



Krugman and  
CUNY (p. 8)

# The End of Morality

Is Regime Change in Ukraine the Latest Sign  
of “Spiritual Death” in Modern Society?



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**Medgar Evers and the Demilitarization of CUNY** (p. 16)

**New Ideas on Reparations from the Caribbean** (p. 22)

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# An Open Letter to the GC Community

TO THE GRADUATE CENTER Community,

The *Advocate*, after a successful tenure under James Hoff, Michael Busch, and Christopher Silsby, has a new editorial staff. Gordon Barnes, Francisco Fortuño Bernier, and Cristina Pérez Díaz now serve as the central editorial staff, along with Mark Wilson who is staying on as the layout editor. As with any changing of the guard, we endeavor to improve upon our predecessors. With this in mind, we hope to advance the *Advocate* in a few different ways.

It is our goal to maintain the political trajectory of the paper so that it is in the interest to broad layers of the Graduate Center Community specifically and CUNY students, staff, and faculty more generally. With this in mind, we hope to diversify the types of articles that we publish in an effort to reach even more members of our desired audience. We use the terminology “diversify” in the broadest sense. From a social point of view, we mean diversifying the paper in a way congruent with the experience of some of the most marginalized groups in New York City and the United States as a whole. Diversity in the abstract, as a bureaucratic checkbox is a fiction that must be superseded by diversity as an actual social and political linkage between the academy and society. This is the perspective from which we will approach work at the *Advocate* and towards which we will strive.

Ideally, we would like to have myriad political views represented in the paper and foster a space for debate around issues affecting not only CUNY, but also the political and cultural stakes we all face in life. Furthermore, we seek to include contributions from people outside of the humanities and social sciences, so that those interested in the natural and formal sciences will have an outlet as well. As you will see in this issue, we have included an article from Greg Olmschenk on exoplanets and the potentiality of extraterrestrial life. We want there to be continued contributions from people in the sciences on topics that animate and motivate them and are keen to incorporate this form of writing in the future.

We also encourage people of color, women, LGBTQ and other members of underrepresented groups in the academy to publish in our paper. The epigram on the first

page of our issues reads “Never Submit, Contribute!” and we are optimistic that this call has not been lost on the Graduate Center community. This is at once a request for both continued and new contributions, and a call for increased engagement with the paper. We also desire to engage the DSC chartered organizations more effectively and provide them a platform to reach not only their constituents, but all of the Graduate Center as well. We therefore ask that the leadership, as well as the membership, of chartered organizations at the GC utilize the *Advocate* to publicize their agendas. This can take the form of articles both regular and sporadic, though we prefer the former. We also appeal to the chartered organizations to use the paper to advertise the various events they are sponsoring, hosting, or otherwise involved with.

With the prospect of opening up the paper to more individuals, we prompt our readers to draft articles in response to published pieces they may find to be fallacious or take exception to. Polemical and dialectical articles are thus not only welcomed, but encouraged as well. Well-measured and cogent counter arguments will benefit the paper as well as our readership in offering multiple views on the same issues or questions. The article by James Hoff and William Blueher, while not explicitly polemical, can be viewed as such a desired piece as it confronts Arun Gupta’s analysis of the 15 NOW campaign in the December 2013 issue.

As part of the move towards diversification, we have been able to secure Rhone Fraser to draft a column entitled “Edifying Debate” for each of our issues in the foreseeable future. His article in this issue on the linkages of US capitalists, public schools, and the Ukrainian crisis brings together divergent, though not disparate, strands of thinking that we hope are as provocative they are illuminating. In the spirit of building a culture of debate, we encourage each and every one of our readers to contribute their work, their thoughts, their ideas, and their knowledge for the benefit of the Graduate Center community. We have also included original puzzles, developed by Maryam Ghaffari Saadat, which we plan to be an entertaining and challenging feature of subsequent issues.

In addition to these changes regarding the print ver-



# 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)
- First Person essays on teaching at CUNY for our regular “Dispatches from the Front” column
- First person essays on life as a graduate student for our “Graduate Life” column
- Feature “magazine style” articles on the arts, politics, culture, NYC, etc.
- Provocative and insightful analyses of international, national, and local politics for our Political Analysis column
- 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 [gbarnes@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gbarnes@gc.cuny.edu).

sion, we also wish to revitalize the *Advocate* website. As some of our readers are aware, the website was attacked and essentially collapsed. It currently exists as a shell of its former self, more so a blog than a useful website, on [OpenCUNY.org](http://OpenCUNY.org). We plan to work with OpenCUNY in the coming months to remedy this problem and have the website fully operational by the start of the Fall 2014 semester. Once the website is properly functioning, we plan to expand our reach beyond the Graduate Center to a wider readership. The editorial staff is also committed to improving and optimizing the ways in which the *Advocate* navigates social media networks, expressly in relation to Facebook and Twitter.

In addition to revitalizing the online presence of the paper, it is our ambition to eventually reach outside of the Graduate Center. We plan to resume deliveries of the paper to the various senior CUNY colleges throughout New York City in an effort to remain in dialogue with colleagues and constituents who may share our interests but do not have the same access to the Graduate Center.

It is our goal that in the near future that all of the articles in the *Advocate* will be sourced from Graduate Center students, staff, and faculty. We currently have to seek columns from outside our academic community, from sources such as journalist Amy Goodman and others in order to make due. We would rather have the *Advocate* serve as the recognizable voice of the Graduate Center community.

This is a call to arms; join us in stimulating a robust culture of discussion and debate at the Graduate Center. We ask you to contribute, we ask you to talk with us and let us know the direction you want the *Advocate* to take, we ask you to read and disseminate the paper and we ask you to be activist-scholars. This is, after all, your paper, it is your bully pulpit; we encourage you to take advantage of it.

With Warm Regards,

The *Advocate* Editorial Staff ☺

# **PUBLIC HEARING ON FORMER CIA CHIEF & WAR COMMANDER GEN. DAVID PETRAEUS**



**JOIN CUNY STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF FOR A  
PUBLIC HEARING TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES AGAINST  
FORMER GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup>**

**6PM TO 8PM**

**CUNY GRAD CENTER**

**365 5<sup>TH</sup> AVE, ROOM 5414**

CUNY students, faculty and staff, together with concerned citizens, have come together to hold a public hearing to investigate charges that former General David Petraeus was responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity as Iraq/Afghanistan



war commander and former CIA chief. The hearing will discuss definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and consider evidence regarding Petraeus' actions.

Why is this hearing being held? Because beginning last fall, CUNY's Board of Trustees hired ex-general Petraeus to teach a course titled "Are We On The Threshold of a North American Decade?" at the Macaulay Honors College. Is his appointment part of an increasing militarization of CUNY, and if so, what does this mean for those who study and work at the City University? The public will consider the facts of the case.

Labor donated

# Albany Kills Dream, Shafts Libraries

## Last Call to Fight for the Budget We Deserve

THE ANNUAL CUNY AT the Council advocacy day, organized by the PSC and CUNY student groups, is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7. They need us students there. Although Mayor de Blasio has made CUNY a pillar of his plan to reduce economic inequality in the city, the members of the city council who will make the decision concerning our budget do not know the daily struggles of our institution. Thus, the presence of CUNY staff and faculty at this meeting is essential in order to offer our firsthand knowledge of the most urgent problems to the lawmakers who are about to decide upon the future of our professional careers and that of the following generations of students attending the only public

university in the city.

The meeting represents an extraordinary chance to embrace our civic power. Join the PSC and student groups on May 7 and let's try to create a better future for CUNY. Meetings will take place in the morning and early afternoon at the Council members' offices at 250 Broadway. You can sign up at <http://psc-cuny.org/CUNYatCouncil2014>.

## Immigrants Denied the Chance of Public Higher Education

NEW YORK IS ONE of the cosmopolitan cities par excellence. The word "cosmopolitan," embraced during the European Enlightenment to characterize the ideal of a political order where all men and nations have developed to their higher degree the potentialities of rationality, and thus

attained a civic and just association with one another, seems to have lost today its highly political nuance. We say that New York is cosmopolitan because it houses millions of people from many different countries. And the adjective has a fancy taste to it. Indeed, what it means is that the city is characterized by migration. That is, this is a city of immigrants. Migration is, indeed, representative of the life of this city, and the source of its cultural richness. It has always been. But, can we really call this city cosmopolitan and make justice to some of its most essential powers, like diversity and dynamism, when we take out of the word all its political implications? Can we really talk about cosmopolitanism without the fundamental presence of equality and justice for the members of this community?

Of course education, higher education most of all, and particularly public higher education, is the quintessential key to equality and justice. In a city of immigrants, one of the greatest challenges is to integrate all the disparate members of the community by providing equal opportunities for their development. The City University of New York, as the university of all New Yorkers, has played an important role in this process of integration. In fact, immigrants make up 41% of CUNY's student body. The opportunity for higher education is the opportunity for immigrants to move forward and attain a more secure position in the country where their families have come, struggling for a better life. And they deserve the



chance at a better life that CUNY has to offer, regardless of their immigration status.

Now, if we take into account that many immigrant families, precisely because of the difficulties involved within the process of migration, belong to the lower classes, it is clear that for this opportunity of development through access to higher education to be real, immigrants need to have the same financial aid opportunities as legal New Yorkers. And this is the issue the New York State Dream Act aimed to resolve.

Last month, the New York State Assembly passed a bill, known as Tuition Assistance Program, that would allow undocumented students who were brought to New York before the age of 16 and have graduated from a New York high school or high school equivalency program to qualify for all state financial aid available to citizens and permanent residents. The Assembly estimated that this would cost about \$27 million next year, and that no citizens would lose any aid. Immigrant families would also be allowed to participate in the 529 tax-free college savings plan, which would help them invest their own money to cover tuition.

Hope on the bill grew stronger as State Senator Bill Perkins announced on March 7 his support of the NYS Dream Act. Senator Perkins joined the majority of State Assembly members and most Democrats in the State Senate in backing the legislation. Governor Andrew Cuomo had already asserted in February that should the Dream Act reach his desk he would sign it. He didn't follow through with his promise as a handful of Republican senators were able to stop it. On the evening of March 17 the NYS Dream Act failed by two



votes. Thirty two votes were needed to pass the bill, thirty senators voted for it and twenty-nine voted against it.

In the words of Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC, “New York State had a chance to make history today, to show that we are still this country’s great gateway for generations of immigrants. But the Senate Republicans made sure that didn’t happen. Their vote against the Dream Act denied thousands of students the opportunity to afford a college education and make their full contribution to the future of this state. As professors and staff at CUNY, we know that these brave students are among the most conscientious we will ever teach. It is a travesty to deny them a meaningful chance for an education. I am ashamed that the Senate Republicans made the Statue of Liberty turn her back on New York Harbor.”

### **Budget Cuts to Libraries Will Affect CUNY GC**

NEW YORK GOVERNOR ANDREW Cuomo’s attempt to cut library funding in this state is directly linked to

the Graduate Center’s resources. In Cuomo’s most recent executive budget, library aid is to be cut by \$4 million, a 4.7% reduction. This proposal includes cuts to state funding for the New York Public Library, allocated on behalf of CUNY.

Despite the fact that the NYPL is a crucial research resource for CUNY students, funding in support of this collaboration has actually declined in the past years. The NYPL–CUNY link is increasingly important, as can be seen from the fact that CUNY graduate students and faculty account for almost half of all the registered users of the Manhattan Research Library Initiative (MaRLI), which allows scholars to benefit from a collaborative effort amongst New York universities and is coordinated by the NYPL. Furthermore, CUNY scholars also account for almost a third of all users the Schwartzman Building’s Wertheim Study, which provides researchers with direct and extensive access to the main branch’s resources.

NYPL state funding on behalf of CUNY was \$300,000 lower than in

**State Aid to NYPL for CUNY Material  
(Millions)**



2007. At its lowest, in 2011, it was only \$1.56 million. Despite a slight increase in the intervening years, the allocation has once again continued to be reduced. There does not seem to be any prospects for full funding on behalf of CUNY, which would entail raising the state contribution to the NYPL budget to \$2 million.

Throughout the rest of the state, library-funding levels are at the same levels they were almost two decades ago. A New York Library Association petition letter to the State Senate points out that not only is funding for libraries at the same level as it was in 1997, but it is also \$20 million under what it should be according to the state's education laws.. The state of New York has provided funding for the New York Public Library on behalf of CUNY since 1968.

## Celebrity Appointment Actually Relevant

IN A SURPRISING MOVE, considering recent celebrity appointments of the military kind, CUNY has recently been in the news due to the appointment of renowned Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, professor in economics and international affairs at Princeton University. Professor Krugman will come to the Graduate Center as professor in the Economics PhD. Program and scholar at the

Luxembourg Income Study Center, which he has described as a crucial research center for issues relating to public policy and income inequality. Krugman will also be nominated for a position as distinguished professor. The economist has also stated that he is endeared to the idea of working at a “great public university,” as he termed the Graduate Center in his announcement.

Apart from his important academic work on international economics, particularly trade theory and economic geography, Krugman has

become famous in recent years as one of the most renowned public intellectuals in the United States, writing from a liberal and broadly Keynesian perspective on political and economic topics.

Krugman, who has also been affiliated with the London School of Economics, maintains a widely read blog, “The Conscience of a Liberal,” and is an op-ed column contributor at *The New York Times*. Despite his fame as a liberal and Democratic Party aligned thinker, in 2008 Krugman accepted the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science awarded to him by the monarchically aligned Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences “for his analysis of trade patterns and location of economic activity.”

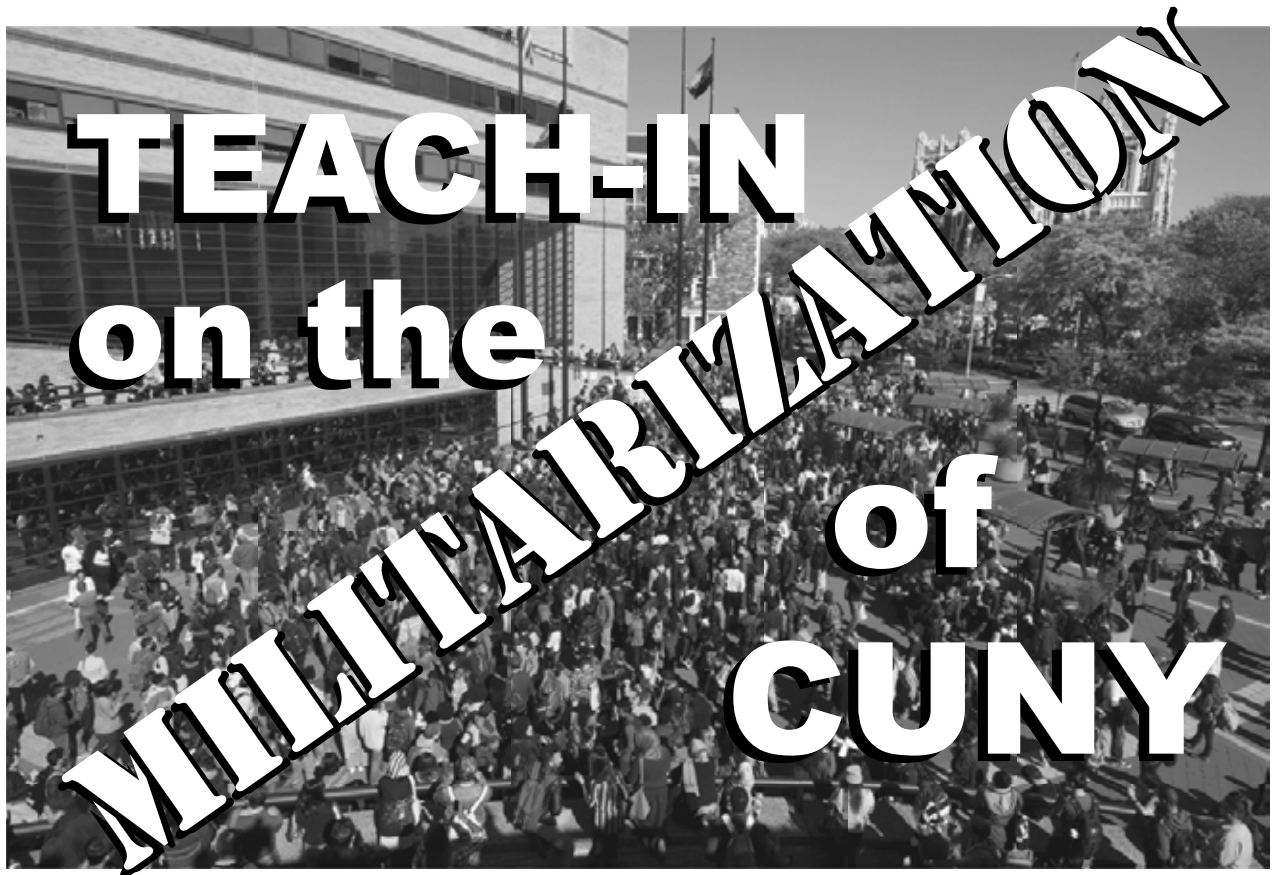
In the late 1970s, Krugman also pioneered academic work on the topic of interstellar trade at near light-speed, extending the theory of interplanetary trade and proving two useless but valid theorems. ☹



Above: Paul Krugman speaking at the Graduate Center in 2013.



