

# Peace & Planet News

*Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster*  
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## Capitalism Versus Life

By Ian Angus

From a recent report on the consequences of climate change:

“Sea level rise, changes in water and food security, and more frequent extreme weather events are likely to result in the migration of large segments of the population. Rising seas will displace tens (if not hundreds) of millions of peo-

*If nothing stops it,  
capital will try to  
expand infinitely, but  
Earth is not infinite  
... and capitalism is  
now pressing against  
those limits.*

ple, creating massive, enduring instability. ... Salt water intrusion into coastal areas and changing weather patterns will also compromise or eliminate fresh wa-



At the People's Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2015. Photo: Ellen Davidson.

ter supplies in many parts of the world. ... A warming trend will also increase the range of insects that are vectors of infectious tropical diseases. This, coupled with large-scale human migration from tropical nations, will increase the spread of infectious disease.”

What makes this report significant is that it was commissioned by the Pentagon and it was published by the U.S. Army War College.

The report recommends strengthening the U.S. military, already the biggest war machine on Earth, to protect the U.S. em-

pire from the consequences of the environmental chaos. When the U.S. military embarks on a campaign, the result is always devastation and destruction for the poor and oppressed.

The U.S. Army, unlike the U.S. presi-  
*continued on page 8 ...*

## COVID-19 and the Wasting Disease of Normalcy

*The pandemic has brought home what the threats of global destruction by climate change and nuclear war should have long ago—that the promises of normalcy will never deliver in the end, that they are lies that lead those who trust in them to the ruin.*

By Brian Terrell

“But what of the price of peace?” asked Jesuit priest and war resister Daniel Berrigan, writing from federal prison in 1969, doing time for his part in the destruction of draft records. “I think of the good, decent, peace-loving people I have known by the thousands, and I wonder. How many of them are so afflicted with the wasting disease of normalcy that, even as they declare for the peace, their hands reach out with an instinctive spasm in the direction of their loved ones, in the direction of their comforts, their home, their security, their income, their future, their plans—that 20-year plan of family growth and unity, that 50-year plan of decent life and honorable natural demise.”

From his prison cell in a year of mass movements to end the war in Vietnam and mobilizations for nuclear disarmament, Daniel Berrigan diagnosed normalcy as a disease and labeled it an obstacle to peace. “Of course, let us have the peace,” we cry, “but at the same time let us have normalcy, let us lose nothing, let

our lives stand intact, let us know neither prison nor ill repute nor disruption of ties.” And because we must encompass this and protect that, and because at all costs—at all costs—our hopes must march on schedule, and because it is unheard of that in the name of peace a sword should fall, disjoining that fine and cunning web that our lives have woven ... because of this we cry peace, peace, and there is no peace.”

Fifty-one years later, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the very notion of normalcy is being questioned

*‘There is a lot of talk about  
returning to “normal” after  
the COVID-19 outbreak,’ says  
climate activist Greta Thunberg,  
‘but normal was a crisis.’*

as never before. While Donald Trump is “chomping at the bit” to return the economy to normal very soon based on a metric in his own head, more reflective voices are saying that a return to normal, now or even in the future, is an intolerable threat to be resisted.

*continued on page 4 ...*



Phillip and Daniel Berrigan burn draft records in Catonsville, Md., in 1968.



# From Our Readers

## Hate Crimes

When I was a child there was a small local airport in a rural, sparsely populated area known as Island Road. It had one dirt landing strip used by private pilots. Now that space is dominated by the Philadelphia International Airport. My grandparents lived in a small house within easy walking distance of the airport, as well as the Delaware River, where they raised five children, my father being the last. I spent my happiest childhood summers at that house, having adventures in the surrounding fields. They were dirt poor, surviving on what little income could be provided by my grandfather. He was one of the last bookbinders in Philadelphia, who worked his craft with his hands and the most basic of tools. He repaired and maintained the libraries of religious texts for neighboring synagogues, and they managed to get through the Great Depression.

