army. In some times and some places, they are working together with internationals and Israeli Jews. And yet, they are not known to the general Palestinian public. The names are not known. They are people who have been put in jail over and over again. One stupid guy with arms, with a gun, his name is more known than those people. This is a problem. The Palestinian imagination is still very much occupied by the cult of armed struggle. Because armed struggle is always done by the few, and of course, always men, or ninety-nine percent by men. There is the example of course the First Intifada. The intifadas engaged the entire population. But the results were bad so people are afraid of another bad result. People do not have confidence in their leadership, another reason why they are not engaged in popular struggle. And they don't believe this can now bring a change. And yet the Palestinians are very rooted, and maybe this is one of the things that encourages me. I believe, I hope, as a leftist, that something will be formed that will enable Palestinians to build up a strategy that will affect the attitude of the world. Because from the Israeli society we cannot expect a change. An armed struggle is a lost cause. If people have hallucinations about an armed struggle, as Hamas has, it is because the armed struggle is a way for Hamas to consolidate its position within the Palestinian internal political front. The only thing left is to have a totally different strategy towards Israel, towards the nations of the world, to security relations with Israel, to civilian relations with Israel. But this has to come from the Palestinians of course. There are thoughts about it. It is still embryonic.

And that is where I end. It is frightening what is happening now. Because while we wait (for an alternative), there shouldn't be another round of brutalization. And with Netanyahu in power, with such a Right-wing coalition in power, the chances for another round of brutalization are higher. ☹

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# On Zendaya

## Respectability politics and the “right” kind of Blackness

nadejda webb

**R**ESPECTABILITY POLITICS ARE NOT new. They are as old as slavery itself, if not created in the same instance as slavery. They echo in various texts, instances and television shows, highlighting the impact of slavery, the making of class and the predominance of power. James Baldwin’s *Another Country* offers a contemporary entry point into the world of respectability, as Rufus, the protagonist, is drowning, he moves through New York City, he is overwhelmed by what surrounds him.

“Beneath them Rufus walked, one of the fallen walked, one of the fallen—for the weight of this city was murderous—one of those who had been crushed on the day, which was everyday, these towers fell. Entirely alone, and dying of it, he was part of an unprecedented multitude. There were boys and girls drinking coffee at the drugstore counters who were held back from his condition by barriers as perishable as their dwindling cigarettes. They could scarcely bear their knowledge, nor could they have borne the sight of Rufus, but they knew why he was in the streets tonight, why he rode the subways all night long, why his stomach growled, why his hair was nappy, his armpits funky, his pants and shoes too thin, and why he did not dare to stop and take a leak.”

While Rufus is starving and penniless, boys and girls sit relaxed, with not just coffee, but also cigarettes. They are separated from his “condition” with barriers “as perishable as their dwindling cigarettes”—but still separated. The consequence of the barrier is unchanged by its insubstantiality. The narrator comments on the separation between Rufus and them, between his hunger and their consumption, his lonesomeness and their company, his nappy hair and their assumed opposite, his funky armpits and their cleanliness, his thin pants and shoes and their comfort. This compari-

son concludes with absence: “he did not dare stop and take a leak”. The absence of action on the part of Rufus clarifies the comparison—what is available to others is unavailable to him. As one of the fallen, Rufus is to perish in these instances daily, perish from politics of race, space, and place (the intersection of space and time). A simple definition of respectability politics can be garnered from Rufus’ experience—that which is decreed as respectable in conjunction with, and from, the Black body. These expectations are shaped by power and disregard a variety of circumstances, be it geographical, economic, or otherwise.

The standards stand, no matter what. Most recently Giuliana Rancic, a host of the E! show “Fashion Police,” came under fire for a comment made at the 87th annual Academy Awards Ceremony. In response to an ensemble choice made by bi-racial teenager Zendaya Coleman, made popular through appearances on the Disney Channel, Rancic stated:

“I love Zendaya’s style, and I love when she has the little hair—she just had it. She has just such a tiny frame that this hair, to me, overwhelms her. I feel like she smells like patchouli oil. Or weed! Yeah, maybe weed.”

To this Zendaya responded with a lengthy tweet, exclaiming her anger at “ignorant slurs and pure disrespect.”

“To say that an 18 year old young woman with locs must smell of patchouli oil or ‘weed’ is not only a large stereotype but outrageously offensive. I don’t usually feel the need to respond to negative things but certain remarks cannot go unchecked. I’ll have you know my father, brother, childhood friend and little cousins all have loc. Do you know what Ava DuVarnay (director of the Oscar nominated film *Selma*), Ledisi (9 time Grammy nominated singer/songwriter and actress), Terry McMillan (author), Vincent Brown (Professor and African American studies at Harvard University), Heather Andrea





Williams (Historian who also possesses a JD from Harvard University, and an MA and PhD from Yale University) as well as many other men women and children of all races have in common? Locs. None of which smell like marajuana [sic].”

Rancic chose to approach the faux locs Zendaya wore in a diminutive fashion, “the little hair.” To stereotype the image of faux-locs as smelling of weed or patchouli oil is indeed wrong. The most interesting part about this debacle, however, is not the first ignorant mistake, but the second. Zendaya’s response (and the concurrent support she receives from various commercial people within the Black community) is attached to not only class but respectability politics as well. Zendaya, an American citizen, installs faux-locs to appear at an American awards ceremony, frequented by some of the (relatively) richest people in America, and is then upset when characterized as smelling of weed and patchouli oil. The hegemonic underpull arises from the disappearing of the other kinds of people, the kind who do smell like weed, because his or her locs are emblematic of a spiritual relationship had with the drug. Besides Rastafari, there are the Saddhus in India who have loced hair and a similar relationship with marijuana—spiritual elation. The individuals Zendaya chose to exemplify operate above the average class ranking as well. They are not blue-collar working people, but adequately professional persons. They are not “problematic” radicals, but those who move in and through respected systems. She intentionally moves against the stereotypes of locs (hippie, Black radical, Rasta smoking his weed) but does create a dynamic image. Instead, she moves towards that

which is considered respectable and proper—the individual with money and/or education and a well sought place in the system.

Within the current context of marijuana decriminalization, much information has been made accessible to the non-academic public, through various Facebook memes, posts, and blog articles. One carried the image of Michelle Alexander at a podium, stating “Here are White men poised to run big Marijuana business, dreaming of cashing in big. Big money, big businesses selling weed, after 40 years of locking up impoverished black kids for selling weed. Their families and futures destroyed. Now white men are planning on getting rich, doing precisely the same thing.” Alexander’s book, *The New Jim Crow*, analyzes the ramifications of drug laws on Black bodies and mass incarceration. As witnessed in this meme, a major part of that project is to highlight the intrinsic bias that moves alongside the majority of laws that were made to alienate specific bodies more than others, and to identify who precisely is at risk. Zendaya reinforces the very power structure Alexander moves against, by alienating the bodies that do not move as she does. She taps into the history of “right” and “wrong” in terms of Blackness (Zendaya is half White and half Black, with hair that is typically straightened and long). She is moneyed and is considered pretty enough to be sold to the America public. Given the current conversation happening in and around Black communities about Black lives, lives of different classes and geographies must be thoroughly welcomed, included and respected. Until then, the conversation is not just irresponsible, but inadequate. How much work can be done without the inclusion of the majority lower class? 🌱

# The Politics of Mourning

## From *Charlie Hebdo* to Chapel Hill

**miri gabriel**

**L**AST WEEK, I LOST someone I can never regain. With that, I lost a specific integrity of the “I” I can never regain, either. I will be skinless for a while, as many are with me, as many have been before and will be, growing skin and scale anew.