**The Hunter College chapter of the  
Professional Staff Congress  
invites students, faculty and staff to a**



**Speakers will include:**

Prof. Tami Gold – Film & Media; Chair, Hunter College PSC

“How military recruiters target students,” with clips from her film *Another Brother*

Prof. Marcia Esparza – Director, Historical Memory Project, John Jay College

“Militarization, war and genocide in Guatemala”

Prof. Jay Arena – College of Staten Island

“Organizing against ROTC's reinstatement”

CUNY student activists speak out:

Amanda Fox-Rouch, Hunter College, Internationalist Club

Sharmin Hossain, Hunter College, Ya-Ya Network

Tafadar Sourov, CCNY, Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee

“Petraeus, ROTC, and the campaign against militarization of CUNY”

**Wednesday, April 2, 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Hunter North Room 506**

# Gay Activists Protest St. Patrick's Day Parade Ban

camilo gomez

AS THE ST. PATRICK'S Day parade made its way down Fifth Avenue Monday, March 17, members of the Irish Queers lined up along the route between 56<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Street to protest because the parade's organizers would not let them participate.

"I'm a gay man. I'm an Irish man," said activist Brendan Fay, 55, organizer of the alternative St. Pat's for All parade in Queens, which took place two weeks prior. "And I'm here on Fifth Avenue, of course, excluded from the largest Irish celebration in the world."

Mayor Bill de Blasio, who marched in Queens, did not participate in Monday's parade on Fifth Avenue, the first time a mayor of New York did not march since 1991, because of the parade ban on gay and lesbian groups. LGBT activists hailed the mayor's gesture—and pushed for the city's police and fire departments to not participate either. The city agencies, however, marched and that's why the Irish Queers and other activists protested along the sidelines of Monday's parade.

"We're glad that the mayor is not marching," said Emmaia Gelman, 39, an organizer of Irish Queers, the Friday before the parade.

The Rude Mechanical Orchestra, a six-member marching band, accompanied the protesters with drums and wind instruments, while the latter cried slogans such as "Cops out, queers in."

The parade is considered to be private, even though it is conducted through one of Manhattan's most iconic avenues. Thousands of onlookers watch the parade each year. 🍀





# U.S. Sailors and Marines Allege Fukushima Radiation Sickness

amy goodman

THREE YEARS HAVE PASSED since the earthquake and tsunami that caused the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. The tsunami's immediate death toll was more than 15,000, with close to 3,000 still missing. Casualties are still mounting, though, both in Japan and much farther away. The impact of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown on health and the environment is severe, compounded daily as radioactive pollution continues to pour from the site, owned by the Tokyo



Electric Power Company, TEPCO.

In an unusual development, more than 100 U.S. Marines and Navy sailors have joined a class action suit, charging TEPCO with lying about the severity of the disaster as they were rushing to the scene to provide humanitarian assistance. They were aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan and other vessels traveling with the Reagan, engaged in humanitarian response to the disaster. The response was dubbed "Operation Tomodachi," meaning "Operation Friendship."

Lt. Steve Simmons is one of the plaintiffs. Before Fukushima, he was physically robust. Eight months later, he suffered inexplicable health problems. He said on the "Democracy Now!" news hour, that, while driving to work: "I blacked out and drove my truck up on a curb. Following

that, I started coming down with what maybe I thought was just maybe a flu, started running fevers. I dropped about 20 to 25 pounds unexpectedly and then started experiencing night sweats, difficulty sleeping." He was hospitalized three times. Doctors dismissed his concerns about possible radiation poisoning. "Three days later, after I was discharged, I was back in the hospital because my lymph nodes started swelling, and still running constant fevers as high as 102.9." In April 2012, his legs buckled under him while he was hospitalized. He has relied on a wheelchair ever since. He will be allowed to "medically retire" this coming April.

This is the second attempt to sue TEPCO on behalf of these sailors and Marines. The first lawsuit had eight plaintiffs and was dismissed for technical reasons based on the court's lack of jurisdiction. "By June of 2013, we had 51 sailors and Marines who had contacted us with various illnesses," lead attorney Charles Bonner explained, "including thyroid cancers, testicular cancers, brain can-

cers, unusual uterine problems, excessive uterine bleeding, all kinds of gynecological problems, problems that you do not see in a population of 20-year-olds, 22-year-olds, 23-year-olds, even 35-year-olds. ... So, now we have filed a class action for approximately a hundred sailors." As news of the lawsuit spreads, many more will likely join in. The USS Reagan had at least 5,500 people on board when off the coast of Japan.

You might wonder why the group doesn't sue their employer, the U.S. Navy, as well. "The responsible party for these young sailors' injury is the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the fourth-largest power company in the world," Bonner explained. "Tokyo Electric Power Company failed to tell the public, including the Navy, that they were in an active meltdown. They had a triple meltdown

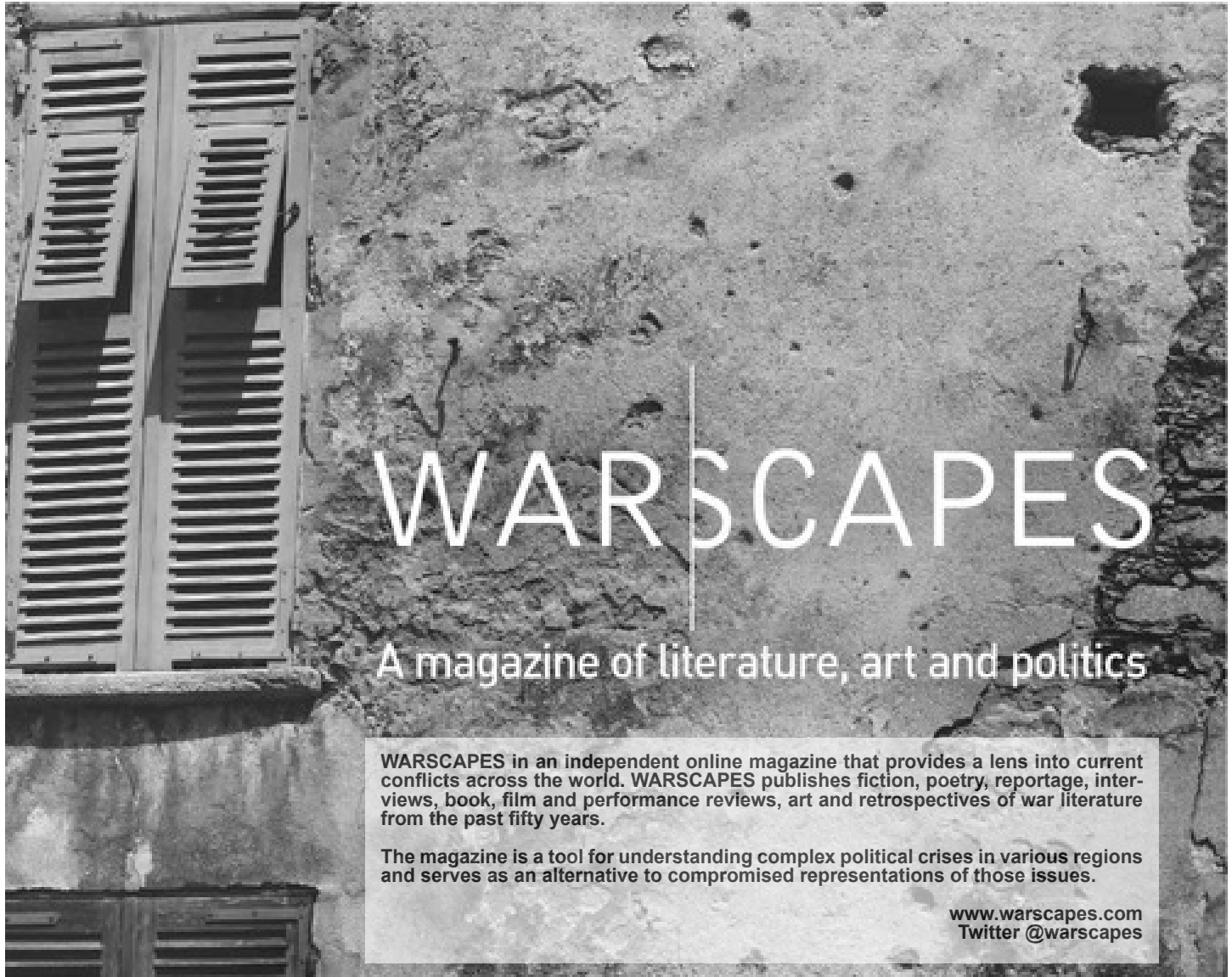
following the earthquake and the tsunami. They didn't have batteries. They didn't have backup power. They didn't have any kind of auxiliary water supply to cool these reactors down."

I interviewed Naoto Kan in his offices in Tokyo last January. He was the prime minister of Japan at the time of the disaster. Kan immediately set up a control center to manage the nuclear crisis. Present at the center was a TEPCO executive. Kan told me, "From what I was hearing from the headquarters of TEPCO, and in particular from Mr. Takeguro, who was the former vice president, was, almost no accurate information was being conveyed about what was actually the situation on site." Frustrated with the stonewalling, Kan flew to the plant to discuss the situation with workers on site. Once staunchly pro-nuclear, Kan now advocates for a nuclear-free Japan.

The ongoing nuclear disaster at Fukushima should

serve as a warning to the world. Instead of following the wisdom of Naoto Kan, President Barack Obama is committing public funds to build the first new nuclear power plants in the United States in more than 30 years. In the wake of Fukushima, Obama's Nuclear Regulatory Commission put out talking points designed to diminish growing public concern with the safety of nuclear power plants in the U.S. NBC News obtained the NRC's internal emails instructing staff to downplay safety risks. U.S. nuclear plants are not safe. The U.S. sailors and Marines of Operation Tomodachi deserve their day in court. The U.S. public deserves an honest assessment of the grave risks of nuclear power. Ⓐ

Denis Moynihan contributed research to this column. Amy Goodman is the host of "Democracy Now!," a daily international TV/radio news hour airing on more than 1,200 stations in North America. She is the co-author of "The Silenced Majority," a *New York Times* best-seller.



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A magazine of literature, art and politics

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# Women in the U.S. Workforce

## Much to Celebrate, Much to Do

**cristina pérez díaz**

**M**UCH HAS CHANGED FOR women since admirable female workers began to demand justice for their gender at the end of the nineteenth century. Over the course of the last century, women have been able to gain a social voice through intense struggle in political, cultural, and domestic spheres. Today, women constitute approximately 47% of the total workforce and 44% of unionized workers in the United States. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have produced an impressive number of female intellectuals, artists, scientists, and political leaders. In demanding and gaining the right to vote and to participate in higher education, women became for the first time, recognized agents of history, actively influencing the institutions in which they worked and studied, the politics of this country, and global history. The old romantic ideal of the shadow-woman whose role was to be the support and *sine qua non* for every successful man is far from being the general case. Women are as successful protagonists as men. In just a century, women have gained a position in society that had never existed prior, both in regards to the United States and older societies. Thus, when we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>, we all have a whole lot to celebrate.

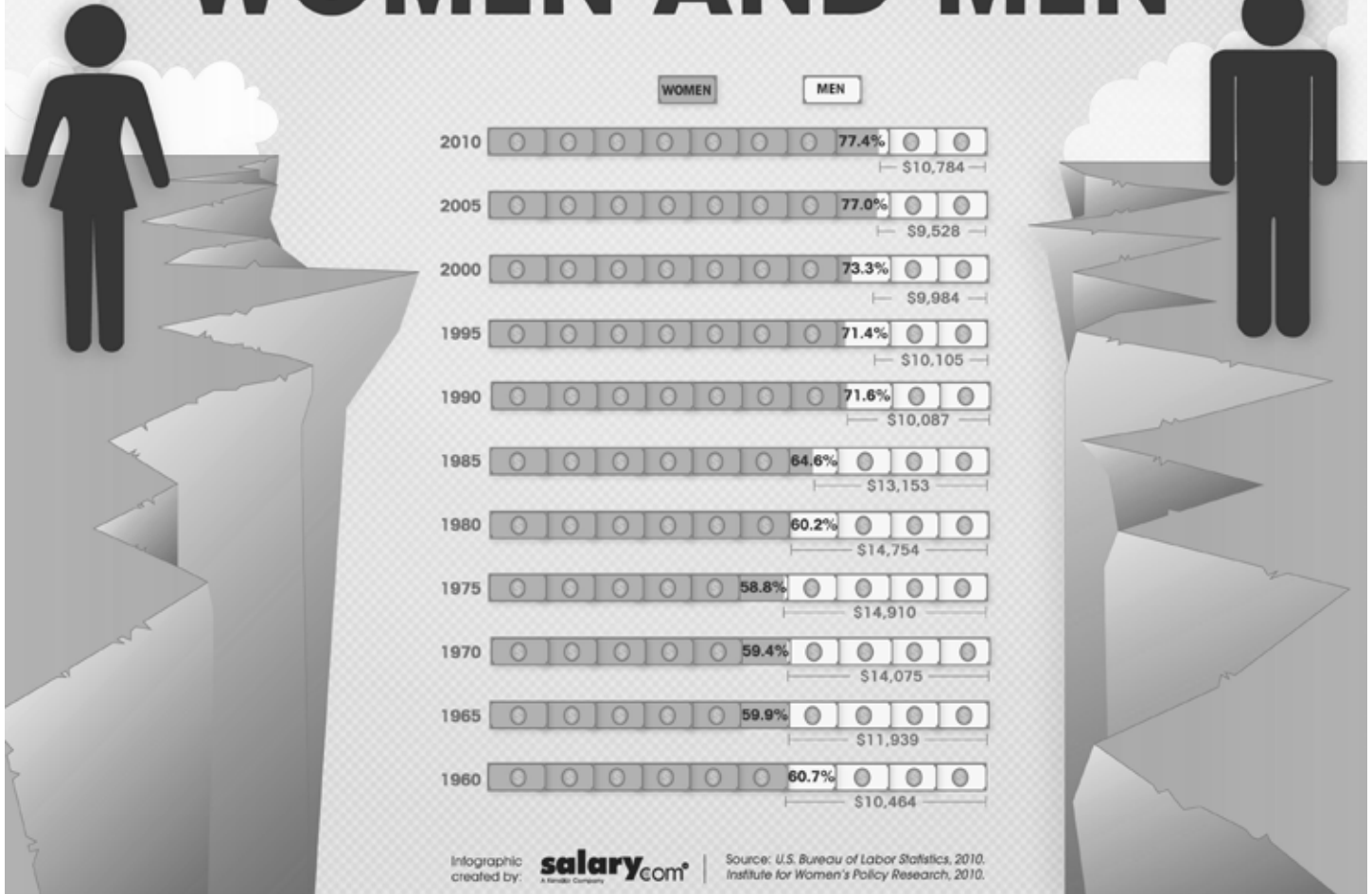
There is no doubt that in many ways this epoch is the best time to be a woman, particularly if we think in terms of the open possibility of being both an active citizen and

It is an historical  
duty to take this  
celebration as a  
reminder of all that  
yet needs to be done.

the masters of our own persona. The numbers confirm it. Women have become ever present in higher education. For instance, of high school graduates in 2011, more women than men enrolled in college (72% and 65% respectively). Of women 25 to 64 years old, 37% hold college degrees, compared with 11% in 1970, and only about 7% of women have less than a high school diploma, down from 34% in 1970. As a result, women have also empowered themselves in the household. In 2010, working wives contributed 38% to their family incomes, up about 11% points from 1970, when wives' earnings accounted for 27% of total family income. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands has also grown. In 1987 18% of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses, in 2010 the proportion was 29%. As a result of the persistent demands for gender equality, many governmental institutions and laws exist today which protect women's rights and there are an even larger amount of non-governmental institutions driven by activists who do not put their guard down, on the contrary, they continue to advance this struggle for recognition.