One kid I knew, Joe, who was older and bigger than me, caught me out in the field and brought me down. He pinned me on my back with his knees, spit in my face, and gave me my earliest, and scariest exposure to anti-Semitism. As I vividly remember, Joe said to me, "You're a Jew, and Jews go to hell." I asked him what hell was. He told me it was under the ground, that they put melted pitch (asphalt) in your mouth, that they set it on fire, and that they kept doing that forever and ever. Some things you never forget!

When my grandmother died, my grandfather lived alone in that old house, and continued repairing and delivering books as he had done for many years. One summer night some person, or persons, entered the house and beat him almost to death, breaking a number of his old bones in the process, and leaving him bruised and bleeding. I have no memory of how he was discovered there. But the family had me take care of him for quite a long time. I could not have been more than 10 years old. My grandfather healed and went back to work. One morning, one of my uncles came to our house, and said, "Well, it's all over" to my parents. My grandfather had been out in the field carrying books on his way to a synagogue. He never got there. He was murdered a short distance from home. The murder weapon was a wooden two-by-four. Contrary to popular belief, most murders do not get solved. This one didn't. I loved my grandparents.

—Stan Levin, San Diego VFP, Navy, Korean War

## Fifty Years Ago

May 15, 1970, two Jackson (Mississippi) State University students were murdered (and 12 were wounded) by police authorities. On that day I walked away from Marine Corps Air Station El Toro a free man, having been awarded an honorable discharge as a conscientious objector.

I spent the next three days hitchhiking back to Blue Ridge, Texas, and my grandmother's farm. For the next several months I worked from dawn to dusk, going to bed and waking up "with the chickens" and hearing no news of any kind, certainly absolutely nothing about resistance to the war or about the murderous mayhem at Jackson State. I did not know that those Black students had died on the precise day that I regained my own personal (white-privileged) liberty.

In September that year I left the farm for college. At the University of Texas campus, I soon became known as the Marine Corps conscientious objector. Although I knew next to nothing about the American War against the Viet Nameese against which I had objected, I was handed a microphone and asked to speak. Flattered, I did so.

What did I have to say? Only what I heard mentioned on the campus among virtually all white antiwar activists who spoke about the unconscionable murders of students that had occurred earlier that year (May 5, 1970) at Kent State University in Ohio. I was introduced as the young Marine who had gotten discharged as a CO during the month of the killing of the students at Kent State University.

It was years till it dawned on me that I had been discharged on the very day, (May 15, 1970) of another murder of students, that of the two young Black Students at Jackson State.

Since then I have learned that those killings were not, in fact, the first killings in Jackson, Miss., of young Black people.

My emphasis on Kent State was not because of the state killing children. Rather, it was because of the perceived horror accompanying the fact that the state had killed white students who resembled us, the antiwar activists.

My and our not knowing was an unconscious act of racism. It was the racism of not noticing, a collective transgression against those Jackson State youngsters, a transgression of not noticing, hence not knowing. May 15, 1970, was the day of that Jackson State tragedy ... and of my freedom from state-sanctioned war.

—Doug Zachary, Austin, Texas, VFP

# From the Editors

## Rewriting the Menu

We are walking through what the author Arundhati Roy calls a "portal" (page 18): the year 2020 with its plagues, wars, and civil strife offers us a chance" to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality." The year 2020 with its plagues, wars, and civil strife offers us a chance to emerge either dragging all the old militaristic, neoliberal baggage, or joining with citizens demanding a fresh, more sustainable future.