On 10 February 2015, three Muslim students—as they have been referred to repeatedly in U.S. media—were shot in their home in Finley Forest Condominiums in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salah (age 21), her husband Deah Shaddy Barakat (23), and her sister Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha (19) were found dead of gunshot wounds after several horrified phone calls from neighbors. The very next day, their shooter, Craig Stephen Hicks, a white man identifying as an anti-theist, turned himself in. It took a rallying cry from the victims’ family members, as well as Muslim and allying communities all over the country, for the attack to be investigated as a hate crime, versus—as suggested by some—a meager parking dispute.

The incident became a public event not too long after the *Charlie Hebdo* murders in Paris, during which, on the morning of 7 January, two Muslim brothers—identified as such by said media—named Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, forced their way into the headquarters of the French satirical weekly newspaper and shot-to-death many of its journalists. Eleven were killed, and eleven more were wounded. The same two men proceeded to kill a police officer, a Muslim-French man, after the initial attack. In the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* murders, Amedy Coulibaly orchestrated a heinous hostage situation in a Kosher shop in Porte des Vincennes. The three-day attack was largely covered as a war, a war on Western values by a backward Islamism, even by the family members of the fallen, with some public outcries to not use this incident to further institutionalize an uncritical apotheosis of the West and the Other.

It is quite jading to write about these incidents back to back, as it was to watch and read of them, specifically the way they were constituted by cable news coverage in the West. What was most interesting, and troubling, in juxtaposing how the lives of the victims were narrated across both

incidents—the French Journalists, the American students, or should I always say, Muslim or Muslim-American students—was how inextricable the way the victims were identified in their death was from their “mournability.” There is no doubt that the murders were senseless on both accounts. But while the legitimacy of the French journalists’ victimhood to a particular hatred was unquestioned—with no mention of their racialization as White, or their power to critique as French citizens—it took a bit more struggle with American media to (partially, or maybe) institutionalize a narrative of innocence, of victimhood to a particular and unwarranted hate, for the Chapel Hill students.

Among the many things I am, I am a writer. And I have a strong affinity with the primary religion of my upbringing, that of Islam. I am still un-doing not only the shock left by each event, but the shock left by the media’s juxtaposition of both these events and the way in which they were constituted. While President Obama framed both incidents as an affront on nationalist values of freedom and diversity and such, the mourning was segregated. When it came to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, I was asked to either cuss the terrorists along with White colleagues and friends or to explain away the terrorists, while with the Chapel Hill attacks, I was offered condolences, assured that “Americans” know that “not all Muslims are...” And, in both cases, I felt more vulnerability stepping out of my dwelling, into the street, into the groundlessness of public life.

Not too long before the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, I joined millions of Americans who yielded our bodies into this groundlessness, and lied down for forty-minute, thirty-second die-ins for Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager shot by a police officer on 9 August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. Dozens of incidents where unarmed Black youth and adults are killed by cops all over the United States have preceded and would follow, up to the recent death of Tony Robinson, Jr. on 15 March 2015 in Madison, Wisconsin. Although not definitively by a cop, one day before the Chapel Hill shootings, a Black Muslim student is shot in his apartment in Ottawa, Canada. His name is Mustafa Mattan, 28 years old, a Somali immigrant, who had just moved to

Western Canada a few weeks before to seek better opportunities and help out his family.

The male among the fallen in the Chapel Hill incident, Deah, is displayed all over news networks with a beaming, lighter-skinned smile. They display photos of him playing basketball, as well as video footage of his work as a dental student with Syrian refugees in Turkey. He is lauded as a precious, dedicated, exemplary young Muslim, with middle-class interests and a service ethics that employs all he has access to for good. There are but a few photographs “we have” via public media of Mustafa, plus a few mourning tweets of him under the Chapel Hill-centered hashtag, #MuslimLives-Matter, which was also written in some articles as a “Ferguson moment” for Muslim Americans. There is little vestige of Mustafa to allow for public mourning.

Yet, I could not help but internalize these two men as the pipe dream I aspired to for so long as an immigrant Muslim—becoming integrated, integral to America in some way, becoming a citizen, visible in life and mournable when gone, collectively mournable on the block and on the television, like the firefighters of 9/11, becoming lighter-skinned as a consciousness, even if not physically, as a tongue and a paradigm and a paycheck—avoiding the the double racism that darker-skinned and Black Muslims face in America, becoming the un-interrogated insider. I shed that skin a long time ago, and as much as I would like to think I’ve replaced them with scales, I was hurt, ashamed. I have let a dehumanizing hierarchy of human relations seep into my skin. As I write this article, I am compelled to suspend my solidarity ethics and prioritize the burning questions I have for Mustafa. To interrogate an unacknowledged silence of his life is to mourn his death.

In her poignant collection of essays, *Precarious Life: the Power of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler tackles mass narratives of vulnerability and mournability after 9/11. She asks, “Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, what makes for a grievable life?” She theorizes that loss is so powerful because of its heightened state of vulnerability and unknowability, not yet knowing what fully happened or how one will emerge from it is inextricably coupled with it never being a solitary event. She writes, “What grief displays... is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves as autonomous and in control. I might tell a story here about what I am feeling, but it would have to be a story in which the very ‘I’ who seeks to tell the story is stopped in the midst of the telling; the very ‘I’ is called into question in relation to the Other... let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something.” One never mourns alone. Meanwhile, one never mourns the

Other alone, but also what is inseparably lost of the self, and of others, of many simultaneous lives.

Meanwhile, cable news narratives would like the public to believe that mourning is as definitive as borders (which they are, with very little finitude). I go back to Butler, who, writing about Emmanuel Levinas’ concept of being ruptured by the face of the Other, describes how “...media representations of the faces of the ‘enemy’ efface what is most human about the ‘face’ for Levinas...those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil, authorize us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated, and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed.” Within the span of a month, media representations of “Muslim faces” went from ubiquitously criminalized against the edifice of a liberating West, to harmlessly moderate and mournfully included, to near absent and barely claimed by a mobilized collective—although members of both Black and Muslim communities have decried this absence. Yet, much like how “the media” covers the #BlackLivesMatter movement’s consistent decrying of the shooting of innocent police officers, which is still far less proportionate than that of innocent Black lives, or—on a more severe example—much like how it covers international Muslim opposition to the Islamic State, there is a well-funded hierarchy of which lives are more innocent, and which deaths more mournable.