However, there is still an income gap based on gender. In 2011, women who worked full time in waged and salaried jobs had median weekly earnings of \$684. This represented 82% of men's median weekly earnings (\$832). 27% of employed women worked part-time (that is, 35 hours or less per week), whereas only 11% of employed men worked part time. Interestingly enough, women accounted for 51% of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of total employment (47%).

# EARNINGS GAP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN



The gender issue is also bounded to racial differences. In 2011, employed Asian and White women were more likely (44% and 42% respectively) to work in higher paying management, professional, and related occupations than were Black (34%) and Hispanic (25%) women. Meanwhile, Hispanic (31%) and Black (28%) women were more likely than White (20%) and Asian (22%) women to work in service occupations. The working-poor rate (the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force) was higher for women than for men—7.6%, compared with 6.7%. Black and Hispanic women were significantly more likely than their White or Asian counterparts to be among the working poor. The working-poor rates for Black and Hispanic women were 14.5% and 13.8%, respectively, compared with the 6.6% and 5.2% figures corresponding to White and Asian women.

To celebrate all the successes of women is very important, especially because it is an historical responsibility not

to assume that women's current situation is "natural," but rather to understand that it is the result of a long struggle waged by the restless might of very many admirable groups and individuals. Moreover, it is an historical duty to take this celebration as a reminder of all that yet needs to be done. This is a relentless fight and we are always facing a giant, history itself, with entrenched understanding of gender and social roles. The ideology that dominated the Western mindset for so many centuries still operates. Therefore, we cannot assume that because women are born with equal rights that the fight is over. On the contrary, it is our task to continue detecting all those places, open or hidden, where the old ideology imposes itself in the form of tradition, with all the authority that custom carries along. The historic task of women is to tirelessly exercise the critical eye, and to further develop their role as agents of history. We cannot forget that there is still much to be done. ♀

# CUNY Gives ROTC the Boot

conor tomás reed

ON FEBRUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>, MEDGAR Evers College's highest governing body, the College Council, voted by majority to remove the U.S. military's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program from its campus. This marks the first reversal of the City University New York administration's invitation for ROTC to re-appear in 2012, after having been unwelcome at the university for forty years. On March 19<sup>TH</sup>, Medgar Evers president Rudy Crew affirmed in a public announcement, "The College Council vote is binding."

The ROTC has been criticized by a wide layer of CUNY students, faculty, and staff, since it was first re-established as a pilot program at York College, and then in 2013 spread to City College and Medgar Evers. This recent anti-ROTC vote occurs in the context of a wave of dissent last semester against the university's turn toward militarization. Evidence for this new trend includes former general David Petraeus' teaching appointment at Macaulay Honors College, the seizure of the Guillermo Morales/Assata Shakur Community Center at city College, the proposed "Policy on Expressive Conduct" to stifle university expression, the rise of Department of Defense weapons and intelligence research projects, and escalated CUNY security and NYPD repression with the arrests and suspension of student leaders and alumni involved in agitating for justice.

In the face of this surprise ambush of the military industrial complex at CUNY, particular efforts to re-remove ROTC have remarkably intensified within the last several months. A September 2013 town hall at the College of Staten Island successfully resisted the implementation of an ROTC program. This served as a model for a mid-February town hall at Medgar Evers College that gathered people from across CUNY to hear anti-war veterans and audience participants debate pro-ROTC speakers. This event was strategically timed to occur before the College Council vote. Members of CUNY opposed to the militarization of the university have begun to coordinate more town halls at Hunter College, and crucially, at City College and York, where the faculty is mapping out governance procedures that could also reverse ROTC's presence.

In addition, a newly formed Professional Staff Congress (PSC) committee on CUNY's militarization has de-

veloped a solidarity network for these future town halls, drafted a union resolution proposal to oppose ROTC with words and actions, and will soon submit a FOIL request on exchanges between the CUNY administration, the U.S. military, and the American Enterprise Institute. The AEI's 2011 report, "Underserved: A Case Study of ROTC in New York City," urged the ROTC to orchestrate a large-scale recruitment campaign at CUNY, in part by installing such "warrior-scholars" as David Petraeus in high-profile teaching positions.

These ongoing anti-militarization efforts across CUNY can counteract the ROTC's aim to "diversify" the management of state violence, but only if our communities more widely take a stand against militarism. A vibrant CUNY movement against militarism would, in fact, be a vibrant city-wide, even global, movement against militarism. We--the nation's largest urban university, where half of all NYC college students attend, with half a million students and tens of thousands of academic workers, and whose students are mostly working-class multilingual women of color from immigrant families--are both the U.S. military's best recruitment dream and worst anti-imperialist nightmare. Many in our CUNY community come from the dozens of countries where the U.S. military maintains over 1,000 bases, including Central American and Middle Eastern countries upon which David Petraeus' scorched earth policies inflicted untold levels of violence.

In a university setting that advocates critical and independent thinking, safe learning spaces, and an internationally scoped dialogue, the decision by a relatively tiny group of faculty and administrators to welcome the U.S. military is both deplorable and embarrassing. ROTC officers themselves refer to recruiting areas as "hunting grounds." Their frequently lauded scholarships are based on "merit," not financial need, for only US citizens aged 17-26, who must serve in the military after graduating or pay the money back. CUNY ROTC colonel Juan Howie even admitted in an April 2013 interview in *The Atlantic*, "People in those communities perceive the military as an organization that will send their children off to war... No one wants to have their children sent off to war." "Those communities" of ours in CUNY, through creatively sustained activities against militarization, both inside and outside the classroom, can potentially dissuade other universities from accepting similar marching orders. 🌐



# Copyright and Democracy

## The Case for Protecting Intellectual Property in the Digital Age

**eric bayruns**

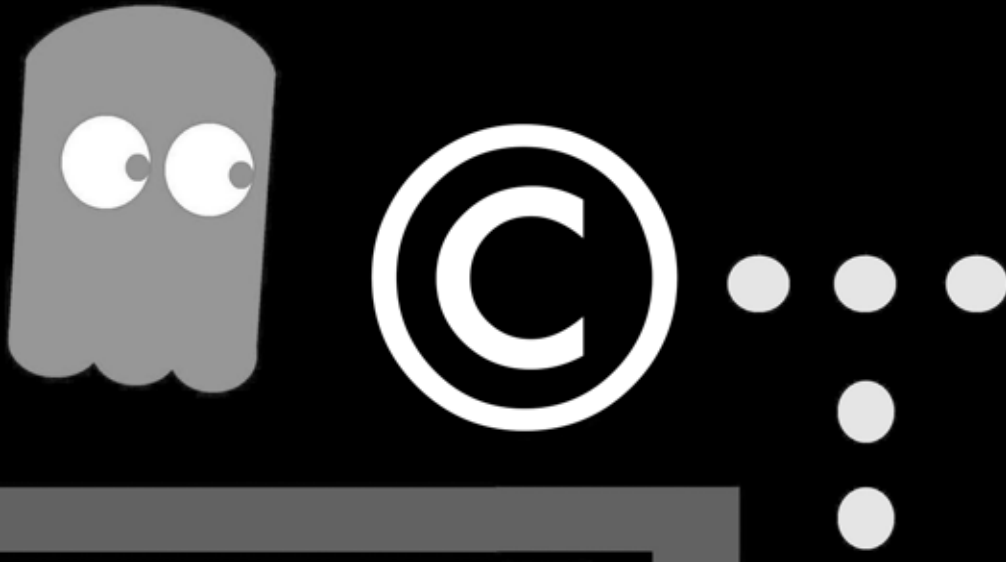
THERE ARE THOSE WHO argue that information ought to be free. This argument is a commonplace in our digital society. Roughly, the argument hinges on the idea that owning information is categorically different from owning material objects. For example, owning a car differs from owning a novel that one has composed. This argument has a strong intuitive pull. It just seems that one's claim to own ones and zeroes differs starkly from owning material objects. This pull seems particularly strong in our digital era, where books and films can be downloaded instantaneously, whereas material objects cannot. Furthermore, those who argue that information ought to be free seem to trade on the moral notion that it is wrong to keep information from those that need it. In other words, that if information can be transmitted at seemingly no cost via the internet, then it is immoral to keep it from those who want it.

I argue that intellectual property, particularly copyright, is morally justifiable. There are many ways to argue this. One form of this argument appeals to the moral right that the author of an intellectual work (for instance, films, literature, or music) possess; this formation trades on the Lockean notion that if one mixes one's labor with an object then one can claim ownership over it, it becomes a property. This argument has a strong intuitive pull as well. If for instance, I built a chair, it means that I have expended a certain amount of energy in creating it. Also, I have improved the material with which I fashioned the chair. Thus, I have a right to the control of the chair. Similarly, if I write a novel, then I have expended energy to create it. I have pulled from the general pool of information available

to me to create a novel. Thus, I have a right to control the novel. It seems intuitive that, if I spend time and energy in creating an object, then I should have more say over its use than someone who has not spent time and energy to create it. Despite this argument's appeal, it requires explaining what a moral right to an object is. Furthermore, one must explain what a right is. But these are tasks that I will not take up here.

A second argument is consequentialist. Democracies that grant copyright have better outcomes than those that do not. Copyright entails better outcomes because it is necessary for voters to obtain information regarding how they will vote. In order to vote, voters require information about the government. In large-scale democracies, news organizations provide such information to voters. In a capitalist society, news organizations require copyright to exist. Copyright is necessary for voters to receive information. Thus, copyright is a necessary condition for large-scale democracies. Because large-scale democracies contain complex bureaucracies and exist across vast distances, news organizations are necessary. A US citizen that goes into a voting booth and votes makes a decision between options A, B, C and so on. In voting, we take for granted that we have an array of information about all of the options. News organizations allegedly provide this information.

Furthermore, news organizations employ reporters or news gatherers that give up their rights as the authors of their work in exchange for a salary. Thus, the news organization becomes, in effect, the author of the work. That is, the news organization has rights to the work as though it created it. This right, or copyright, is important for the



news organization because it gives it recourse to at least recoup its investment in gathering news. This recourse follows from the rights awarded to those who hold copyright under United States law.

I am using the United States as an example but copyright law more or less functions the same way in most countries, prohibiting unauthorized use of copyright holders' works without permission. When one buys a newspaper or purchases a novel, one is obtaining permission to use or access a particular work. Newspapers would not exist if they did not have copyright to their works. That newspapers have been going out of business at alarming rate since increasing levels of internet access is evidence of the importance of copyright to their survival. Newspapers have historically received income from the purchase of physical newspapers. The shift in the news consuming public from print to the internet caused a massive decline in revenue because the majority of news that is consumed on the internet is not paid for. Moreover, the advertising models on the internet have not made up for the loss of physical newspaper revenue.

However, news organizations do not have a monopoly on informing voters. Many voters cast their ballot based on books they read. But copyright is of equal importance here. Authors subsist as authors through the rights afforded them by copyright. If authors did not receive revenue from consumers of their works, then they would not, for the most part, continue to write books. Some authors would continue to be published. Yet, it is hard to imagine that the majority would continue to be economi-

cally viable.

An objection to such a stand is that the government can provide news to voters. This seems problematic. A press independent of the government seems important, as it acts a check of sorts. In one sense, voters are evaluators; they evaluate the government through voting representatives out of office. Evaluators, on their part, ought to have information about those under consideration that is independent. In short, one could never be certain that the information received from a government about itself is not biased. Of course, bias exists in the press, but at least one can seek out information that has opposing biases. Moreover, even if the government provides information that is not biased one still ought to hear opposing views. According to nineteenth century political philosopher John Stuart Mill, one is not justified in holding a true belief if one does not know the counter arguments to it. Furthermore, Mill claimed that it is not enough just to know opposing views. He claimed that one ought to seek out those who earnestly hold opposing views, because they will most forcefully argue for it.

In a way, democracy's life blood is information. If I do not know how a representative has performed his or her job, then it will be hard for me to evaluate it. If I do not know what the arguments are for and against certain positions, then voting will be done blindly. If voting is how the people of a democracy rule, then they will be ruling blindly. Blind rule, it is arguable, is not self-rule. Thus, copyright is necessary for the people to rule in large-scale societies. ☹

# BDS & ACADEMIC FREEDOM

April 2, 2014 7-9pm  
Skylight Room, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
CUNY Graduate Center

Moderator: Professor Christopher Stone (Hunter/GC CUNY)

Panelists: Professor Bill Mullen (Purdue University), Radhika Sainath (Palestine Solidarity Legal Support), Sherry Wolf (*International Socialist Review*), Professor Ashley Dawson (College of Staten Island/GC CUNY)

Join us for a roundtable discussion on BDS and academic freedom. This panel discussion specifically addresses the question of academic freedom and political affiliation from the different perspectives of academics and activists working with and around BDS in the US academe today. Panelists interrogate how the pursuit of “academic freedom” has been used to both open and close debate, how it frames the call for solidarity with Palestinian students and scholars, structures relationships with dissenting opinions, and how it applies in a US university system increasingly dependent on a contingent workforce of graduate students and adjunct labor.

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Co-sponsored by: the Adjunct Project American Studies Certificate Program; the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics; Critical Palestine Studies Association; Haymarket Books; International Socialist Organization at the Graduate Center AELLA-Latino and Latin-American Students Association, Middle Eastern Studies Organization; Mise en Scene; PostColonial Studies Group, QUNY, RevAm Studies Group; Social and Political Theory Students' Association, the Space Time Research Collective and Thought Club

# Fighting for a Fair Wage

## 15 NOW comes to NYC

**william blueher & james d hoff**

EVERY NEW YORKER INTUITIVELY knows that city rents have risen dramatically over the last decade leaving many families strapped, destitute, and desperate. As a recent *New York Times* article notes, since 2000, rents in New York City have increased 18% even as household wages for most families have decreased by more than 7%. In fact, according to the Coalition for the Homeless, as of November 2013 there were an astounding 12,701 homeless families living in New York City shelters, and more than 22,000 homeless children. Furthermore, many of these homeless New Yorkers are working, some of them full time, and yet they still do not have enough money to afford city rents. Such a situation is not only incredibly unjust, but is also completely unsustainable.

How long before the city is completely gentrified and the working classes driven out entirely?

These frightening figures are a prime example of why the story of New York City in the twenty-first century really is, as Mayor Bill de Blasio claimed during his campaign for office, “a tale of two cities.” While the landlords and bosses continue to capture more and more of the vast surplus value created by the city, the families and workers that make that value possible are being mercilessly squeezed out. De Blasio and the City Council claim they want to help workers by raising the minimum wage, but they have yet to truly distinguish themselves from the city’s neo-liberal predecessors and have failed offer any clear indication of how much they are actually willing to fight for. Even the \$10 an hour (\$20,000



annually before taxes) federal minimum wage proposed by President Barack Obama is nowhere near enough to live on in NYC. However, Even the miniscule increase to \$10 has been met with fierce opposition by lobbyists for the restaurant and hotel industries, which notoriously pay their workers the lowest wages possible.