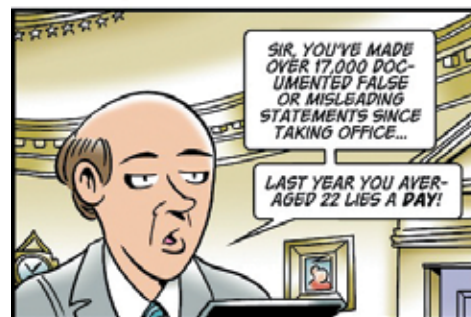
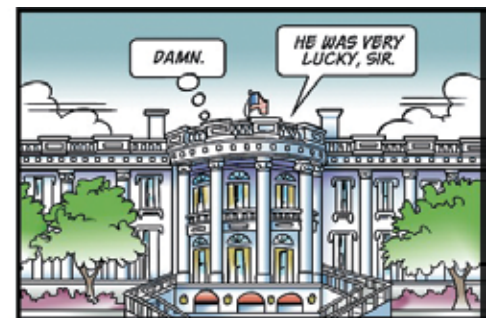
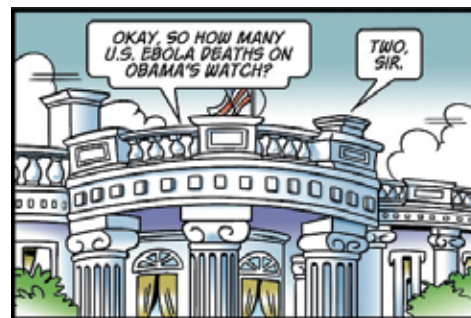
Depending upon perspective, Arundhati Roy can seem Pollyannish, or profoundly prescient. If her invitation for change is discounted by corrupt politicians and greedy corporatists, then we should prepare ourselves for the same old, same old in spades—political parties quibbling over morsels tossed their way by their multinational corporate masters while we wait like beggars for crumbs to fall to the floor. The old saying that "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu" is very much in play. But how about if we get off the floor, set the table, and write the menu, for a change? What would our world look like if we accept the chal-

lenge to work across generational borders, across racial divides, across gender lines that the powers-that-be keep throwing at us? Listen to Zapatista women talk (page 14) about grassroots resistance for women. In his essay "Either Socialism Will Defeat the Louse or the Louse will Defeat Socialism," Vijay Prashad counsels, "This darkness too will pass away. The light that welcomes us will not be, as Ngugi writes, the old light, but a new dawn."

Former Vietnam combat Marine Scott Camil unequivocally states in our centerfold interview, "The main duty of a citizen in a democracy is to control their government. Our government is out of control, and it's the duty of the citizens to do something about it."

*Peace & Planet News* is committed to offering readers narratives of world citizens unwilling to accept an unjust status quo. We want to emerge from this portal into a world where the U.S. military budget does not control our lives. We want to live in a world where our tax dollars are used to build ecologically sound infrastructures designed to save lives, not take them. We want to join forces with peace

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## Peace & Planet News

*Peace & Planet News* is published quarterly by Vietnam Full Disclosure ([vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org)) and the New York City chapter of Veterans For Peace. Bundles are \$35 for 45 and \$50 for 70. To donate, subscribe, or order bundles, visit [vietnamfulldisclosure.org/ppn](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/ppn) or send a check to NYC Veterans For Peace, 170 East 88th Street, Apt. 2C, New York, NY 10128.

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# A New Way to Fight Climate Change

*A Yurok Tribe resolution allows cases to be brought on behalf of the Klamath River as a person in tribal court.*

By Anna V. Smith

This summer, the Yurok Tribe declared rights of personhood for the Klamath River—likely the first to do so for a river in North America. A concept previously restricted to humans (and corporations), “rights of personhood” means, most simply, that an individual or entity has rights, and they’re now being extended to nonhumans. The Yuroks’ resolution, passed by the tribal council last May, comes during another difficult season for the Klamath; over the past few years, low-water flows have caused high rates of disease in salmon and cancelled fishing seasons.

With the declaration, the Yurok Tribe joins other Indigenous communities in a growing Rights of Nature movement aimed at protecting the environment. Last year, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe adopted the Rights of Manoomin to protect wild rice—manoomin—and the freshwater sources it needs to survive in Minnesota. And in 2017, the New Zealand government adopted the Rights of the Whanganui River, stemming from a treaty process with Māori iwis, or tribes, that gives the river its own legal standing in court. “By granting the rights of personhood to the Klamath River, not only does it create laws and legal advocacy routes, but it’s also an expression of Yurok values,” says Geneva Thompson, associate general counsel for the tribe and citizen of the Cherokee Nation, who worked on the resolution. “The idea is that the laws of a nation are an expression of the nation’s values.”