I write this in light of recently losing someone I can never regain, my last grandmother and one of the lives I loved the most, and myself in light of her loss. I could not be present for her funeral in Cairo, and so I took it to Facebook, and a new family emerged from my CUNY Graduate Center colleagues—for whom I awkwardly facilitated a book launch party while the Muslim Writers Collective launched a night of poetry and memory nearby, called ‘A Parking Space Called America.’ Mourning can be most palpable when not in location, when outside of the ritual parameters of where it is to be spoken of, felt, smelled, even financed, and the question of it is embodied in exile. But is that where one should settle for location, pitch up a tent and become content with the refusal of rupture, with allowing a society to formalize who can get under whose skin and when? And even for the lives purported to be aptly mourned, is stuffing their memories between the cracks of a nationalist monument enough to empower a people to face violence, to know its senselessness, to know the inseparability of the Other? I am here reminded of the words of James Baldwin in *Untitled*, “Lord, / when you send the rain, / think about it, please, / a little? / Do /not get carried away / by the sound of falling water, / the marvelous light / on the falling water. / I / am beneath that water. / It falls with great force / and the light / Blinds / me to the light.” ☹



# How to Build a Co-op

## Helping to kick start workers' self-management

**alexander kolokotronis**

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS ARE TAKING on a small but historic role in fostering workers' self-management. Specifically, two municipalities have been compelled to invest funds and resources into worker cooperative development—New York City, and Madison, Wisconsin. While each of the cities already possess some of the largest worker cooperatives in the country, Cooperative Homecare Associates and Union Cab respectively, the municipal governments of these cities are seeking to facilitate the expansion and proliferation of the model.

### **New York City**

BETWEEN THE TWO MUNICIPAL governments, New York City was the first to commit funds to worker cooperative development. In late June of 2014, the City Council included the \$1.2 million USD Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative in its fiscal year 2015 budget. While only constituting a drop in the bucket relative to the overall budget, the initiative was the first of its kind on such a scale within the United States. The initiative was pushed by the NYC Worker Cooperative Coalition, which at the time was composed of fifteen groups, including two groups from CUNY—the CUNY Law CED Clinic and Student Organization for Democratic Alternatives. Since the passing of the initiative, the coalition has grown as a number of other groups are seeing the upside of developing worker cooperatives.

The City Council's commitment to facilitating the rise of worker cooperatives was reaffirmed by the passage of Intro-423. In total, forty-nine council members voted for the bill, while two council members abstained, none voted against it. On 18 March 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed Intro-423, which, as Green Worker Cooperatives notes, "requires the Department of Small Business Services and the Mayor's Office of Contract Services to report on the number of contracts awarded to worker owned cooperatives and the amount of worker owned cooperatives that are receiving assistance from the city."

While speaking to Chris Michael, the Executive Direc-

tor of NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives and a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center, he told me: "Intro-423 is important because it implicitly puts purchasing goods and services from worker cooperatives as goal for the city government. In very concrete terms, the Department of Small Business Services now has a mandate to issue annual recommendations on how to improve the level of worker cooperative procurement for the city. This is important for both worker cooperatives and residents because dollars spent on worker cooperative businesses are retained and recirculated in the local economy and taxed by New York City." Also, according to a mid-year report from the New York City Worker Cooperative Coalition, on top of the preexisting twenty-two worker cooperatives, twenty-four new worker cooperatives are slated for launch by next summer. There are an additional twenty worker cooperatives in development, bringing the overall number to forty-four new worker cooperatives. Many of these worker cooperatives have been built from scratch. A number of others were capitalist businesses that have since been converted into worker cooperatives, or are on the path to doing so.

### **Growing the Cooperative Sector Through Conversions**

CONVERSIONS ARE BECOMING MORE of a staple in the worker cooperative movement. A particularly intriguing, and recent, example of this is the newly formed Island Employee Cooperative. It is the largest worker cooperative in Maine, with a composition of sixty-two worker-owners. Previous to its conversion, Island Employee Cooperative existed as three separate businesses owned by one couple. The couple's decision to sell the businesses led to the transition into democratic-employee ownership. This was seen as an effective way to keep money and jobs in the community.

In New York City, one can find the example of a successful conversion with the construction worker cooperative called Build with Prospect. As indicated by their website, being a worker cooperative is highly valued by the enterprise. They even cite five reasons as to why being worker cooperatives are good for their clients:

1. Our workers are vested in the projects. The company's success directly benefits them.
2. Due to a higher retention rate than most midsize companies, our workers have more focused training to constantly improve their skills.
3. With workers profit sharing in the company, they have living wages that make them healthier and more attentive to their worker.
4. With all workers looking out for losses in efficiency, projects get completed on time.
5. The client can feel good that their project is creating full-time living wage jobs.

The advantage of conversions also lies in the fact that workers likely don't require extensive industry-skill training, nor go through an extended process of learning about each other as co-workers. As Melissa Hoover, the Executive Director of the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, noted in an interview with Democracy Collaborative, "From a cooperative development standpoint, it's generally just a lot easier and less risky to finance the sale of an existing business than to start something from scratch." Hoover also states that conversions can be presented as another selling option for outgoing business owners.

Chris Michael himself asserts: "The use of conversions for the growth of worker cooperatives is a top international recommendation. There are a number of obstacles to startups. Foremost of which is the high risk associated with any startup business, and the need for high level business expertise. Conversions mitigate both of these problems (the problems of risk and professional business expertise) because you are working with an existing business with a successful or stable operating history. And although you need some business expertise with conversions, it surrounds the transaction itself and it doesn't necessarily require industry-based expertise or management expertise, though this may be helpful."

There are even viable policy proposals for boosting conversions. For example, a given locale or even nation may implement a policy of workers, collectively, holding a right-of-first-refusal. According to Investopedia, a right-of-first-refusal is "a contractual right of an entity to be given the opportunity to enter into a business transaction with a person or company before anyone else can." Providing workers, as a collective, with this right could be a significant catalyst in proliferating workers' self-managed firms. This departs from looking at conversions as something to be employed for a failing or struggling business, such as the case of workplace recuperations and expropriations in Argentina. Conversions are viable for quite healthy businesses as well, even preferable. Within New York City, the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives, the business association of worker coopera-


tives in the metropolitan area, is, in particular, looking to the tactic of conversions to foster growth in the cooperative sector.

Conversions are a part of the plan for moving forward in New York City and New York State. Chris Michael states, "We're going back to the city for an expanded \$2.34 million USD. Part of the expanded request is the inclusion of a few new groups, but it also includes the expanding of capacity for first-year groups. On the state level we are currently lobbying Albany to refund legislation from 1983 that supports conversion work including a State Center for Democratic Employee Ownership, educational training grants, and the robust conversion loan financing program. Moving forward, we have a fairly robust policy agenda aiming at incentivizing conversions, leveraging the power of public procurement to increase conversions and increase worker cooperative revenues, as well as structural protections on the worker cooperative form."

## Madison, Wisconsin

THE CASE OF NEW York City cannot be understated due to the impact it had on the city of Madison. As Jay Cassano notes in his 2 February 2015 Fast Company article, Paul Soglin, the mayor of Madison, stated "he got the idea from New York City's" Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative.