These politicians' timidity and inaction is, sadly, not surprising. City politicians are notoriously beholden to the capitalist interests that have dominated New York's politics for decades: finance, insurance, and real estate. But while politicians and lobbyists continue to forestall the possibility of better wages for ordinary New Yorkers, "the rent won't wait." Thankfully, the working people of New York know what they want and are not waiting around for the politicians to act. The movement for a fair minimum wage is growing. Among the many organizations leading the fight for a truly livable wage for all is 15 NOW, a national campaign that advocates for a nationwide \$15 minimum wage for all workers without exception.

Fueled in part by the election of Kshama Sawant, the first democratic-socialist elected to the Seattle City Council in over a hundred years, the 15 NOW campaign has already experienced massive success in Washington State, where the city government is feeling the heat from a grassroots movement that helped make raising minimum wage the central issue of the last elections. Recently, voters in the Seattle-Tacoma area approved a \$15 an hour minimum wage for airport employees. Building on this momentum, 15 NOW activists are hoping to replicate their success in Seattle in other parts of the country. Nationally, more than half of minimum wage employees are on public assistance and four million Americans earn less for 40 hours of work than the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment. In New York City, where rents are well above national averages, a minimum wage worker would have to work 130 hours a week to afford the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment.

On March 2, 15 NOW kicked off its New York City campaign in the "St. Pat's for All" Parade in Sunnyside, Queens. With nearly a hundred members present, the campaign was one of the largest and liveliest contingents in the parade. Chanting "raise that minimum wage/ we've got to raise that minimum wage," and "Hold the burgers!/ Hold the fries!/ We want wages/super-sized!," they brought their message to the crowds of supportive on-lookers who raised their fist and joined in on the chants. That first successful action was followed by two 15 NOW marches on March 15<sup>th</sup>, one in Brooklyn and the other in

Manhattan. Both marches were lively, raucous, and well received by thousands of working class passersby who applauded and cheered the demonstrators.

In Brooklyn, a number of organizations were represented including Socialist Alternative, Occupy Kensington, the Green Party, System Change Not Climate Change, and Trade Justice New York Metro, as well as many others. As the march progressed down Fulton Mall, people on the streets joined in the chants, shouting "What do we want?/ Fifteen! When do we want it?/ NOW!" One worker, standing as a human billboard outside an electronics store, began pointing at his boss as the marchers passed, asking when he would ever get paid \$15 an hour.

The Manhattan rally gathered in front of Macy's flagship 34th street store, where protesters reviled the retail giant's low pay and called on them to pay their workers a living wage. As it turns out, not surprisingly, Macy's can afford it. According to the *New York Times*, Macy's profit rose a whopping 22% in 2013 to a staggering total of \$6.28 billion dollars. It seems reasonable to expect that at least some of that profit should be given back to the people who actually make Macy's profitable: its workers.

After the rally, about 80 protesters poured onto the wide sidewalks of 34th street, marching from retail store to retail store to bring their message of a \$15 an hour minimum wage. During the march, 15 NOW activists went into two other serial perpetrators of unjust labor practices: Foot Locker and H&M, both corporations that pay their employees far below even Obama's proposed \$10 an hour minimum. According to Glassdoor.com, sales associates at Foot Locker earn an average of only \$7.64 an hour, with some managers earning less than \$10. Only two positions warrant pay over \$10 an hour and no position earns as much as \$15 an hour. Meanwhile, according to Salary.com, the CEO of Footlocker, Ken C. Hicks, made \$10,546,542 in 2012, or about 660 times what the average sales associate earns. It is no wonder that employees cheered as marchers streamed into the store and clapped wildly when asked if they wanted to earn \$15 an hour.

The 15 NOW campaign fights for economic equality on the side of the working class over that of the ruling elite and is struggling against the injustices of the current economic system. It is time to fight for a minimum wage that people can actually live on. New York City is clearly ready for at least \$15 an hour, if not more. ☺

*Those interested in joining the 15NOW campaign or marching with 15NOW in the upcoming NYC May Day Parade should visit [www.15now.org](http://www.15now.org) for more information on how to join or help.*

# The Problem of Reparations for Slavery

## New Proposals from the Caribbean Community Address the Legacy of Humans as Property

**gordon barnes**

ON AUGUST 1<sup>ST</sup> 1834, the Emancipation Act legally freed the slaves of the British Empire. Alternatively known as the Slavery Abolition Act in British Parliament, the 1833 adoption of this legislation ushered in a new organization of labor relations known as Apprenticeship and *de jure* freedom, although *de facto* freedom remained elusive. Of the many provisions stipulated by the Act, two are quite striking. The first resulted in the indemnification of slave owners. The Colonial Office secured £20 million to compensate slave owners for the loss of property (over £989 million in 2005 pounds, with 2014 estimates as high as £200 billion). The other resulted in the essential continuity of slave labor, specifically for predial laborers, with less than one-fourth of all working hours being remunerated.

Despite the ostensibly progressive nature of this legislation, chattel slavery based upon race persisted in the Americas outside of the confines of the British Empire. The US Civil War ended slavery in 1865 and the institution was terminated by royal decree in Cuba and Brazil in 1886 and 1888 respectively. While the histories of the cessation of slavery are not homogenous throughout the Americas, the vestiges of the institution have helped in fomenting—to varying degrees across time and space—oppressive social, political, and economic realities for peoples of African descent. At the same time, racial

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slavery proved to be the economic foundation of merchant and finance capitalism and then later served as part of the rationalization for European colonization in Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. Slavery was thus instrumental in the development of European capitalism as an economic mode of production, and then influential in the epoch of imperialism as part of a rhetorical attack on slavery used to justify colonization as a way of ending the practice in Africa. Simply put, European states were able to use the institution of slavery to build capitalism and then motivate the legacy of the practice to colonize the African continent, thus extracting even more wealth. In effect, Europe profited doubly from slavery, as European individuals and states reaped profits from slave labor in the Americas between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and then from their African colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Of course, this is a simplified and general portrayal of slaving, slavery, and imperialism that glosses over the intricacies of economic development under various formulations of capitalism between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Nonetheless, if one were to take the basic proposition that Europe benefited economically, more so than Africa and large portions of the Americas, from the legacy of slavery, then one must consider the prospect of restorative justice. This is particularly salient in regard to those peoples that bear the brunt of the lopsided social

relationships emanating from the history of slavery. If one is convinced that Europe benefited from slavery and the majority of colonies did not, then reparations can be viewed as a viable option for justice, development, or perhaps both. The word “reparations” engenders a variety of affective sentiments and conjures disparate feelings for various individuals. The word is certainly controversial and requires a certain level of sensitivity when arguing about it, either in the affirmative or in the negative.

In December of last year, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) called “upon the former slave-owning nations of Europe—principally Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Denmark—to engage Caribbean governments in reparatory dialogue to address the living legacies of these crimes.” CARICOM, an economic organization ostensibly moving towards economic integration is comprised primarily of the former British colonies of the Antilles but also includes Suriname, Haiti, Belize, and Monserrat, which is still a British colony. CARICOM identified six broad areas of Caribbean life that had been directly affected by the “crimes”: public health, education, cultural institutions, cultural deprecation, psychological trauma, as well as scientific and technological backwardness were areas that Caribbean leaders found suitable for a “reparatory dialogue” with European states. On March 10 at the CARICOM Inter-Sessional Conference in St. Vincent, a ten-point reparations plan was formally adopted under the title of the Reparatory Justice Framework. The ten-point plan demands: 1) a full formal apology from the European slaving states, 2) repatriation to Africa for those who wish to “return,” 3) an Indigenous Peoples Development Program, 4) the building and buffering of Caribbean cultural institutions, 5) practical remedies to the public health crisis in the Caribbean, 6) the eradication of illiteracy, 7) an African Knowledge Program, 8) psychological rehabilitation, 9) a technology transfer, and lastly, 10) debt cancellation.

The plan is at once wonderful and disastrous. The first point, a formal apology, is acceptable, expected, and long

overdue. Germany apologized for the holocaust of the Herero in Namibia and of the Jews in continental Europe, and such a gesture is necessary for advancing within the broader framework of reparations. Yet the second point, repatriation to Africa, largely geared for Rastafari groups that maintain Afrocentric ideologies, is an abysmal idea. One only needs to consider the United Nations parti-



tion of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1947 for an historical example of the terrible consequences that result in having peoples with an ideological and narrative connection to a certain locale “repatriate.” The examples of Liberia and to a lesser extent Sierra Leone provide a germane illustration as to why repatriation is a bankrupt portion of CARICOM’s reparation plan. Liberia and Sierra Leone were sites where manumitted slaves, free blacks, and Asians were repatriated during the nineteenth century. The historical development of an ethnic-political group such as the Americo-Liberians (which dominated political institutions in Liberia for over a century) should remind anyone keen on reparations that repatriation to Africa for West Indian blacks will result not in some sort of Pan-African unity, but rather in social, political, and economic segmentation. The potentiality for the emergence of violence as an attempt to remedy the imposed disparity cannot be ruled out.

The proposal for an Indigenous Peoples Development Program is interesting. While theoretically agreeable, in regard to the majority of the Anglophone West Indies, it seems problematic in reference to the fact that the indigenous Carib, Arawak, and Taíno populations no longer

exist as clearly definable cultural entities, if at all. CARICOM has insisted that the Indigenous Peoples Scholarship at the University of the West Indies be partially funded from European states as part of reparations. This aspect is acceptable within the framework of reparations, though a larger program for what are now non-existent indigenous communities would be a gross misappropriation of funds that would be better served in other ventures.

CARICOM's fourth point calls for a buffering and building of Caribbean cultural institutions, reasoning that such institutions "serve to reinforce within the consciousness of their citizens an understanding of their role in history as rulers and change agents" and pointing out that "there are no such institutions in the Caribbean." CARICOM has not proposed what any of these institutions will do or how they are to be organized, either thematically or logistically. Nonetheless, this point in the call for reparations is, at its base, a beneficial aspect, as much of the cultural artifacts of the global south are housed in Europe, the United States and Canada. Supposing that we can imagine that the proposed cultural institutions will largely be educational venues such as museums and research centers, then this portion of the plan is necessary as part of the reparatory process. European cultural institutions have had the time and capital to become somewhat ossified (the Louvre and British Museum, for instance) whereas similar institutions in the Caribbean are woefully underfunded, if they even exist.

CARICOM's plan also calls for funding for an improved public health infrastructure and the mitigation of chronic levels of hypertension and type two diabetes in the Caribbean. This would potentially be done through European capital and credit lines in conjunction with the importation of medical technologies available in Europe that remain scarce in the Caribbean. Some may argue that this problem has no relation to slavery, but if we consider CARICOM's claim that the health crisis is directly influenced by the lack of financial sustainability, then the legacy of slavery is evident. The sixth point, the eradication of illiteracy, is directly related to the era of slavery and colonial organization after "freedom." CARICOM's plan calls for the European states in question to assist in funding educational, particularly literacy, programs. Clearly, some CARICOM states maintain similar levels

of literacy (based upon the percentage of people over the age of 15 years that can read and write) as the European states in question or the United States. Some have literacy levels that surpass the international average of 84.1%. On the other hand, others, especially Haiti, have a literacy rate that would warrant a reparatory program.

The seventh point in CARICOM's plan is an "African Knowledge Program." The bulk of this point argues that "the forced separation of Africans from their homeland



has resulted in cultural and social alienation from identity and existential belonging. Denied the right in law to life, and divorced by space from the source of historic self, Africans have craved the right to return and knowledge of the route to roots. A program of action is required to build 'bridges of belonging.' Such projects as school exchanges and culture tours, community artistic and performance programs, entrepreneurial and religious engagements, as well as political interaction, are required in order to neutralize the void created by slave voyages."

This is another laudable aspect of the reparations plan,

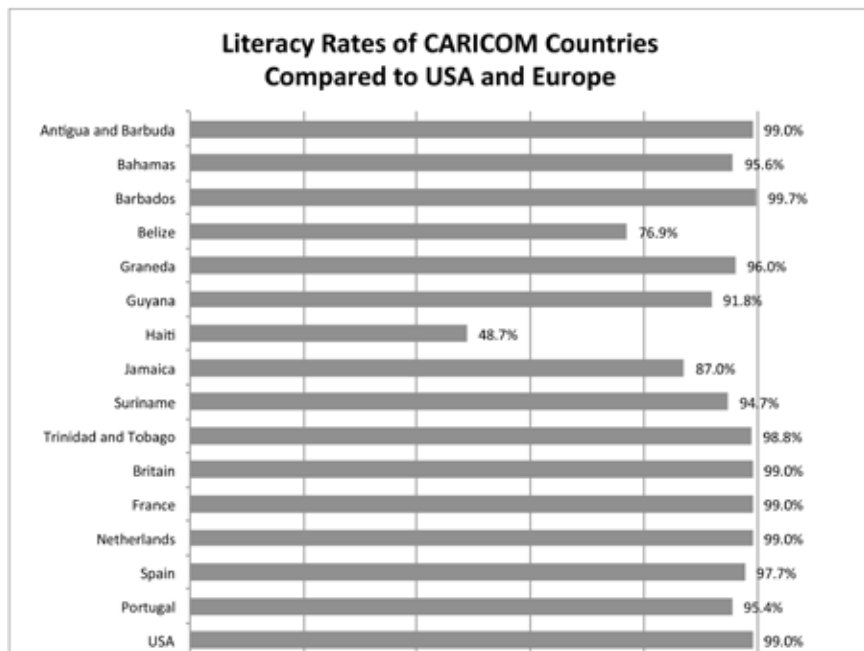


though there are some attendant caveats. To institute an African Knowledge Program without including a similar agenda for other racial or ethnic groups proves problematic for the Caribbean. After the era of slavery and apprenticeship, the British Empire incorporated Asian indentured laborers to supplement plantation production. To eschew the legacy of Indians and Chinese (as well as other groups from Asia and the Middle East) is problematic given the high levels of coerced immigration of these populations to Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica. Excluding these groups, some of which still maintain visible communities in the Caribbean, with an African rather than multi-ethnic Knowledge Program is at once Afrocentric and fails to force home the coercive histories of European colonization and exploitation.

CARICOM's position on psychological rehabilitation is a bit diffuse with no concrete solution or proposal. The plan only calls for "a reparatory justice approach to truth," and asserts that "educational exposure can begin the process of healing and repair."

The final two points of the plan are of the utmost importance within the context of reparations. The transfer of technology and the cancellation of debt are the most impactful aspects of the plan and have the most potential to make a tangible social difference. The Caribbean slave-based economies provided the capital accumulation for the advent of the industrial revolution in Europe (predominantly in Britain). Whilst Europe was able to produce more and more commodities for the global market, the Caribbean was stuck in such a position that it could not industrialize, in fact it was not allowed to. The denial of participation in industrialization afforded the opportunity for European merchant, states, and business interests to extract raw materials from the colonies at minimum cost, sell them, and use the profits to enable maximum wealth accumulation in Europe. This process was in full sway with slaving, and continued afterwards, arguably into the twenty-first century through neo-colonial machinations on behalf of Europe and the Caribbean elite and ruling classes. Thus, the transfer of industrial, agricultural, and scientific knowledge in general from Europe to CARICOM member states is a valid claim within the framework of reparatory justice.

The question of debt cancellation is extremely im-



portant if reparations are to be successful. Even though simplistic, and at times obfuscating material realities contingent on time and place, the development-underdevelopment dichotomy is the most basic formulation for understanding the relations between the former slaving states in Europe and the CARICOM member states. Former colonies are doubly punished as they are now economically beholden to the former colonizers through the unscrupulous functioning of international debt and credit. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are equally as culpable for the disastrous financial situation in which much of the Caribbean finds itself. We must remember, for example, what happened when Haiti achieved independence in 1804, smashing the slavocracy along the way. France soon demanded, with warships off the coast of the island, repayment to recoup the value on lost property, that is, property in human chattel. Initially 150 million francs, the payment was eventually reduced to 60 million francs, though it still amounted to extortion. This played a fundamental role in constricting the Haitian economy and can be viewed antecedently in reference to extant economic relations between CARICOM states and Europe.

For a contemporary example, one only needs consider Jamaica, where the government is so behind in its payments to European states, the IMF, and the World Bank that government functionaries, bureaucrats, and some public sector employees are paid with IMF loans. The dual legacies of slavery and colonialism have left the majority of the Caribbean governments with the burden of attempting to ameliorate the conditions these socio-eco-

conomic processes wrought. Thus, according to CARICOM the burden of public employment and social policy goes towards confronting the social vestiges of slavery in particular and of colonialism more generally. In order to do this, the acceptance of the predatory lending of the IMF, World Bank, and certain European states is necessary, eventually resulting in the accumulation of public debt and fiscal entrapment for Caribbean states. CARICOM's plan calls for the annulment of international debt and for European support in the payment of sovereign debt. Without the pardoning of international debt and without the cessation of predatory lending by these entities, reparatory justice will not come to fruition.

In addition to the ten-point plan, CARICOM has retained the services of the British law firm Leigh Day that recently won compensation for hundreds of Kenyans brutalized by the colonial government during the Mau Mau uprising between 1952 and 1960. Allegedly, a proposed suit will be filed against Britain, France, and the Netherlands (and possibly other European states) to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars. It is still early, however, in the negotiations between Europe and CARICOM. The Caribbean association plans to announce a formal complaint to the governments of the former slave trading states by late April and is also proposing a conference to be held in London to discuss the issues. If, however, these measures fail, various CARICOM states have articulated the willingness to take their individual cases to the International Court of Justice.

The most acute problem with CARICOM's reparations plan is CARICOM itself. As a pro-capitalist development organization with many members that also participate in the Caribbean Single Market Economy, this reparatory plan seems more apt in building up the coffers of the regional elite. We should not expect governmental largesse to help the working classes and oppressed of the region. On top of the plan being as problematic as it is (though there are some excellent points), given the political parties in power in the Caribbean and the structure of social

The transfer of industrial, agricultural, and scientific knowledge in general from Europe to CARICOM member states is a valid claim within the framework of reparatory justice.

relations in the region, we can expect that little tangible change will come of these reparations, even if they can be pushed through. Only when stewardship of the Caribbean is left to the rank and file will such reparations benefit the majority, rather than an elite cadre of governmental bigwigs and upper-middle class citizens.

Though we should not oppose the bulk of CARICOM's framework for reparatory justice, we must remind ourselves of the political blind alley that successive Caribbean governments have lead their constituents into in relations with Europe and the United States. Even the "socialist" politics of earlier generations are not exemplary of what type of politics is necessary for truly emancipatory and reparatory justice in the Caribbean. There need not be any more leaders like Michael Manley, Cheddi Jagan, or Maurice Bishop. There needs to be grassroots leadership of government and society in general if CARICOM's plan is to bear tangible socio-economic fruit in the future.

While one may support CARICOM's reparation plan while simultaneously rejecting the political legitimacy of the organization, the plans' very proposal opens the question of what a reparatory framework for Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Afro-American, Puerto Rican, Pacific Islander, and Amerindian populations of the United States would look like. All of these areas have a diverse history with slavery, colonization, and European involvement. One cannot propose the same or similar framework as that of CARICOM, but we can extrapolate that at least large swaths of these areas are entitled to reparations in some respect. If we remember that Potosí provided the silver for Spanish economic ascension in the sixteenth century, if we recall that the Congo supplied the human capital for Belgian development, that the British and Dutch East India Companies produced wealth for Europe through the exploitation of Indian and Indonesian pre-dial laborers, we must also consider the practicability of reparations. While this is a subject fraught with problems ranging from historical contingency to the politicization of economic development, it is worth asking whether or not certain European states owe something emotional and material to the formerly colonized world. Clearly, Europe does not owe every group or state reparations, perhaps not even most, but some claims are clearly warranted. 🌐

# Approaching Spiritual Death

## Austerity, Intervention, and the Collapse of Morality

rhone fraser

THIS NATION'S HUGE INVESTMENT in the Ukrainian “revolution” coupled with the devastating effects of austerity raises Martin Luther King Jr.’s warning of April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1967 about the crumbling moral fabric of the United States. King, in Harlem’s Riverside Church said “a nation that continues to spend more and more money on military programs than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” Public schools in this society are our last bastion of “programs of social uplift.” Unfortunately they are being closed due to austerity programs that privilege regime changes in foreign countries like Syria and the Ukraine. This contradiction highlights the control that Wall Street executives have over Washington, whose lawmakers, judges, and elected officials serve the interests of the corporate lobbyists who pay them. These corporate lobbyists are dictated by ideas about how American society should function. Their idea of a “normal world” is where the majority of Black and Latino children deserve to be deprived of adequately funded public education because they have better use in privately owned prisons than they do as educated citizens. This concept of a “normal world,” as understood by the upper echelons of American society is slowly causing a spiritual death in this country. Furthermore, it is based on beliefs that are fundamentally racist, classist, and sexist. What makes those who have billions of dollars feel satisfied in growing a private prison industry and in closing an increasing number of public schools in this country while at the same time funding regime change in Ukraine?

The founder and chairman of eBay, Pierre Omidyar, believes that as a billionaire, his money, hundreds of thou-

sands to be exact, is best spent helping to oust Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovich through the non-governmental organization known as New Citizen. Yanukovich is painted as an enemy of working people by the mainstream media who serves the interests of a “sociopathic imagination” by justifying United States intervention in Ukraine and by ignoring serious crises such as mass incarceration, failing public schools, and the severing of public services. Not only does Omidyar give his money to fund the Ukrainian “revolution,” he also uses it to pay news outlets like First Look Media who brand themselves as “progressive.” First Look employs Glenn Greenwald, whose anti-imperialist tomes are in a direct conflict of interest with his funder. To this charge, Greenwald responded “journalists should be judged by the journalism they produce, not by those who fund the outlets where they do it.” But could Greenwald at least ask Omidyar the question: why is keeping Russia out of Ukraine so important? How exactly does Russia’s military takeover of Ukraine pose a serious threat to the wealth creation of Omidyar and other American billionaires who maintain this “normal world”? Greenwald’s inability to really raise this important question challenges his identity as an independent journalist. Journalists like Greenwald and Amy Goodman, who receives millions from the Soros Foundation, pride themselves on being “progressive” or “independent.” They don’t deserve this title as long as they refuse to challenge this pathology that sees every single leader sympathetic to socialism or communism as a threat.

The effort of the richest, like Omidyar, to fund pro-IMF coups across the world reflects, still, even after two decades, a fear of Russia. This hypersensitive fear of Russia

is something similar to what Paul Krugman has described as “paranoia of the plutocrats.” Paul Rosenberg for Salon writes that this fear is part of a “sociopathic imagination,” the idea that the wealthiest in the United States will do anything to maintain their “normal world,” even if it means destroying social programs and increasing military occupations across the globe. The sociopathic imagination in the minds of the wealthiest social layers in the United States is what causes the enormous wealth gap between themselves and the rest of the world. This paranoia or pathology operates on such a level that the wealth that they have, they deserve, and those that don’t have it must not deserve it. One only needs to consider Tom Perkins to consider this sociopathic imagination. Perkins, founding member of the venture capital firm Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers, was mortified at his wealth being critiqued. In a *Wall Street Journal* letter to the editor, Perkins calls a “progressive” radical critique of the richest a “descendant” of *Kristallnacht*, the 1938 Nazi pogrom against the Jews. Perkins reflects the arrogant indignation of the sociopathic imagination. Martinican writer Aime Cesaire wrote that what Portugal, England, France, and Spain have been doing to Africa for centuries is similar to what the Nazis did to European Jewry in the 1930s. It was only until brutal colonialist policies started to affect other Europeans that pogroms like *Kristallnacht* got worldwide attention.

Perkins is unable to care about how austerity policies that weaken colonial nations and brutalize more neocolonial states are yet another brutal, albeit slower, form of colonialism.

The obsession of Pierre Omidyar and other American billionaire wealth-mongers such as Perkins in investing in the pro-Western coup in the Ukraine comes from the McCarthyism of the 1950s. This is a maniacal drive to purge, remove, or destabilize any thinker who dares to engage socialist or communist thinking. Thus, any thinker who engages the idea of public property as opposed to private property is seen as a threat. In the mentality of those who purge communists, there should be no such thing as public ownership. Anything and everything on earth should be owned by a private entity, to the exclusion of all others. This is the sociopathic imagination that has produced in some minds of those who maintain a “normal world” view.

This “normal world” is hostile not only to communist leaders and left-leaning socialist leaders; it is increasingly hostile to those who dare oppose austerity measures or openly show any sympathies to the concept of public ownership. What austerity essentially does is to force more of people to depend more on Western currency in order to survive. This is truer in countries that are pushing austerity measures that reduce the number of jobs and essential-



ly force an undercover and secret economy that is easily prosecutable. Those prosecuted feed the growing private prison industry. Nations that choose to accommodate this “normal world” are forced to use Western currency as such, and depend on predatory loans that destroy the ability of most countries to build a self-sustaining economy. Glen Ford, for instance, writes that Muammar Gaddafi was killed for seeking an African based currency outside of the euro and the dollar.

With the IMF’s money come imported goods that discourage local workers in each country from producing their own; these local economies are continually dependent on the benevolent white hand. As a consequence, the nations and their neocolonial leaders develop the same sociopathic imagination as the people they are borrowing from. This leads to what Claudette Carr has called the “White Savior Complex”. There is no effort on behalf of people who believe in this “normal world” to help other nations build a self-sustaining economy. The disdain for public ownership and the privileging of private property can be traced to America’s Founding Fathers. They learned from and praised the Enlightenment ideas of John Locke, who said that all men should never be deprived of the right to life, liberty, and private property. What Locke and the Founding Fathers meant by “all men” were, of course, all white men including slave holders. Slave owners considered their slaves precious private property and expected governmental bodies in Europe and elsewhere to protect their private property which required that the humanity of the enslaved be denied. It is these kinds of maniacal beliefs that maintain a “normal order” and will lead to what King has called a spiritual death.

Since 1989, the United States has more than sufficiently shown that it can successfully crush communist societies. It successfully destabilized and destroyed the U.S.S.R. What more does it need to prove? The Cold War has been over for over two decades now. All of what was nationalized in Russia has, to the delight of Western businessmen, been privatized. What, therefore, is the need for this maniacal drive to maintain this “normal world” that is based on a racist sociopathic imagination? “Because it has always been that way” seems the most common and unchallenged answer.

King warns us that maintaining this “normal world” will lead to spiritual death, which is a death of morals and values that challenge militarism, sexism, and racism. This “normal world” becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it has been since the beginning of Western colonialism, and

provides the practitioners of white supremacy that we see today with jobs and satisfaction. But underneath this is an approaching spiritual death. This death is fueled by murder of people of color across the world to maintain the wealth of the ruling classes.

Fordham law professor Brian Glick writes that any social order based on wealth and inequality of power depends on political repression to control the disadvantaged majority. One form of the political repression we see today is the U.S. Appeals’ Court’s rejection of Net Neutrality which privileges private owners of the Internet to make Internet access more cost prohibitive. Glick writes that the elites in this country have a particular need for covert measures because of their need to appear democratic. Pierre Omidyar has a need to appear democratic, which is why he funds not only NGOs, to overthrow pseudo-socialistic leaders in the Ukraine, but also so called “progressive” news outlets like First Look Media.

No single document has supported this “normal world” concept more than President Obama’s federal budget. The media has been alarmingly silent on President Obama’s 2015 fiscal year budget released March 4 which was “welcomed” by the IMF and essentially supports this sociopathic imagination. In announcing this upcoming budget, Obama said “budgets are moral documents.” The morality his budget promotes only supports a sociopathic imagination that will lead to spiritual death. For the largest military power in the world, it designates \$496 billion for the military while devoting only \$300 million to education. Our moral message to the world is that spending on education is worth less than a tenth of a percent, compared to spending on our military. Obama has clearly shown that he supports the sociopathic imagination. He conceived the legal sequester, passed as the cleverly titled “Budget Control Act of 2011” which designated over \$2 trillion dollar cuts over ten years in social spending that included cutting public schools across the country.

A common belief of these types of people is that the public schools that serve majority Black children are not important. Another belief is that those Black children who are deprived of a public school education are more useful as prisoners. These are pathological beliefs. This imagination says that students in Philadelphia, New York City, and Detroit do not deserve the opportunity to get an education more than they deserve to be imprisoned by the time they’re teenagers. Such ideas are fundamentally racist. Laporshia Massey, a Philadelphia public school student was a casualty of public school austerity that President



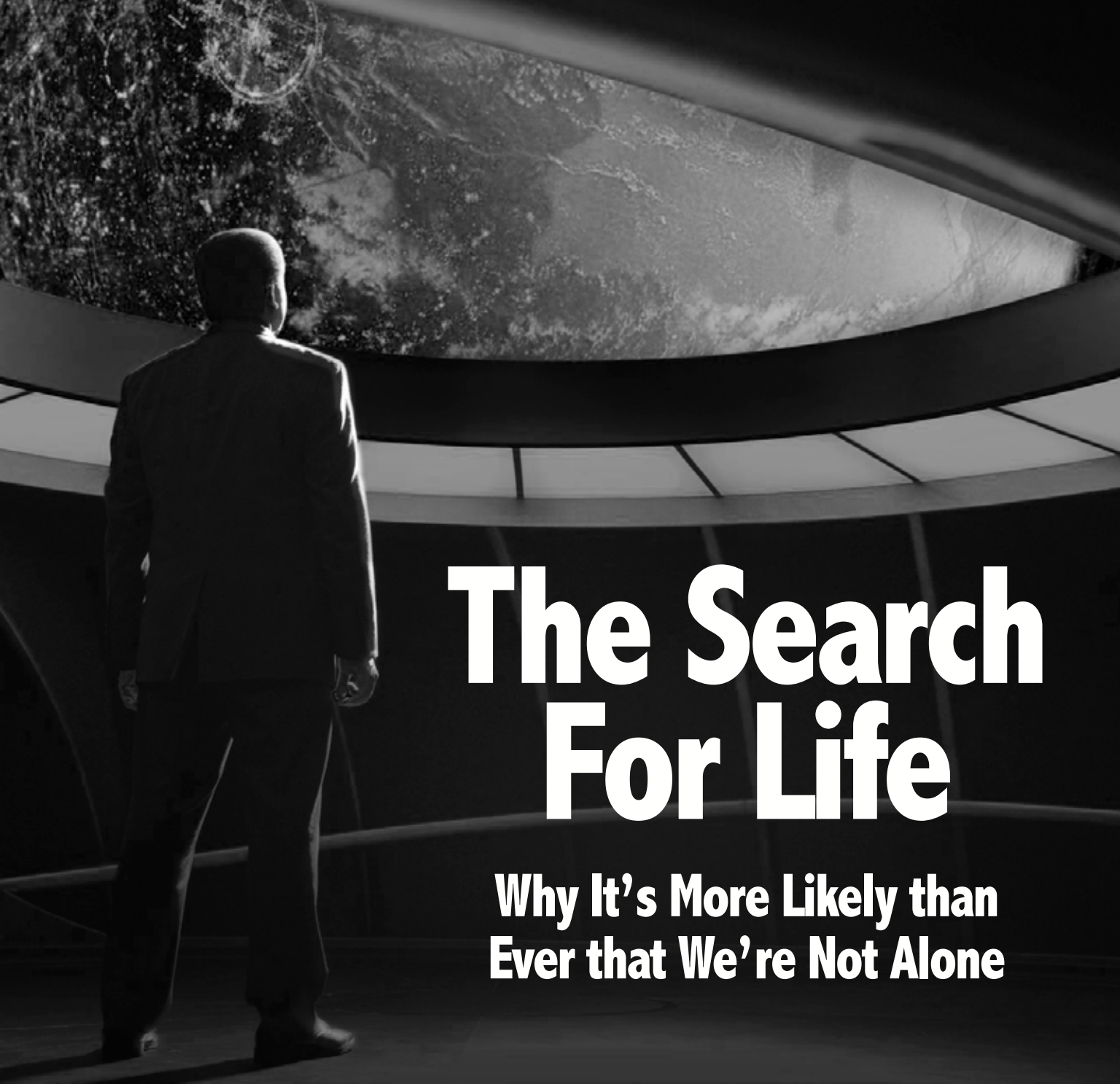
Obama and his plutocrats endorse. She died after suffering an asthma attack on a day that her school nurse was not in the building. According to the sociopathic imagination, Laporshia deserved to die, because if she (and her parents) really cared about her education, she would not be in a public school. This kind of attitude endorses racism, classism, and sexism and is an attitude that our “normal world” is based on. Bruce Dixon wrote last year about how Obama’s education policy, which is his “Race to the Top” Program, essentially justifies cutting public school spending. This law forces schools to compete for a smaller allocation of federal funds and incentivizes school districts to close schools in order to receive federal funding.