What "idea" is this? It is an initiative to invest \$1 million USD per year for the next five years for the purpose of establishing worker cooperatives. The idea has been approved by the Madison city government. Soglin himself states: "I'd read about what Mayor de Blasio had proposed for New York City when I was in the process of developing the 2015 city budget. I simply went back to the office next day and said we're not going to be upstaged by New York City." What makes the Madison initiative important is that it is a multi-year venture, so that those doing the development work can rely on that to properly carry out research, and successfully target businesses for conversions. De Blasio did not himself propose the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative. Also, developments in Madison are more complex than the narrative provided above. Yet, the point remains that the NYC initiative has set a precedent that provides the possibility for replication across the United States, especially by municipalities and states.

When asked about this possibility of replication, Chris Michael stated: "Absolutely. Unhesitatingly, yes. The idea that states and municipalities can dedicate funding to support worker cooperative development, to bring in experts to expand the base of democratic businesses, as well as to create legislative incentives for conversions is something that is absolutely doable in any city or state across the country." 

# Useful Fictions

## False belief, empowerment, and social justice

**eric e. bayruns**

**B**ELIEF IS SOMETHING THAT one wants to get right. That is, most people would agree that one ought to believe what is true. This seems uncontroversial. If one believes incorrectly then there are bad consequences. For example, if you believe that the train you take to work arrives at nine o'clock when it actually arrives at 8:30, then you may miss your train and arrive late to work. Thus, believing things that are untrue seems to be something that one should avoid. That is, one's beliefs should be grounded in states of affairs. However, I will suggest that believing things that are untrue may be useful.

The human species' reproductive success is due, in part, to the fact that humans tend to represent the world roughly as it is. That I can successfully stroke each key on my computer as I write this article is evidence of this human tendency to successfully represent the world. Humankind's visiting the moon, our successful landing of machines on other planets, landing rockets on comets, is even further evidence of this tendency. I invoke these technological feats because their success depends on our beliefs tightly matching how the world actually is apart from how we represent it.

From all of this, one can conclude that we ought to promote veridical belief because it leads to good outcomes. Or, if we want good outcomes, we can only achieve them via veridical belief. So far, so good. It is not hard to endorse beliefs of the veridical kind. Conversely, incorrect beliefs seem to lead to bad outcomes. The range of examples of incorrect beliefs leading to bad outcomes varies from the mundane train example I gave above to more serious ones like religious belief. For example, philosophers like Nietzsche point out that believing that there will be an afterlife causes people to devalue the here and now of the lives we are living. An extreme example of this is that if you believe that Christ is coming back to earth next week to punish the wicked and exalt the faithful, then you may not pay next month's rent. A less extreme case of this is that if most of a society's members believe that they will be redeemed in the afterlife, then the urgency or impetus to remedy things like social injustice will be lacking.

Other examples of this are racist beliefs about other peoples' personhood. Shortly after the exploitation of the Americas by Europeans, racist beliefs, in part due to economic reasons, began to take hold. By the 1800s Europeans, for the most part, believed that Amerindians, Africans as well as Afro-Americans, and most non-White persons were sub-human. They believed that people of color were not fully rational agents. In other words, they were sub-persons. So, here false beliefs lead to horribly bad outcomes for people of color. Although, the metaphysics of race may muddy the waters here, we can fall back on examples of false beliefs about how diseases work and false beliefs about the natural world, generally. If my point thus far is that false beliefs tend to lead to bad outcomes, and, conversely, that true beliefs tend to lead to good outcomes then one may object that this seems trivially true or obvious. My phrasing of true beliefs leading to good outcomes and false beliefs leading to bad outcomes may be a bit too simplistic. Thus, I will reformulate this as one should reasonably expect to achieve desired outcomes only if one's beliefs tend to be true. This still seems rather uncontroversial.

Now, I will claim something that may be controversial, namely that fictions are useful. That is, false belief may be useful to achieving one's desires. Moreover, and this is what motivates this article, these fictions, or false beliefs, may be very useful for empowering victims of social injustice. Let us keep in mind that the human species succeeds in large part because it believes truly or believes true things. So, now, I suggest that believing false things, or having false beliefs, will at least, have an empowering effect on victims of social injustice. That is, we may achieve a desired outcome through believing something that is false.

There are many examples of this but there is one in particular that I find particularly compelling. The religious group known as the Five Percenters is this compelling example. They are also known as the Nation of God's and Earth's. Many people believe that they are Muslims because they use lots of Islamic symbolism, terms, and iconography, but they are not theists in the usual sense. They were founded by a former member of the Nation of Islam, namely, Clarence




13X. He, indeed, attended Malcolm X's mosque in Harlem, New York. I will give a cursory explanation of their beliefs and history, and will then outline why I think that they are a particularly compelling example of a group achieving emancipatory goals through false belief.

The Five Percenters believe that Black men are the originators of the human species. Thus, they believe that Whites are both inferior and derivative of Black men. Furthermore, because Black men are the original kind of human beings, they believe that Black men are gods. They also believe that a rogue Black man, during prehistory, created White men. Whites were created, as their creed goes, to be devils or evil. I take their belief that Black men are deities to be a rejection of both White Christian theology and a way of thinking about controlling one's environment. Clarence 13X developed this set of beliefs in the 1960s. This was in the heat of the civil rights movement, and Black Power was starting to galvanize around this time. Thus, this belief set is a product of its socio-historical setting. Clarence 13X was able to find converts, or followers, in poor black communities. Furthermore, Five Percenter doctrine steadily found adherents in the prison system in the northeastern part of the United States.

It should be no surprise that Five Percenter doctrine was taken up by inner city Black youth. Many inner city Black youth had few ways of combating both the racist views that society held regarding them and their systematic oppression which manifested itself in, at least, police brutality and poor economic conditions. Here, the Five Percenters have false beliefs in the same way that Christians have false beliefs. That is, they both have beliefs that are not veridical. The Five Percenters' false beliefs serve to empower this group of young Black males that have been historically told that they

are anything but gods. They have been told, for hundreds of years, that they were the furthest thing from gods. In some way, they flipped a false belief that was propounded about them on its head. Through the belief that they were superior, and gods, they were able to gain a sense of agency. That is, through their false belief that they were gods, they were able to believe that they could change their oppressed situation. In some ways, this false belief was both motivational and inspirational.

Maybe we can think of this belief as propaganda aimed at oneself. The Five Percenters decided that they wanted their world to be a certain way, a different way, and they mediated this change doxastically. That is, they decided that certain beliefs worked for them, and thus, they ought to believe them irrespective of their veridicality. Moreover, it seems that these beliefs were not so costly in their success that they had to pay the price of success that true belief tends to bring. By costly, I mean that their false beliefs neither prevented them from successfully navigating the world nor did these beliefs conflict with other important beliefs in any robust way.

I believe that this example, of the Five Percenters' belief set, is particularly illustrative because it is an instantiation of a false belief set that is not too far removed from us historically to understand how it was used. It seems to me that this belief set was developed, in part, for the goal of empowerment. Moreover, because we do not have the fog of history obscuring the facts on the ground during this belief set's inception, we do not have to deal with arguing about things like whether Christ did such and such or said so and so. Thus, here it seems to me, that we have an example of a useful fiction. Or, in other words, we have an instance of false believing that we can endorse. 