By the logic of billionaires like Omidyar, seeing a coup that is more hostile to Russia than the United States is more important than a Black female student like Laporshia Massey. This kind of sociopathic imagination that renders Laporshia invisible is exactly what will lead this country to a spiritual death. The inability to understand how the “normal world” functions makes lives like Laporshia’s less valuable and less worthy of being seen as important as the lives of the NGO that Omidyar gives his money to. Furthermore, this spiritual death that King is referring to grows in a populace in the United States that is either too disinterested or too scared to do anything about the reality of this “normal world.” This growth of apathy within the citizenry of this country has led to the creation of political-zombies who uncritically obey the model of what the elite has established for the past few centuries in their “normal world.”

Recently I interviewed Chernoh Bah, chairman of the African Socialist Movement who is based in Sierra Leone. We talked about his new book *Neocolonialism in West Africa*, where he talks about challenging this IMF imposed “normal order” which includes denying the sovereignty of African governments in Sierra Leone. Fighting for a fair government for Chernoh has meant imprisonment seeing successive coups supported by Western powers that will impose only African leaders who are friendly to those same powers. Malcolm X said in Ghana that “leaders who are receiving the praise and pats of the back from the Americans, you can just flush the toilet and let them go right down the drain.” We talked about leaders why leaders like Charles Taylor received unconditional support from the United States, because in fact, they helped private Western corporations steal resources from their nation while leaving the people in that nation impoverished. Chernoh wrote about the Lansana Conte regime in Guinea that “the U.S. and France committed themselves to supporting the Conte regime only because he upheld the interests of the leading North American corporations operating in Guinea.” When I asked Chernoh why he is doing a book tour in the United States and not more work in Sierra Leone which is faced with, according to his own writings, the neocolonial leadership of Prime Minister Ernest Koroma, he replied that he is hoping that the spread of information will lead to weakening the West’s neocolonial grip of leaders like Koroma. My interview with him reminds me that this “sociopathic imagination” is continuously challenged.

Chernoh identified the two parties in his country, which essentially represent the same interests, and I compared that situation to the political situation in the United States, where the Democratic Party agrees on the most fundamental policies with its so-called opposition, the Republican Party. They agree on the need to close public schools, the need for private prisons to make more profit, the importance of displacing Yanukovych, and preventing a Russian invasion. The “normal order” makes the latter even more urgent, even though austerity is literally killing our children or preparing them for prison. It is up to us in this country to turn this information into a reason to lobby in a way that would end military interventions.

I think about how difficult it would be to really change people’s minds regarding challenging this “normal order.” We have to in order to save this nation from spiritual death. The question is: how will liberals and revolutionaries respond? 🌐



# The Search For Life

## Why It's More Likely than Ever that We're Not Alone

**greg olmschenk**

**F**OR CENTURIES PEOPLE HAVE looked toward the sky and wondered if there might be life on distant planets. Even early Greek philosophers such as Democritus believed that there might be infinite worlds like Earth inhabited by living beings. With the development of the Sun-centered view of the universe in the 1600s, astronomers began to wonder whether other planets or even the Moon were also thriving with life. By the 1800s, it was known that the Moon had no atmosphere, so people shifted their attention toward Mars. The astrono-

mer Percival Lowell constructed a powerful mountaintop observatory and saw what he believed to be artificial canals built on Mars. He postulated that a desperate civilization on a dying planet was channeling water from the Martian polar ice caps to the cities near the equator. Exciting as this may have seemed, all he was seeing was an optical illusion.

Today we realize the rest of the solar system is not hospitable to human life. If a human being were placed anywhere but on Earth they would die almost instantly. Yet, despite this, the potential for finding extraterrestrial

life in the universe is greater now than ever before. Thousands of planets around other stars have been discovered, microorganisms are found thriving in the most extreme conditions, and even our own solar system still has high hopes for life beyond Earth.

The first exoplanet—a planet orbiting a star other than the Sun—was detected in 1988, but could not be confirmed until more powerful telescopes were utilized in 2003. Since then, the number of confirmed exoplanets has been rapidly rising. Since 2010 more than 100 exoplanets have been added to the catalog, and in the first three months of this year 800 new exoplanets have been confirmed. Today, about 1700 exoplanets have been confirmed with around 4000 candidates on the waiting list.

Exoplanets are found using a number of techniques. Early on, we watched how huge planets—similar to Jupiter—caused their star to wobble as they mutually gravitated around each other. This wobble causes the light waves coming from the star to vary in frequency. When the star is wobbling toward us the light is bluer, and when it moves away from us it appears more red—similar to how an ambulance siren changes pitch as it passes by you. However, most of the confirmed planets have been discovered by their transits. When a planet passes in front of its star it blocks a small amount of light, making the star appear to dim by a certain constant amount for a short period of time. Only recently have telescopes been able to both block light from the star while still collecting light from the planet, thus allowing for direct observation of distant worlds.

Since we only know of life on Earth, Earth-like planets are our best bet for finding life elsewhere. “Earth-like” means that the planet should be a similar size to Earth—large enough to have an atmosphere, but small enough not to be a gas giant. So far, the majority of the planets found have been gas giants like Jupiter, this is because huge planets are much easier to detect than smaller Earth-sized ones. However, the number of smaller planets discovered constantly increases along with the power of our telescopes. Besides size, an Earth-like planet cannot be too hot or too cold. It should fall into the “habitable zone” of its star—a distance such that the planet’s temperature allows for liquid water on the surface. Based off of current observations, it’s expected that 22% of all stars similar to the Sun have an Earth-sized planet orbiting them within the habitable zone. With 40 billion such stars, this yields approximately 8.8 billion Earth-like planets in our galaxy alone. This means that there are more Earth-like plan-

ers in the Milky Way than there are human beings on the globe.

Along with the discovery of new planets, the variety of life known on Earth continually rises. We once thought microorganisms could only propagate in a nice, warm pond. Since then, we have found everything from creatures that thrive in the superheated geothermal vents on the ocean floor to bacteria that will come back to life after being thawed out of the arctic ice. Vast multitudes of bacterial life flourish in the crust of the Earth beneath the oceans, never receiving a glimpse of sunlight. These colonies show us that life may not require the habitable zone at all. The lingering heat from a planet’s core may be sufficient energy for life. Some microorganisms can survive exposure to the vacuum and radiation of space and go for years without food or water only to rehydrate and reproduce. Even a place like the Dead Sea was only named that way because its discoverers did not have microscopes. As it turns out, virtually every place we find liquid water on Earth we find some form of bacterial life. From this we are hopeful that finding liquid water beyond Earth will mean finding life.

Of course, water alone does not guarantee life. We have to consider how difficult it was for life to spring up in the first place out of the molecular soup of the early Earth. Our planet is 4.5 billion years old. From current fossil and geological research, we have evidence of life as early as 3.8 billion years ago, or even 3.9 by some studies. This means life started only 700 million years after the formation of the planet.

Once computers became powerful enough to model the early solar system, we realized that it was a place of utter chaos. During the first 500 or 600 million years after the formation of the Earth, the solar system was in an era known as Heavy Bombardment. As the name implies, the planet was vacuuming up debris from the formation of the solar system, which rained down to the surface as asteroids. During this time, the surface of the planet was molten rock, too hot for molecules to combine and to even have a chance of forming life. Life on Earth took only a scant 200 million years to form.

What about the ingredients of life? What if life developed on Earth simply because it had a viable amount of rare molecules and elements to start with? If life on Earth were based primarily on Thallium, this would be a good argument, but life is made out of the most common ingredients in the universe. Ignoring helium, which is chemically inert, the most common elements in both



the universe and the human body are, in order, hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon. Thus, there is no reason to expect that Earth is rare as far as ingredients go.

While we now know that there are no intelligent civilizations channeling water on Mars, the planet may harbor microbial life. There are signs of ancient bodies of water everywhere on the Red Planet. Dried riverbeds and ocean floors cover the Martian landscape. Current data suggests that 3.8 billion years ago up to one third of Mars' surface was covered in water and the planet had a much thicker atmosphere. During this time, Mars may have looked similar to how Earth does today. Yet, the water is now gone, though there could be underground deposits. NASA's robotic emissaries are now scouring the planet for some sign of past or even present microbial life.

Recently, Jupiter's moon Europa has become one of the

most likely candidates for life in the solar system outside of Earth. Europa's surface is an icy shell, but the gravitational pull of Jupiter and its other moons causes Europa to stretch and twist. This process leads to huge amounts of friction in the core of the moon and heats it from the inside out. Today, Europa is expected to have an ocean beneath its surface twice as large as all the oceans on Earth combined. Not only that, but these oceans have been liquid for billions of years, providing plenty of time for life to form. And if our solar system is any indication, there are far more moons than planets in the galaxy.

With all this information and knowledge, it seems simply egotistic to assume that we are unique in our existence. The amount of life in the Milky Way, let alone the universe, is likely grand. And there is good chance we need only to look in our own solar system to find it. 🌌

## mind games – solutions

Check out the new puzzle column on our Back Page.

### Solution to Puzzle 3

are sitting adjacent to one another, and that the number of people in the group is larger than four, we can easily derive that C1 and C2 are the dishonest couple.

R: a red circle  
B: a blue square  
G: a green diamond  
P: a purple triangle

We have the following equations:

$$(1) 3R + 2B = G + P$$

$$(2) P + B = 4G$$

$$(3) R + G = 3B$$

$$(4) R + 3G = P + ?B$$

By adding (1), (2), and (3), we will have:

$$3R + 2B + P + B + R + G =$$

$$G + P + 4G + 3B$$

Which simplifies to:

$$4R = 4G$$

$$R = G$$

If we substitute R with G in (4), we will have

$$4G = P + ?B$$

Now from (2), we derive that we need exactly one blue square (B) to balance the scale.

**H1:**  
1) on my right is a dishonest person. (true)  
2) on my left is an honest person. (not true)

**C1:**  
1) on my right is an honest person. (not true)  
2) on my left is a dishonest person. (not true)

**C2:**  
1) on my right is a dishonest person. (not true)  
2) on my left is an honest person. (not true)

**H2:**  
1) on my right is an honest person. (true)  
2) on my left is a dishonest person. (true)

So in the announcements, we need to search for two persons calling each other dishonest. We will find exactly two instances of such a pattern in the group, H1 and C1 on the one hand, and C2 and H2 on the other hand. Since we know the persons in the dishonest couple

### Solution to Puzzle 1

Circle: 9  
Square: 1  
Triangle: 0

$$199$$

$$+ 9001$$

$$991$$

$$10191$$

### Solution to Puzzle 2

Yes. With the exception of the dishonest couple and the two honest persons adjacent to them, everybody announces the truth as to whether or not their left and right neighbours are honest. Let C1 and C2 represent the dishonest persons in the couple. Suppose the dishonest couple is sandwiched by two honest persons denoted by H1 (the Honest person on one side) and H2 (the Honest person on the other side). So we have the following chain:  
H1 C1 C2 H2  
Assuming that H1 is on the left of this chain, the pattern of announcements for these persons is as follows.

# White Men in Suits: On Abstract Expressionism and Dorothy Krakovsky

► *Recent Paintings* by Dorothy Krakovsky.  
Soapbox Gallery, Feb. 15–Mar. 16.

## clay matlin

I HAVE MADE NO secret of my fondness for abstract expressionism. The moral questions that the medium proposes, its existence as a direct response to the horrors of the Second World War, the size and sumptuousness of its paintings, and the sadness and longing that the works elicit define some of its best examples. These aspects make it stand out as the signal American artistic moment. Even those abstract expressionists, like Ad Reinhardt and Robert Motherwell, who did not share some of the medium's quasi-mystical leanings still wanted painting to be something more, to break with a past held firmly by a ruined Continent. Maybe the abstract expressionists could embrace their "Americanness," their "difference," because they did not have to rebuild from nothing. American artists, untouched by the physical presence of the war, could assert themselves because the Europe they looked up to and away from did not exist anymore.

There are, of course, very reasonable complaints that greet words of praise for abstract expressionism. The first generation of abstract expressionists was mostly comprised of white men (that did not change with the second) with talented wives who gave up much (Lee Krasner), if not all (Annalee Newman) of their artistic and intellectual lives to serve both the life and memory of their husbands. The heroic cravings of abstract expressionism's men get tiresome and their white maleness can be off-putting. Willem De Kooning's paintings of women, regardless of their importance to the history of art, are spectacularly misogynist, Barnett Newman's paintings are unintelligible to those not versed in his difficult hermeneutics, Robert Motherwell was a better thinker than painter, Reinhardt seemed like a prick, Clyfford Still was a controlling maniac who couldn't stop dreaming of his boyhood, Mark Rothko's paintings have a creeping sensuousness that is both cloying and unsettling, and Jackson Pollock burnt himself up, who knows what might have been.

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The problem lies in the fact that even after these issues are recognized we are still to this day dealing with what was a total reimagining of possibilities in the world of painting. We cannot escape it. In many ways, the story of abstract expressionism is a tragic one. Earnest men, and Lee Krasner, seeking to subvert the dominant paradigm of art production succeed only for themselves to become art's own burden. Younger abstract painters like Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, Joan Mitchell, Al Held, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Cy Twombly, and Brice Marden, while not following directly in the vein of abstract expressionism were still forced to deal with and move past it in order to have any artistic life of their own. These artists were too young to have experienced World War II in the same way as Newman and Rothko, but the influence of abstract expressionism, whether negative or positive, informs their work.

Yet, for those painters who either were not born before the war or did not begin painting under its long shadow, the specter of abstract expressionism has gradually faded. With distance, time, and a history of art that incorporates more than the history of Europe, we are able to take in what abstract expressionism had to offer, without being weighed down by it. We ought always to confront the past, for it troubles us most when we deny its power. Nietzsche knew this, he wanted the past to be something usable, not a temple that we build up and up until it collapses in on us. However, the problem with the history of painting is that it is a temple. Painters are forced not only to place themselves within some sort of ridiculous conversation about their position in the absurdly long history of painting, but to look up towards a standard that is, if not unattainable, then at the very least frighteningly daunting. Therefore, to be a painter, particularly an abstract painter, one must deal with abstract expressionism, and as one would with impressionism or fauvism, forgo trying to surpass it but rather see how it speaks to one's own project.

All of which brings me to the work of Dorothy Krakovsky. At ninety years old, Krakovsky still believes in abstract expressionism. It sings to her with the same pow-



er it had over sixty years ago. Her paintings at Soapbox Gallery, in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, are both a testament to her belief in the power of abstraction and an argument that maybe the magic of the labels and movements we love is ruined by time. Dorothy Krakovsky functions as an artistic time capsule. Born in 1924, she is as old as Ellsworth Kelly and older than Al Held, Joan Mitchell, and Cy Twombly would have been. Although the exigencies of life made her painting sporadic, compared to her canonical peers her output has been frustratingly small, she has nonetheless been committed to painting for six decades. Krakovsky began to paint in the early 1960s and received a BFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1966 and a Masters of Arts from the University of Iowa in 1971. That she returned fully to painting in 2009, at the age of 84 when she enrolled in classes at the Art Students League, matters little. What is important is that she never wavered in her intellectual commitment.