## *Never Submit. Contribute!*

The *GC Advocate* newspaper, the only newspaper dedicated to the needs and interests of the CUNY Graduate Center community, is looking for new writers for the upcoming academic year. We publish six issues per year and reach thousands of Graduate Center students, faculty, staff, and guests each month.

Currently we are seeking contributors for the following articles and columns:

- Investigative articles covering CUNY news and issues (assignments available on request)
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- Feature "magazine style" articles on the arts, politics, culture, NYC, etc.
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- Book reviews for our regular Book Review column and special Book issues
- Local Music Reviews and Art Reviews

To view recent articles and to get a sense of our style, please visit the *GC Advocate* website: <http://opencuny.org/gcadvocate>. Payments for articles range between \$75 and \$150 depending on the length and amount of research required. We also pay for photos and cartoons.

Interested writers should contact the Editor at [gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gcadvocate@gc.cuny.edu).

# "Society is a Lover's War": On Kehinde Wiley and the Politics of Love

► *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic*. Brooklyn Museum (200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn), until May 24th

**clay matlin**

FOR MANY YEARS NOW I have been a member of the anti-Kehinde Wiley club. It is a large club, easy to join, overpopulated even, and always taking on new members. It is a membership I have worn with pride. Not with very much nuance, mind you, but with real pride. The main complaint is that Wiley is a one-trick pony with an army of assistants churning out paintings in ornate frames for collectors and museums with money to burn. As Deborah Solomon observed in a recent profile of Wiley in the *New York Times*, Wiley "has his share of critics who say his work is formulaic and repetitive. Whether he's working in oil or watercolor, he deploys the same strategy of inserting dark-skinned figures into very White masterpieces of the past." Those are valid critiques. That is exactly what Wiley does.

But the narrative of Wiley's mid-career retrospective at the Brooklyn Museum, *A New Republic*, is that Wiley has branched out. He may have achieved staggering success, but he has not rested on the laurels of his precociousness. Wiley still uses the template of Western, White art history, inserting Black men in the place Whites would have occupied, but can claim stained glass, sculpture, and even small Hans Memling-style portraits as part of his expanded artistic repertoire. Wiley also paints women now. The sculpture and stained glass are fine. They seem a natural enough progression, if a little boring. The Memling portraits are interesting, if not as powerful as his monumental paintings. The paintings of women (a series known as *An Economy of Grace*) are essentially the same as his paintings of men, but less sensual, their energy more subdued.

The problem with, and possibly the success of, *A New Republic* is that it reminds us that Wiley really only has one trick, and this trick has allowed him to become as much a brand as an artist. Wiley himself even said, "Let's face it, I make really high-priced luxury goods for wealthy consumers." If one is at all familiar with contemporary art, especially painting, Wiley's success (he is not yet 38) is a source of real consternation. He graduated with an MFA from Yale in 2001, immediately started a residency at the Studio Museum of Harlem, that kingmaker of young, Black, New

York artists, and had his first solo show with Jeffrey Deitch in 2003. Wiley's career is intriguing because it is so young and so staggeringly successful. Though maybe that's also why there is so much disdain for him. Here, in the United States, we hate the young and successful. We want people to struggle because we assume struggle builds character. As if failure teaches us anything other than pain. The art world is no different. Perhaps it is even a little more jealous of those who take off like rockets. Young artists are cautioned against too much early success—it might spoil them and when they come crashing back down to earth the reentry will destroy them. This is probably true, the art world is littered with the broken careers of those that tasted success at a young age and were then cast aside. It is a vicious place. Older artists are venerated if they have achieved stature either in the art world or the greater society, but if they are still plugging along at the age of forty-five it is often considered too late for them. Young artists are loved for their youth and brio. They are scorned for their success.

Yet perhaps we have been unkind to Wiley. I know I have been guilty of not thinking more deeply about his work, of not looking past the slick and lushly painted imagery. Wiley's one trick really might be enough. For when he deals exclusively with the representation of young, American Black men his work has real power. When he leaves America, as he did with his *World Stage* series (in which he travelled around the world and substituted young Brazilian, Indian, Sri Lankan, Palestinian, African, Israeli, French, Jamaican, and Haitian men for his usual Afro-American subjects) his art is less convincing, replaced with a pervading feeling of gimmickry. What makes Wiley important and allows his paintings to be moving is the connection and love he feels for his subjects—the bond of being Black and being American. He understands and can empathize with his subjects because they come from the same country, even similar urban environments.

It is, nevertheless, this love and empathy that is often either ignored or misread in Wiley's work. It is not that he just has a shtick, but there is an assumption that his paintings are in some way exploitive of their subjects, that there is a long con being pulled. Jessica Dawson, in a recent *Village Voice* review, likened Wiley to a predator offering young Black men some sort of promise of transcendence by putting them





in the position formerly occupied by the paintings' White subjects. She reads into Wiley's "street-casting"—an act in which he approaches young men on the street, asks if they want to pose for his paintings, lets them pick out an image from art history that they would like to be painted into, has them pose as the subject of that original painting did, photographs them, and then recreates the painting with them as the subject—an overly sexualized and inequitable power dynamic that is not there. Dawson likens "street-casting" to a "casting couch," and sees Wiley as some sort of pornographer. Her interpretation is silly and extreme. Wiley is neither a predator nor a pornographer. Dawson, however, does hint at complaints that Wiley's work often elicits, that it is in some way a relationship of exploitation. I used to side on the more benign spectrum of this criticism. There appeared

to me something in Wiley that harnessed the aspirations of young Black men in a way that served to exploit them.

I now believe I was wrong. I would not call myself a convert, but there is more to Wiley than I was originally willing to admit. Many will continue not to like him, they will see things in much the same way Dawson does, probably in a more gentle way—she has been accused of being both racist and libelous—but the feeling will be similar. This is a mistake. There is much at the Brooklyn Museum to prompt a reconsideration of Wiley's project. Wiley's actors may assume poses chosen from images of classical European painting, but they are neither victimized nor are they transformed into something other than themselves. The MSNBC pundit Touré wrote, in an elegant short essay in *A New Republic's* catalog, that Wiley's paintings allow for young, urban Black





men to be seen as individual men and not as members of the “plantation of criminal expectations and fearful permutations—repatriating images, spiring them up north where they can get the respect they deserve and be free. It’s revolutionary work Kehinde is doing, but the real revolution is not happening with his brushes but within his mind, where he sees us as beautiful and then figures out how to get the world to see that.”

By inserting young Black men into the world of “Old Master” painting, Wiley does not in fact “complicate” the history of Western art, as has been argued by critics and art historians. Nor does he address some missing part of art history’s narrative. To fault the Old Masters is an empty and fruitless task. The absence of Black faces in the paintings that Wiley draws from is not a problem of cultural insensitivity or racism, it is instead an instance of anachronism, a reading back into time of our own prejudices, guilt, and needs. I disagree with Holland Cotter’s contention that, in Wiley’s art “people once excluded from Western art, or reduced to the role of servants, are now in command.” There is exclusion in art history, but Wiley is not capable rectifying the situation. It is a Whiggish undertaking to divide the history of art into, to quote Herbert Butterfield, the “friends and enemies of progress.” The record cannot be set straight, past sins cannot be painted away. What Wiley does is paint young, urban-American, Black men as young, urban-American, Black

men.

I am not sure if what Wiley is doing is revolutionary, that might be asking too much of any artwork. Though I would argue that the very act, the casting, the photographing, the looking through art history books and picking out the image to be painted as, the painting itself, adds up to an act of love, perhaps even a “spiriting up north.” I realize this may be a stretch, but I believe love is a key component of Wiley’s paintings. It was the Left Hegelian, Ludwig Feuerbach, who wrote in 1843 that, “Love is passion, and only passion is the hallmark of existence. Only that exists which is an object—be it real or possible—of passion.” Wiley’s posers are objects of passion, both his and theirs. The men are given existence in a way usually denied to them. This is not to imply that before Wiley painted them these men did not exist. Rather, the very act of painting them as historical or legendary figures removes them from the anonymous life of their American cities and reinforces the reality of their humanness, what Ralph Ellison, in 1968, referred to as Black America’s “enduring faith in their own style of American humanity.” Wiley makes them real as men, not as some amalgam of Black men. He loves them in a way that is not bound up with pity or patronizing sentimentality, he loves them because of their beauty and their place in American society. This love is also transformative. It is a love that makes them real and in some way imaginary. They become idealized versions of themselves, freed from the weight of their existence as young, American Black men.

“Societies never know it, but the war of an artist with his society is a lover’s war,” James Baldwin wrote in 1962, “and he does, at his best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself, and with that revelation make freedom real.” Baldwin was concerned in particular with the role of the artist in America. He believed that American artists were required to make known all the “uncharted chaos” that America seeks to suppress, and blaze a trail into the darkness that is the soul of American history. In doing so, by attempting to bring America to itself, the artist might push us towards a more humane life.

I am not claiming that Wiley is the personification of Baldwin’s artist—I am merely suggesting that the project Wiley set forth for himself, the project that began in 2003 with *Passing/Posing*, is a project that operates under a language of love and recovery. Wiley does not always succeed—often his work is simply boring (*World Stage*) or not quite ambitious enough (his paintings of women). But when Wiley is on, when the work is alive and vibrant, when he sticks to the United States and ignores his global longings, he reveals to us the humanity of Black men in this country. At its best, Wiley’s art really is a lover’s war, and if that is his one trick, then it is a worthwhile one. 🍷

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# JACOBIN

# A Blow to Cinematic Shock and Awe

► *Birdman: Or, The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance.*  
Written and directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu.

## michael stivers

THE MARKET FOR FILMS, like any capitalist market, has been metastasizing since the medium's inception. In the new millennium, the use of special effects and computer generated imagery, or CGI, has in many ways been the defining characteristic of film. Over eighty percent of revenues for films made in the United States will be reaped outside of the country, in the loci of global capital. From Paris to Bangkok to Buenos Aires, production companies have been forced to make films that appeal to the innumerable cultural, ethnic, economic, and racial identities of ticket-buyers. Overwhelmingly, their solution was CGI. The safest bet for a film to resonate with a global audience and even a domestic one is a film devoid of all local particularity and dominated by numbing explosions with no social context.

Standing in the face of this seemingly indomitable former sub-industry turned mega-industry was the nearly flawless 2014 film *Birdman: Or, The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*. The film launches an incisive critique of the superhero-style action films of the past decade and the industries that feed them. In addition, *Birdman* bites off a huge chunk of thematic material in taking up questions of ego, risk, and artistic authenticity. Impressively, it manages to chew up and digest them all with ease in just under two hours.

The film is the latest from writer and director Alejandro González Iñárritu and it follows a fictionalized former participant in the culture of bombastic big-budget films, actor Riggan Thompson, played by an immaculate Michael Keaton. Riggan made his name and his now dwindling fortune playing the star of a superhero trilogy known as “Birdman.” In an effort to recast himself as a “serious” actor, Riggan attempts an adaptation of Raymond Carver’s short story “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” which he writes, directs, and stars in.

Iñárritu chooses to leave the content of the Carver adaptation largely unengaged, electing instead to show the internal and intra-cast dialogue that grounds the questions of ego, meaning, and the ever-elusive definition of “good art.” The film teases out the intricacies of these questions masterfully, with Riggan taking the figurative center stage as he struggles to make sense of an acting career which, in retrospect, appears largely meaningless. Aside from his embarrassing stint as Birdman, Riggan must reckon with

himself as a divorcé and as a father to his fresh-out-of-rehab daughter Sam, now his set assistant, played by Emma Stone. Edward Norton, Naomi Watts, and Andrea Riseborough round out the cast as the actors joining Riggan on stage. A brilliant Zach Galifianakis plays Riggan’s agent, adding some humor to the film while showing some diversity in his own acting ability.

*Birdman* is made to appear as if it is one shot, which could come off as gimmicky, but is seamlessly done and thus is so engrossing that it can take a while before a viewer realizes the stylistic intention. The roving camera follows the actors closely and gives us a view into the social culture of “backstage,” where most of the film takes place. In fact,



Above: Michael Keaton as Riggan Thompson in *Birdman*.



the camera almost entirely avoids frontal shots of the stage and its actors. In the scenes backstage, we see at play the relationships, egos, ideas, excitement, failure, torment, and intimacy necessarily present in the creation of art. *Birdman* is ultimately not about the performance, but what constitutes the performance. We see, so to speak, the sausages being made. The film is also guided and punctuated by the syncopated rhythm of a drum set that extends throughout the entire film. The device adds tension and appropriately enhances a few moments on screen but distracts more often than it amplifies.

The scenery in *Birdman* is dark and earth-tone plain in a clear effort to drive all attention towards Keaton, Stone, Norton, Watts, Riseborough and Amy Ryan as Riggan's former wife. Riseborough is underwhelming at best and sometimes the dialogue written for Stone seems unfit for a character of that age. This shortcoming is most apparent when, in the midst of a heated argument, she yells in affirmation the dir-

est of Riggan's insecurities; his work is in fact meaningless. Norton and Watts's characters, who are romantically involved in the film, have great interplay and help cut some of the tension when Riggan's more personal moments get a bit heavy. Mike Shiner, played by Norton, is a pleasure-seeking yet earnest actor obsessed with making "genuine" art and utterly unconcerned with his popular image. "Popularity is the slutty little cousin of prestige," he assures Riggan. Watts is an ascendant actor relieved to have finally made it to Broadway, but who, like Riggan is grappling with the lack of the fulfillment the position turns out to provide.