Krakovsky came to the movement in the 1960s with no real knowledge of it but felt an immediate kinship. She has called herself an “accidental abstract expressionist,” and claims she’s “never stopped being an abstract expressionist.” These are bold statements. For Krakovsky, abstract expressionism represents a type of artistic freedom in which an artist can make art, as she puts it, “without knowing anything.” It reverberated in her being and she wanted to carry on its spirit.

Krakovsky is old enough to have experienced similar fears and uncertainty about the world that the abstract

expressionists did. She is also old enough to have begun painting at a time when there was a deliberate break from abstract expressionism. Yet instead of moving away from it, she has spent her life trying to get closer to it. A younger painter would leave us questioning the validity of someone so dedicated to what seems an anachronistic approach to art-making. But for Krakovsky the work has a “presentness” that is perfectly in conversation with the history that she has aligned herself with, rather than being burdened by the past and anxious about the future.

Consequently, the eight large paintings (all acrylic on canvas and 5’ by 6’) that comprise “Recent Work” are without question beholden to abstract expressionist titans. They are reminiscent of Joan Mitchell, Lee Krasner, and 1980s-era de Kooning, although only de Kooning gets a nod when Krakovsky is asked about her influences. Instead of Mitchell and Krasner, she mentions Larry Poons, Rene Magritte, and Mark Tobey.

Krakovsky makes deliberate aesthetic choices and does not merely copy. She has an elegant sense of color. Her brushwork is the sophisticated work of a trained and serious hand, a combination of small mark-making brush strokes and long, looping, sweeping gestures. She paints in an old-fashioned way because the history of art communicates with her through a particular sort of abstract language.

I am, however, unsure of her reading of abstract expressionism and wonder if she has given it too much power. As a movement, abstract expressionism sought to



free itself from the history of Western painting, simply because the way in which the past imparted its experience onto the present no longer worked. Its most vocal practitioners, –Newman, Rothko, and Motherwell– believed, like Friedrich Schiller one hundred-fifty years before them, that there is a price to pay for civilization. That for each benefit there is an attendant cost. That faced with the onslaught of progress we perhaps become less human.

As Schiller wrote in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*: “Once the increase of empirical knowledge, and more exact modes of thought, made sharper divisions between the sciences inevitable, and once the increasingly complex machinery of the State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and a disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance.” The abstract expressionist would see that “disastrous conflict,” as would the rest of the world. By 1945, the great gifts of enlightened individuals had been presented to the world: the twin forces of the atom bomb and the Holocaust.

Less than two years after the war’s end, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that the language of the history of civilization—the increasing devotion to a rational understanding of the world—was a language of violence, the quest for the rational often took a turn to the irrational. Kant’s “Formula of the End in Itself,” that man should always regard others as ends and not as means to an end, had been perverted, the means had come to justify the ends. This was most evident in the camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald and the shadows burned into the ground at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Perhaps the desperation of this narrative strikes us now as a bit absurd, but when we think about the world of the mid-1940s, with a ruined global economy and more than 70 million dead over a span of a little more than thirty years, these fears are not so easily dismissed. It was Barnett Newman who gave voice to the abstract expressionist project when he declared in 1967 that after the war painting was in a moral crisis, that the “reclining nude” and the painting of flowers, offered nothing to what was a “world in shambles.”

None of this grimness infects Krakovsky’s vision. The moral questions, the fear and trembling that were a part of so much abstract expressionism, seem not to have significance for her. Instead, abstract expressionism exists for her as a legacy of artistic freedom of expression. I find

her reading troubling, because it seems to cherry-pick the sunniest parts of abstract expressionism. Consequently, I am unsure if she is the heir she claims, or that she should want to be. Krakovsky still believes in the power of abstraction, and this is something worth believing in. Motherwell wrote in 1951 that “the emergence of abstract art is one sign that there are still men able to assert feeling in the world ... I think that abstract art is uniquely modern ... in the sense that abstract art represents the particular acceptances and rejections of men living under the condition of modern times.”

Let us accept Motherwell as a product of his time, and consider his point that abstract art is the possibility of asserting feeling, that it speaks to the peculiar situation that is modern life. As such, painting need not hit us over the head with meaning; there is meaning in the act. The subject matter resides in the painting itself. The narrative we want, maybe even need to be told is ever present in the abstract work that was made to be more than decoration. Things don’t need to look like things. The benefit of abstract painting is that it destroys the old problem of dualism, that the material and the mental are separate. When successful, abstract painting has the capacity to bring the world of experience and the life of the self together. The subject and the object do not stand apart, instead unity is possible. Abstraction recognizes that we are at all times within the bounds of experience.

This is the attraction of Krakovsky’s brand of abstraction. Her paintings are both out of time—they could have been painted fifty years ago—and profoundly of these times. It was the aesthetic philosopher Nelson Goodman who observed that realism is particular to its place and moment; it is merely a form of representation. One might say that realism is shaped by the needs of the time and its use. For Dorothy Krakovsky, realism, and thereby the real, is apprehended through the use of abstraction. She is able to assert feeling and the reality of modern life.

Is this abstract expressionism? Maybe. It is certainly a form of abstraction and expression. But clinging to the idea of a dead movement keeps Krakovsky in the past in a way that is unfair to her own art. She would be better served to think of herself as an abstract painter, nothing more, and nothing less. The power and importance of abstract expressionism resides in its origin. It was the product of a different world. That world is now gone. We should hope never to see anything like it again. Dorothy Krakovsky, though, is still here. She should dispense with labels and let the paintings really be only hers. 🍷

# An Unexpected American Utopia

► An American Utopia: Fredric Jameson in Conversation with Stanley Aronowitz. Co-sponsored by the Writers' Institute and the Ph.D. Program in Comparative Literature. CUNY Graduate Center, Mar. 20.

## francisco fortuño bernier

“REINSTATE THE DRAFT, MILITARIZE everything, and radically transform society...by universalizing the army.” It sounds like the starting point of a dystopian novel, but it is in fact the political program of Fredric Jameson’s newly proposed utopia.

Tellingly, Jameson’s provocative “universal utopian army” is inspired by a political cartoon: Dwight Eisenhower, in full military uniform, stands perched over his desk in the Oval Office while offering a rebuttal to those calling for socialized medicine à la Canada, “If they want socialized medicine, let them join the Army!”

The implication is obvious; it is only inside military institutions that society has the possibility of being organized in a radically different way. To be specific, American society, for Jameson’s and Aronowitz’s conversation is an “Exercise in American Exceptionalism.”

But Jameson’s exposition did not start with Eisenhower’s statement, the cartoon, or the army. Instead, he traced the trajectory of two historic failures. On the one hand, there is the epoch-making defeat of revolutionary movements throughout the world that has rendered the concept of “revolution as obsolete, and on

the other, the total bankruptcy of reformism and the end of social democracy. In other words, Jameson delineated the unviability of two strategies described by Antonio Gramsci (the war of movement and the war of positions). Interestingly, Jameson’s identification of the end of “revolution” stands in an ironic relation to the overall Leninist undertone of his utopian proposition. Although unmentioned, Lenin reappears in one of his most powerful incarnations, with an echo of anarchism, for Jameson aims to cut the Gordian knot of reform or revolution by reference to a third strategy, that of dual power.

Why the focus on the army and not on other institutions such as unions—a traditional focus of the Left—or even more recent movements such as mass uprisings in the vein of the Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street? Jameson describes unions as having been completely



integrated, and as Aronowitz pointed out; they have lost all references to changing the status quo and are rather devoted to offering people the possibility of “the good life.” The reasons for discarding the manifestations of popular discontent as exemplars of vehicles for social change were not exposed in detail, but at least in the case of Occupy Wall Street, a movement whose merits were otherwise recognized, Jameson’s criticism is convincing. OWS was a movement that substituted technological innovation for political organization. In essence, the military ends up being Jameson’s preferred avenue of organization because it is the only institution that goes beyond the boundaries of liberalism. The military, and, we should add, the rest of the national security establishment, are the only political organizations that transcend the Constitution.

Jameson’s decision to resume the practice of proposing utopias stems from a biting criticism of political theory, particularly its normative pretensions. Political theory stands condemned of being historically guilty of stifling change and for attempting to halt radical transformations. From Aristotle to Kant and beyond, political theory has

sought to arrive at the theoretical understanding of the foundational moment of politics and has taken the writing down of constitutions as the culmination of such a foundational moment. But it has failed as a discipline to make obvious the counterrevolutionary implications of founding a new order. When the foundation is done, no change is legitimate, and power is constituted to enforce acceptance. In other words, liberalism is the theory of the eternal end, or of the end eternalized.

The fundamental “lesson of the Army” is that it is the only institution beyond the modern fetish of American society, the Constitution. Not only right-wing lunatics, but also committed leftists, even of the socialist or communist kind, find themselves beholden to this document of unity and order. Jameson opposes this fetishistic constitutionalism by reference to a fundamental insight provided by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Namely, that collectivity is unthinkable, that the reality in fact is diversity. Does this mean that Jameson is calling on us to dispense with such commonplace concepts of politics as the state, the nation, or class? In the case of the first two, the answer is unequivocally yes, even if the irony of setting and topic is recognized (a state institution and American utopia). As for class, Jameson only retains the concept analytically through reference to Karl Marx, for whom class did not represent the new name of an institutionalized collectivity or an identity, but rather a category for analysis and—in times that now seem long forgotten—for practical politics.

Jameson’s attempt to distance his own thought from political theory also responds to the way in which the discipline contrasts with utopian thought. In Jameson’s own words, “political theory poses problems without solutions” and “utopian thinking imagines solu-

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tions without problems.” If, for example, Samuel Huntington famously claimed in 1968 that in conditions of “underdevelopment” more democracy makes countries ungovernable, Jameson retorted that given any conditions, democracy is not governable. Thus, the key characteristic of any genuine democracy is that it is ungovernable, hence Jameson’s call to abandon government as such.

We have to be clear; the call for “reinstating the draft and universalizing the army” is truly utopian, crafted in the grand tradition of the likes of Charles Fourier, not an absurd attempt to shock an audience. Jameson’s proposal is detailed in its plans for recognizing diversity and producing substantive equality in such a way that it evokes and provokes the imagination. It requires one to think of a possible society beyond the limits of any lame late-capitalist imagination. But how should one approach this proposal, which is in fact, shocking? In Stanley Aronowitz’s opinion, we should take it very seriously. His only issue with Jameson’s proposal is the qualification of utopia as “the impossible.” Alluding to Herbert Marcuse’s “The End of Utopia”, Aronowitz points out that “if utopia means the impossible, then global capitalism, which seems to make everything possible, has changed the problem.” In this sense, we are beyond the problem of utopia.

Furthermore, Aronowitz detailed the problem of the abandonment of the concept (or dream) of “revolution.” After three decades of neoliberal onslaught, the Left has lost its ability to think beyond the immediateness of defense. In this way, it has circumscribed itself for too long to organizing against the dismantling of the liberal welfare state, an institution that poses a problem in and of itself. Nevertheless, what lies behind neoliberalism is the ideological manufacturing of scarcity as an economic fact. In order to show the reality that neoliberalism hides, Aronowitz calls attention to capitalism’s own achievements. For instance, we need only look at the monstrous developments in the level of commodity production to understand that problems like uneven distribution and ecological calamities could be stopped. Utopian thinking becomes an exercise in seeking out and exploring the possibilities created by actually existing capitalism.

For those who approach Jameson’s proposal with a great deal of skepticism, Aronowitz provides a reminder: the creation of a volunteer army was not only a political ploy to diffuse opposition to war (specifically to the Vietnam War), but also an invitation to fascism. In recent times, this development has found its form in the increasing privatization of war and the disturbing presence of far

right extremism among the ranks of the military.

Aronowitz also invited those present to consider the implications of socialist experiments with renewed eyes. In describing his own political trajectory, he described himself as a council communist, who arrived there by way of Stalinism. “And you shouldn’t be so appalled” he warned those who gasped, for communist practice in the twentieth century, both within state structures and beyond them, provides at least an important experience through which to consider the actual problems of attempting to create a new society. Thus, he invites us to consider problems such as bureaucracy and transition. The former prompts the question: Will those who are in charge, even in a utopia, relegate themselves to coordination and forgo the opportunity to use power to cement their own position? Concerning the latter, one has to keep in mind that although revolutionary thought may propose socialism, justifying the ideology as a method to get to a further aim, specifically a truly utopian communist and communistic society, the problem then becomes the permanence of the transitory period.

How seriously should Jameson’s proposal be taken? “Without a proposal, we remain hopeless romantics,” stated Aronowitz. Aronowitz provided us with a guide on how to interpret the universal utopian army. It should not be, seen as a case of that traditionally Leninist trope of “two steps back, one step forward,” although it could be considered as a kind of detour into utopian socialism that would allow us to think beyond the limits of scientific socialism. Nor should it be seen as a vain attempt at “third-wayism,” the insidious tendency to propose a third way that is self-justified by its mere existence. Instead, what we are dealing with is an attempt to truly produce new problems, in theory and in practice, through the imagination of a new world.

Jameson’s proposal is modest, if we take into account the problems facing humanity in general, and in particular, the problems related to the transformation of the world. As the event ended, someone asked me: “Who is this universal army? Us?” To drive home the irony, at the event’s outset, the presenter had contextualized it all nicely. The talk was held in celebration of the creation of a new Critical Theory Certificate Program, a crucially important step from the point of view of student’s in relation to the job market. The presenter’s comment might have been, even if unintentionally, the most insightful kernel of truth of the night if one were, as Marx would say, only to stand it on its head and peel off the mystical shell. ☹



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# JACOBIN

# A Purim Spiel at Baruch



► *The Megile of Itzik Manger*. Music by Dov Seltzer. Book and Lyrics by Shmuel Bunim, Haim Hefer, Itzik Manger, and Dov Seltzer. Directed by Motl Didner. In Yiddish with English and Russian supertitles. 6 March 2014.

## dan venning

YIDDISH THEATRE IS CRUCIAL to the history of the development of theatre in New York and the United States. Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg both began their careers in this theatrical tradition—Stella’s father, Jacob

Adler, was one of the most notable stars of New York’s Yiddish theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century, known particularly for his sympathetic portrayal of Shylock in a Yiddish translation of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. Strasberg and Adler adapted elements from Konstantin Stanislavski’s system of emotional acting, developed in Russia at the Moscow Art Theatre, into realist acting techniques that are now referred to as “Method acting” and continue to be taught in schools around the country and practiced in film, television, and on stage.



At its height in the early twentieth century, there were fifteen different companies presenting theatre in Yiddish in New York; Harold Bloom has spoken of remembering his first experience of Shakespeare being in Yiddish. Both Yiddish theatre and the language itself—spoken by Ashkenazi Jews across Eastern Europe—went into severe decline after the Nazi devastation of European Jews during the Holocaust, and after Hebrew, seen as a symbol for Zionism, won out as the official language of the new state of Israel. Today, the only company that remains from the

heyday of the Yiddish theatre in New York is the National Yiddish Theatre –Folksbiehne (“People’s Stage”). Nevertheless, while Yiddish Theatre in the United States has declined significantly in commercial viability and cultural significance over the last century, there remains a form of Jewish theatrical performance that is still taught, seen, and enjoyed in Jewish communities across the country: the Purim Spiel. Purim is a holiday celebrating how Jews in ancient Persia survived an attempted genocide thanks to the Jewish queen Esther and her guardian Mordecai. The story is portrayed in The Book of Esther in the Christian Old Testament, but is often referred to as the Megillah, or “Scroll.” In many respects, Purim is a sort of Jewish Carnival performance, celebrating the survival of Jewish peoples in a most desperate time.