Still, the spotlight consistently comes back to Riggan, and as the film progresses we become increasingly invested in his play, particularly when it appears to be imploding upon itself. Yet, the story, driven by Keaton's performance, cannot be circumscribed solely to the travails of a struggling actor. Riggan's frustration and torment become a powerful ode to risk. In perhaps the most moving scene of the film,



Riggan attempts to strike up a friendly conversation with the fictionalized *New York Times* Theatre Editor, Tabatha Dickinson, whom he knows can ring the death knell of the production upon which he has bet everything. Dickinson rebukes his offering and chastises him for bastardizing art in his superhero past and asserting that he is merely a celebrity, not an actor. Riggan responds with a vicious tirade against her half-assed form of thoroughly removed criticism. “You risk nothing,” he concludes.

The scene exemplifies the struggle between those who perform and those who critique and how, despite the comparative ease of the latter’s task, all the odds of social acceptance seem to be stacked against the performer. The results of this dichotomy plague Riggan throughout, as he battles uphill to stake out a place for himself as an artist that exists outside of *Birdman*, a husk of a character that haunts his artistic consciousness.

In fact, this haunting materializes in the film as Riggan’s internal dialogue is consistently interrupted by the gravel-throated *Birdman* that appears both as a voice over and as a masked, winged superhero physically alongside him. The character that still gnaws at Riggan’s ego torments him with the assurance of international fame, fortune, and power. “Forget about the *Times*,” he implores when Riggan wakes up on a stoop after night of doubt-induced heavy drinking. “Come on. Stand up! So you’re not a great actor. Who cares? You’re much more than that. You tower over these other theater douchebags. You’re a movie star, man! You’re a global force!”

Riggan’s self-doubt is also exemplified earlier in the film as he quickly steps outside the theatre to smoke a cigarette and the heavy metal door slams behind him, catching his robe and leaving him nearly naked in the Times Square limelight. As he walks around the block to reenter the building, he must suffer the mob of *Birdman* fanatics in his underwear and without the protective coating of his former costume. Riggan bares all in one of the most illuminated areas in the world.

These personal struggles constitute Riggan’s larger struggle with his own sense of meaninglessness. Riggan knows that CGI-treated explosions and a boat load of money can’t solve this intractable problem. Despite the constant temptations from the voice of his former character, he opts to create on stage what Edward Norton’s character is ultimately concerned with, “complex human emotion.” The task proves difficult and for exactly this reason, the struggle is absorbing.

Yet this course of action is socially conditioned—not everyone can self-fund a theatre production to make themselves feel like they have a meaningful life. Combine this with *Birdman*’s earnest attempt to engage “complex human emotion,” and we are forced to ask what sort of mass

appeal *Birdman* has, if any at all. If the numbers are any clue, the answer is very little, and it seems that the people likely to watch *Birdman* don’t need to be convinced of the utter emptiness of the Fast and Furious franchise and its genre siblings. *Birdman* ranked seventy-eighth in box office sales for films released in 2014, falling far, far below titles like *Guardians of the Galaxy* in third, *Transformers: Age of Extinction* in seventh, and *The Amazing Spider-Man Two* in twelfth. The rest of the list isn’t pretty either. *Boyhood* ranked at one hundred, and even *Selma* came in at only at sixty-first, grossing about fifteen percent of what the latest installment of the *Hunger Games* raked in. These numbers lead us to confront the same seemingly eternal problem that Riggan also agonizes over throughout the duration of *Birdman*: is mass appeal a valid criterion by which to judge artistic production?

There is however, some evidence to indicate that the once childishly easy game of enticing viewers with shock and awe explosion porn is becoming increasingly difficult. The seduction of superhero and sequel-driven cinema is becoming less appealing and less financially feasible too. As David Christopher Bell wrote on Cracked.com, “In 2000, the average budget for a blockbuster was \$113 million. [In 2012] it was \$195 million. So it’s no surprise that 2015’s blockbuster [lineup] is going to bring that average well past \$200 million.” One would assume that profits are rising accordingly with investment, but as Bell notes, revenues from the *Jurassic Park*, *Terminator*, *Fantastic Four* and *Star Wars* series are all in decline.

Yet production companies continue to wantonly pour more and more money into these films in a last-ditch effort to save an industry of depreciating returns. *Avengers 2*, *Batman vs. Superman*, and *Star Wars VII* are all slated for release in 2015, among others. This bubble will eventually pop, but until it does, *Birdman* will stand as one piece of a larger counter-narrative that not only rejects the industry fetishism of blockbuster hits, but engages “complex human emotion”—a testament to what film can be when it’s not buried under the rubble of computer generated cities.

Unfortunately, *Birdman* ends on a weak note, and the ending deviates from the rest of the film in an egregious fashion. It betrays Riggan’s tormented yet compelling internal dialogue as well as the harsh, realist take on the production of art in the CGI era. Most of the film aims very high, but the ending makes a crash landing, leaving the viewer somewhere between confused and upset.

But despite the ending and a few plot devices that may appear gimmicky to some, *Birdman* as a whole is truly ambitious and it should be celebrated not only for its willingness to challenge the CGI-industrial-complex but to do so with such poise, vitality, and fervor. 🍷



# WARSCAPES

WARSCAPES is an independent online magazine that provides a lens into current conflicts across the world. WARSCAPES publishes fiction, poetry, reportage, interviews, book, film and performance reviews, art and retrospectives of war literature from the past fifty years.

The magazine is a tool for understanding complex political crises in various regions and serves as an alternative to compromised representations of those issues.

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# New Reps, Safer Sex, & IT Issues

## DSC Affiliate Organizations

EACH YEAR THE DSC makes decisions about the work of its affiliate organizations: *The Advocate*, OpenCUNY, the Adjunct Project, and Alumni and Fundraising Commission.

The DSC has convened an ad hoc committee to evaluate the process through which the work of affiliate organization leaders is reviewed and decisions to reappointment those leaders are made. The Committee consists of the Co-Chair for Student Affairs, Co-Chair for Business, Officer for Governance and Membership, several steering committee members, and affiliate members.

We met on 20 March and will be sharing our findings with the affiliates, opening it up to their suggestions, before forwarding our proposals to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

## Now with More Representation!

IN THE LAST FEW months the DSC has found representatives for previously unfilled seats. We are happy to welcome the following representatives.

- ▶ **Program Representatives:** Isaac Overcast, Biology; Monika Buczek, Biology; Maryam Ghaffair Saadat, Computer Science; T. Leo Shmitt, Linguistics; Brooke Prashker, Public Health; Chloe Asselin, URBA; Cassandra Barnes, MALS; Kevin Cadeno-Pacheco, MALS
- ▶ **At-Large Representatives:** Janet Werther, Theatre; Theodor Maghrak, Anthropology

## Very Email! Much Migration! Such Update!

THE DSC'S OFFICER FOR Library and Technology Hamad Sindhi continues

advocating for students in the new email migration and troubleshooting problems. Here are a few issues he has identified.

- ▶ **Upcoming Deadline:** Starting 1 June 2015, student and alumni will no longer be able to access our @gc.cuny.edu accounts, and all of our data on the old accounts will be deleted; redirection of email from the old accounts will continue.
- ▶ **Listserves:** if you signed up for GC listservs with your new email addresses and were rejected by the listserv system and you received an error report at @gradcenter.cuny.edu account, please forward that message to Hamad at library@cunydisc.org.
- ▶ **Password Reset:** To reset lost email passwords please continue to call the Helpdesk. Office 365 will be implementing a password reset system, an email with directions from IT is forthcoming.
- ▶ **Frequently Asked Questions:** The DSC asked IT for and has gotten new and improved FAQs and simpler step-by-step guides on how to transfer data from our old accounts.