In the story, King Ahasuerus (Akheshveyresh in *The Megile of Itzik Manger*, possibly the historical Ataxerxes) is enraged when his wife Vashti refuses to “display her beauties” to lords at a feast. Vashti is removed (or executed) and the King holds a beauty contest to choose his new wife, selecting the Esther. Haman (Homen in *Megile*), the King’s advisor, is envious of Mordecai (Mordkhe in *Megile*), who gains favor by exposing a plot to kill the King and hates Jews in general—he convinces the King to plan a pogrom of all the Jews in the land. Esther bravely approaches her husband without his permission (which could result in her execution) and convinces him to spare the Jews, Haman and his sons are executed instead.

The festival of Purim, in addition to recitations of the Megillah, often includes masquerades or Purim Spielen, comic plays in which performers and children will dress up as characters from the ancient story. Haman’s name is often blotted out during these performances with shouting, noise from wooden instruments, or spitting whenever it is uttered, and his defeat is celebrated by eating Hamantaschen, small pastries filled with fruit or candy and shaped like triangles in reference to the hat supposedly worn by Haman.

Itzik Manger was a Yiddish folk playwright and poet who began his career in Austria-Hungary and Poland in the 1920s. He wrote his version of the Purim story in 1936 in Warsaw during the increasing tide of Nazi anti-Semitism. In 1958 he immigrated to Israel. His works were hailed as important contributions to Jewish modernism, in particular his *Songs of the Megillah*, which set the Purim story in a vaguely contemporary world. This version broadened the work’s scope and politicized it, increasing the seriousness and resonance of the story of Esther

in a time of increased anti-Semitism. In 1965, the Israeli conductor and composer Dov Seltzer adapted *Songs of the Megillah* into a musical, where it was a major success. Despite being presented in Yiddish, major political figures such as Golda Meir made shows of appearing at performances. In 1968 Seltzer's adaptation was presented in New York on Broadway at the John Golden Theatre, performed by the Burstein family, prominent stars of New York's Yiddish theatre in the mid-twentieth century. The current revival at Baruch College's Center for Performing Arts was first presented in 2013.

When the show begins, a small, brightly colored wagon sits onstage. A narrator, Loyfer (Avi Hoffman), dressed as a sort of circus ringleader, appears, explaining (in English) that a touring group of performers will present a Purim Spiel, and that the remainder of the show will be in Yiddish. The full cast appears performing circus tricks and they turn the wagon into the backdrop for the show—a colorful outline of a city that looks vaguely Persian, cartoonish, and reminiscent of Chagall's whimsical expressionism. Throughout the rest of the show, the nine actors play a variety of roles, alternating between their main parts and ensemble characters. Some present multiple main characters, such as Stephen Mo Hanan, who plays both King Akheshveyresh and Fanfosse, the Jewish leader of the Tailor's guild, and Adam Shapiro, who plays both the Jewish hero Mordkhe and the villain, Homen. Central characters are often presented with masks, reminiscent of Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, to highlight their archetypal nature. Several elements of the show, such as Mordkhe's prevention of the assassination plot against the King, a dream in which Homen imagines he is being shamed by Mordkhe, or birds that are a central part of one song, are presented using various styles of puppetry. The shadow puppetry used during the assassination plot is in fact reminiscent of Persian shadow puppetry performed in antiquity.

At the opening, Loyfer introduces King Asheshveyresh as a drunkard, completely unsuited for leadership. Homen

is introduced early in the story, feuding, in this version, with Vashti (Rebecca Karen), and comes up with the idea of suggesting that the King summon her to the banquet naked. When she refuses, it is also Homen who suggests her execution. Before she is executed, Vashti sings an elegiac lament ("Vashtis Klogid" [Vashti's Song of Protest]), while an aerial silk dancer (Rachel Yucht) performs a routine that suggests Vashti's impending hanging. It is at this early point in the show that *The Megile of Itzik Manger* reveals that it is not a traditional comic Purim Spiel—



Vashti's song is a heartfelt protest against the tyranny of unjust executions. As Hanan always plays King Akheshveyresh as a bumbling fool, we see through his actions that his misrule is in fact far more nefarious.

The beauty contest is a short comic interlude in which the other contestants are played by thinly-disguised male members of the ensemble. Notably, when Akheshveyresh selects Esther (Stacey Harris) as his new bride, he drops a glass on the ground and stomps on it—a Jewish wedding tradition. This is one of many moments

in which the actors reveal that they are portraying not just their characters, but also Jewish performers playing those characters. Similarly, throughout the show the whole cast spits whenever Homen's name is mentioned. Everything within *The Megile of Itzik Manger* is presented within the frame of Jewish performance. Esther herself is portrayed not as an ingénue, but as a woman who survives in the court of Akheshveyresh (and saves the Jewish people) because she is herself an adept performer. We see her meticulously prepare for the beauty contest, we see her in bed with her much older husband (to whom she is clearly not attracted), and ultimately her victory over Homen comes when she is able to outwit him by making herself seem weaker than she actually is.

Manger added characters to the original Esther story—

most notably Fastrigosse (Andrew Keltz), a young Jewish tailor who had been engaged to Esther before she won the beauty contest and married the King. Fastrigosse has the most memorable songs in the show—“Di Elegiye Fun Fastrigose [Fastrigosse’s Elegy]” and “A Grus Mit Di Feygl [A Greeting from the Birds].” The forlorn young man decides to kill the King and there is a second failed assassination attempt. Homen blames Fastrigosse’s attempted crime on the entire Jewish people, subsequently having one of his sons publish anti-Semitic propaganda. At this point in the show, actual newspapers headlines from the 1930s with anti-Semitic script are projected onto the backdrop. Homen suggests the pogrom and the King eagerly agrees. In the show’s central moment of political irony, the King decrees genocide while singing about how much he loves life, “S’a Mekhaye [How Sweet It Is].” Fastrigosse’s execution is movingly lamented by his mother (Hannah D. Scott) and the tailor’s guild, led by Fanfosse, with whom Esther creates a plan to save the Jewish people. Esther hosts a feast and invites Homen, who is given a special gown by the tailors. As the King enters the feast, Esther approaches Homen and causes his gown to fall off. She shrieks, and it appears as if Homen were attempting to sexually assault her. Using her wiles and the King’s love for her, Esther is thus able to disgrace Homen. The King reverses his decree and it is Homen (and his sons) who are executed. The story comes to a close with the celebratory song “L’khayim [To Life]” and praise for Mordkhe, the “good King Akheshveyresh” and “innocent Esther,” words which can only be read ironically in light of the political musical we have just seen. The show ends at this point, without an explicit return to the frame story of the traveling Jewish theatre troupe.

*The Megile of Itzik Manger* is a crucial link to twentieth-century Jewish literature and to the history of Yiddish theatre in the United States. It is a valuable show for the National Yiddish Theatre to have revived, especially over Purim, in New York at Baruch College. Additionally, the show’s reliance on multiple types of performance (circus-style performance, *Commedia*-style mask work, puppetry, and foreign-language performance) introduces audiences to a variety of styles that are seen onstage less than they might deserve. However, the show was uneven throughout, especially in the actors’ performances. Hanan, an expert clown, is a comic star, as also are Akheshveyresh and Fanfosse; Keltz and Keren excel in their roles as Fastrigosse and Vashti, providing the most moving moments of the show in their musical numbers; Hoffman, on his

part, is an entertaining and effective ringleader throughout as Loyfer. But the rest of the cast delivers middling performances. Some of the performance problems have to do with the language—although several of the younger cast members are members of the Folksbiehne’s troupe, I got the sense that some have not mastered the Yiddish language.

In addition to some poor performances, Jenny Romaine’s set was cartoonish and Merete Muentzer’s choreographies were over-the-top, evidenced by some of the performers lacking in their ability to successfully execute juggling and acrobatic routines. The director, Motl Didner, is most at fault here for not having rehearsed all his scenes and musical numbers until they worked on a moment-to-moment basis, as well as for not cutting the circus routines that the actors could not perform well.

Perhaps the most successful element of the show was the music, performed by a Klezmer band including the Folksbeihne’s Artistic Director Zalmen Mlotek on piano, Dmitri Zisl Sepovitch on clarinet, Lauren Brody on accordion, Dmitry Ishenko on bass, and Matt Temkin on drums. The band performed with such energy that in spite of a mixed performance on the part of the cast, the audience was excited enough at the end to join in and clap along with the upbeat numbers.

The National Yiddish Theatre is presenting an important work with this revival of *The Megile of Itzik Manger*, and I am glad to have seen this link to the dynamic history of Yiddish theatre in New York. But for Yiddish theatre to remain vital and attract new audiences (most of the audience members appeared to be around retirement-age, excepting a few younger parents and young children), the Folksbeihne must commit to a higher standard of performance. *The Megile of Itzik Manger* is much more than a traditional Purim Spiel for families—it is a modernist work of great political, social, and theatrical value. Sadly, in the current production this value, at times, can be hardly recognized. 🍷

*The Megile of Itzik Manger*. Music by Dov Seltzer. Book and Lyrics by Shmuel Bunim, Haim Hefer, Itzik Manger, and Dov Seltzer. Directed by Motl Didner. Presented by The National Yiddish Theatre—Folksbiehne. Music direction by Zalmen Mlotek. Choreography by Merete Muentzer. Production design by Jenny Romaine. Lighting Design by Natalie Robin. Sound Design by Benjamin Furiga. Stage Management by Shayna O’Neill. Featuring: Stephen Mo Hanan, Stacey Harris, Avi Hoffman, Andrew Keltz, Rebecca Keren, Alan Schmuckler, Hanna D. Scott, Adam Shapiro, and Rachel Yucht. In Yiddish with English and Russian supertitles. At the Baruch College Performing Arts Center. 2—16 March, 2014. Tickets \$28—\$40.

# Help Pick the Next President

## Student Participation in the Presidential Search

THE SEARCH FOR A new Graduate Center president was announced last month. Two of the DSC Co-Chairs, Colin Ashley and Amy Martin, will serve as student reps on the search committee. Please send them any input, including and especially names of potential candidates. They can be reached at [ccsa@cunydisc.org](mailto:ccsa@cunydisc.org) (Amy) and [ccb@cunydisc.org](mailto:ccb@cunydisc.org) (Colin).

### Timeline:

- ▶ The call for applications has gone out and applications are due on April 7.
- ▶ The committee will be reviewing applicants and holding interviews during April and May.
- ▶ Campus visits are schedule the 1 two weeks of June.

### Nomination Process:

The committee has published the job announcement in and across several mediums, however they have requested direct nominations/suggestions from the Graduate Center Community. The board will reach out to those folks who are suggested directly. Students are encouraged to send suggestions to the two student representatives (Amy and Colin) but can also send them directly to Dr. Jonathan Cole (search committee consultant) at: [jrc5@columbia.edu](mailto:jrc5@columbia.edu) or to the following email: [executivesearch@cuny.edu](mailto:executivesearch@cuny.edu). Suggestions should include the nominee's name, contact info, current institution, and a short bio.

At the March 4 visit of the search committee to the GC, several GC community members raised

concerns over the short notice given to the visit and the minimal extent of its announcement. The DSC will try to schedule another visit with the search committee in early April as well as a GC student town hall for students to air concerns and suggestions to the student reps on the committee. Look out for these announcements and please feel free to email us comments if you can't make those meetings. Another concern raised at that March 4 meeting was that the dates of the campus visits were scheduled while many in the community would be away from campus. The student representatives will raise this concern to the committee again.

## DSC News

THE DSC BROUGHT FORTH a resolution against the drafted CUNY Expressive Conduct Policy at Graduate Council, which passed unanimously at the March meeting. It resolved that as a university founded as the result of dissent, CUNY should uphold the highest standard of free speech and assembly, and called on the University administration to withdraw from any further consideration by the Board of Trustees the proposed "Policy on Expressive Conduct" and any successor drafts that may be issued.

At the March 21, 2014 plenary meeting, the French Students' Association was created. There was also an election for an Officer for Governance and Membership to serve the remainder of the term, and Ashna Ali was elected.

The next DSC meeting is April 11, 2014, at 6:00 p.m. in 5414. Interim President Chase Robinson and Interim Provost Louise Lennihan will be our guest speakers at the opening of the meeting.

The "bench sciences" are apparently going to split from the Graduate Center—though no official information has been made available to students, and students were not involved in any of the committees formed at CUNY Central to address this potential change. Students who are interested in this issue can join the ad hoc committee on Science Program Restructuring. Email Anne Donlon, [ccc@cunydisc.org](mailto:ccc@cunydisc.org) to be put in touch with the committee.

## Annual Wellness Festival

THE ANNUAL WELLNESS FESTIVAL will take place on Thursday, April 10 from 10am-4:30pm on the Concourse Level. Come for giveaways, wellness information, health screenings, fitness classes, free chair massages for Graduate Center students sponsored by the DSC, and more! Jen Prince, Officer for Health & Wellness, and Jenn Chancellor, Adjunct Project Coordinator, will hold a Navigating NYSHIP workshop.

Health & Wellness also solicits student feedback on the Mental Health & Substance Abuse provider transition to ValueOptions on its blog, [opencuny.org/healthdsc](http://opencuny.org/healthdsc).

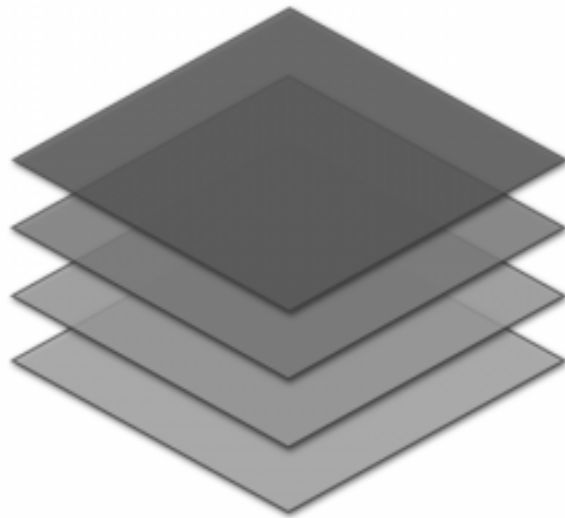
## Elections

THE BALLOT FOR DSC elections will go live April 1. Keep an eye on your GC email for more info. 🗳️

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### 1. Decode the Shapes

Can you replace each shape with a distinct digit so that the result of the below summation is correctly calculated?

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 \end{array}$$

### 2. Detect the Dishonest Couple

Suppose a group of at least five friends have gathered around a table. You know that all of them are honest, except for two of them who always tell the reverse of the truth.

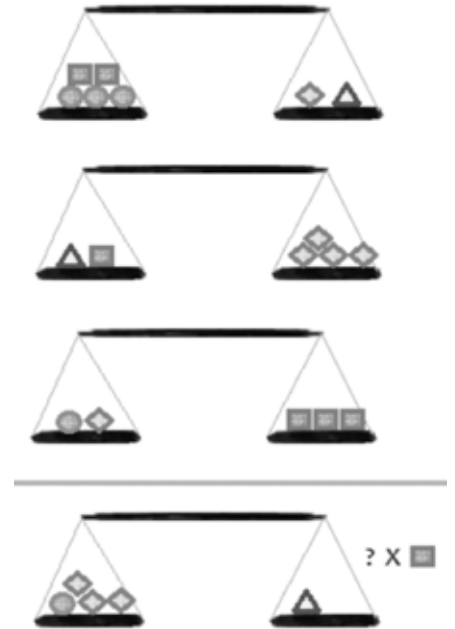
Everyone at the table knows which two are dishonest. You only know that the dishonest couple are sitting adjacent to each other. Every person on the table makes two announcements:

- 1) Whether the person sitting on their right is honest.
- 2) Whether the person sitting on their left is honest.

Could you detect the dishonest couple using only the given information? If so, how?

### 3. Scales

How many squares do you need on the right pan to balance the last scale?



solutions on page 33

## ph.d. comics BY JORGE CHAM