## Student Tech Fee Committee Allocations for 2015-16

FACED WITH A BUDGET deduction because CUNY has elected to keep a larger portion of student technology fees, students on the committee had to balance the shortfall to ensure that ongoing services are maintained. The committee retained funds for IT

maintenance and library databases at current levels. However, there are no lo get sufficient funds to maintain off-campus printing equipment.

## University Student Senate Scholarships

APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN at <http://www.ussscunyc.org/scholarships.html> for undergraduates and graduates awards. Submissions are due 3 April 2015.

The USS Representative is working with the Scholarship Committee so that more doctoral students will be eligible.

## Let's Get It on, More Safely!

THE SAFER SEX INITIATIVE is now providing finger cots in the DSC office. These are the latest edition to our free barriers. If your program doesn't currently stock safer sex supplies but would like to, please contact Charlotte Thurston, Health and Wellness Officer. If your department helps distribute these materials but hasn't been refilled recently, feel free to pick them up.

We offer condoms, receptive condoms, dental dams, finger cots, lube, and more! Please also contact Charlotte if you need help coordinating a new "point person" responsible for supplying your program. The DSC also offers these materials in "discreet packaging" upon request.


## NYSHIP

IN ORDER TO ASSURE that all NYSHIP-eligible adjuncts retain their health insurance coverage during the 2015 Summer Semester, seven health insurance premium deductions will be automatically prepaid over the final

four pay dates in the spring semester (see information in the link below). Students can opt out of the prepayment if they are working as adjuncts during the summer period, if they are not returning to a NYSHIP-eligible position in the fall, or if they are graduating at the end of the Spring 2015 Semester.

If any of these situations applies to you, please fill out the appropriate forms and send them to NYSHIP Coordinator Scott Voorhees. Forms and additional information can be found online at <http://opencuny.org/healthdsc>.

Wellness Center Stop-gap Health Services provided through some

Institute for Family Health clinics continue while the GC's nurse practitioner is out on medical leave. Please provide the DSC feedback about your experiences with this stopgap measure. More information in online at <http://opencuny.org/healthdsc/temporary-off-site-wellness-center-student-health-service-options/>. 

## MIND GAMES ANSWERS

Check out the puzzle column on our Back Page.

Solution #3:	
<p>1) In order to reduce the number of cuts, we should bundle the largest number of pieces together at each step. The optimal method to achieve this is to cut the stick(s) in halves at each step. But what if the length is odd? In that case we simply cut the stick in approximate halves. Here are the steps where each piece is represented by its length:</p>	
Step	Stick(s) at each Step
1	(7, 7)
2	(4, 3), (4, 3)
3	(2, 2), (2, 1), (2, 1)
4	(1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1)
<p>Explanation</p> <p>Stick of length 14 is halved to generate two pieces of length 7</p> <p>Each piece of length 7 is cut into a piece of length 4 and a piece of length 3</p> <p>Each piece of length 4 is halved, and each piece of length 3 is approximately halved.</p> <p>Each piece of length 2 is halved.</p>	
<p>Thus the minimum number of cuts is 4.</p>	
<p>2) In this part since we have a constraint, we should expect to need a larger number of cuts to achieve the same task. In order to minimise the number of cuts, we should choose the longest pieces to bundle together and cut at each step. Here are the steps:</p>	
Step	Stick(s) at each Step
1	(7, 7)
2	(4, 3), (4, 3)
3	(2, 2), (2, 1), (2, 2), 3
4	(1, 1), (1, 1), 2, 1, 2, 2, (2, 1)
5	1, 1, 1, 1, (1, 1), (1, 1), (1, 1), 2, 1
6	1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, (1, 1), 1
<p>Explanation</p> <p>1 piece of length 14 was cut</p> <p>2 pieces of length 7 were cut</p> <p>3 pieces of length 4, 4, and 3 were cut</p> <p>3 pieces of length 3, 2, and 2 were cut</p> <p>2 pieces of length 2 were cut</p> <p>1 piece of length 2 was cut</p>	
<p>Thus the minimum number of cuts is 6.</p>	

Solution #1:	
<p>8 + 8 × 888 + 888 = 8000</p> <p>8 + 888 + 8 × 888 = 8000</p> <p>8 + 888 × 8 + 888 = 8000</p> <p>8 × 888 + 8 + 888 = 8000</p> <p>8 × 888 + 888 + 8 = 8000</p> <p>888 + 8 + 888 × 8 = 8000</p> <p>888 + 8 × 888 + 8 = 8000</p> <p>888 × 8 + 8 + 888 = 8000</p> <p>888 × 888 + 8 + 8 = 8000</p>	
Solution #2:	
<p>THE TWO MOST FREQUENT characters in the encrypted message are 'A' and 'N', each with a frequency of 3.</p> <p>► If the result of encrypting 'T' is 'N', then the offset is 20 (calculated by shifting from 'T' to 'Z', from 'Z' to 'A', and from 'A' to 'N'). If we decrypt a short word such as VM with this offset, we will obtain BS which is not a valid word. Decrypting the entire message is not necessary but will result in 'FGEHTTYR VF GUR YNJ BS TEBJGU'.</p> <p>► If the result of encrypting 'T' is 'A', then the offset is 7. If we decrypt VM with this offset, we will obtain OF which is a valid word. Decrypting the entire message will result in 'STRUGGLE IS THE LAW OF GROWTH'.</p>	

### #1: Insert Operations

INSERT ADDITIONS (+) AND multiplications (×) between eight instances of 8 to obtain a result of 8000.

8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8

If you figure out one of the solutions then try and find all twelve! Note that it is not necessary to insert an operation between every pair of digits above.

### #2: Decrypt the Message

A SHORT MESSAGE HAS been encrypted by shifting each letter by a specific number (i.e. an offset) in the alphabet. Examples of such an encryption are as follows:

- ▶ if every letter of 'ABC DE' is shifted by an offset of 2, the encrypted message will be 'CDE FG'.
- ▶ if every letter of 'AYZ' is shifted by an offset of 3, the encrypted message will be 'DBC'.

If the encrypted message is 'ZAY-BNNSL PZ AOL SHD VM NYVDAO', can you find the original message?

Hint: one of the more frequent characters in this message is T.

### #3: Cutting a Stick

A STICK THAT IS 14 units long needs to be cut into 14 pieces with equal lengths per single unit.

- 1) What is the minimum number of cuts required if the blade is sharp enough to cut several stick pieces simultaneously?
- 2) What if the blade is only sharp enough to cut at most 3 stick pieces simultaneously?

**solutions on page 47**



↑ REPEAT (N+1) ↓

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New website URL! Go to <http://opencuny.org/theadvocate>  
Guess what, we're even on Twitter! Follow @GC\_Advocate