The Yurok resolution draws inspiration from the Rights of Manoomin, as well as the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which enshrines the right of Indigenous people to conserve and protect their lands and resources. Legal personhood provides a different framework for dealing with problems like pollution, drought, and climate change, though no case has yet been brought to put the Whanganui, Manoomin, or Klamath rights to the test in court. The crucial aspect to



Four Yurok girls in traditional tribal ceremonial clothing stand before the mouth of the Klamath River.  
Photo: Will Houston/AP

establishing these legal frameworks, Indigenous lawyers say, involves shifting relationships and codifying Indigenous knowledge—in other words, recognizing non-human entities not as resources, but as rights-holders.

“From New Zealand to Colombia, the powerful idea that nature has rights is taking root in legal systems,”

*‘The idea is that the laws of a nation are an expression of the nation’s values.’*

says David Boyd, U.N. special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, of the Yurok Tribe’s resolution. “We must no longer view the natural world as a mere warehouse of commodities for humans to exploit, but rather a remarkable community to which we belong and to whom we owe responsibilities.”

In essence, the Yurok resolution means that if the river is harmed, a case can be made in Yurok tribal court to remedy the problem. Currently, says Yurok Tribe General Counsel Amy Cordalis, laws like the Clean Water or Endangered Species acts can be used to protect rivers by addressing symptoms of problems like diseased fish or pollution. But the Yurok resolution seeks to address the river’s problems directly and holistically, including the impacts of climate change. “You’re working towards making the river whole again,” Cordalis says.

In December 2018, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe and the 1855 Treaty Authority, an organization that upholds treaty rights for Chippewa bands, established legal personhood for wild rice. The resolution draws from the Rights of Nature—an international concept that argues that nature should have the same rights as humans—and is the first law to recognize legal rights of plant species. The rights spell out that within White Earth and other Chippewa ceded territories, wild rice has “inherent rights to restoration, recovery, and preservation,” including “the right to pure water and freshwater habitat,” the right to a healthy climate, and “a natural environment free from human-caused global warming.” Frank Bibeau, executive director of the 1855 Treaty Authority and a White Earth tribal member, says the rights are an extension of Ojibwe treaty rights both on and off the reservation. And they may soon be put to the test—the pro-

posed crude oil Enbridge Line 3 pipeline, which requires state approval, would cross into off-reservation areas where manoomin and freshwater sources are.

The resolutions give tribal nations new legal strategies for use in court, especially in regards to climate change: “The idea of having legal avenues to address the harms of climate change is an important next step as legal systems adapt to the climate crisis,” says Thompson at the Yurok Tribe. And they also encourage a change in mindset, says Maia Wikaira, an environmental law attorney who worked with the Yurok Tribe’s legal team, and a member of the Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Te Rarawa, and Ngāpuhi tribes of New Zealand. As tribal nations establish rights for nonhumans, it creates an opportunity for states to follow suit and incorporate the concept into their own court systems. “It’s another example of where long-held Indigenous perspectives and association with the natural world are not only being embedded within our legal system—they’re being seen in popular environmental movements as an innovative way forward and a necessary step,” Wikaira says. “So, old is new again.”

Rights of nature have already been established in Colombia, Ecuador, and India, with varying success, and

*‘You’re working towards making the river whole again.’*

have also appeared in non-Native communities in the United States. In Ohio last February, voters passed a law—which is already being challenged—granting Lake Erie personhood rights. An attempt in 2017 by Coloradans to force the state to grant the Colorado River rights of personhood collapsed after the state threatened possible sanctions against the lawyer behind the case.

Now, Thompson says, the relationship between the Yurok Tribe and the Klamath River is reflected in the tribe’s law. “It shifts the conversation, and it shifts the value system, because you see the environment has a right to be clean and protected for the environments sake.”

*This story was originally published by High Country News.*

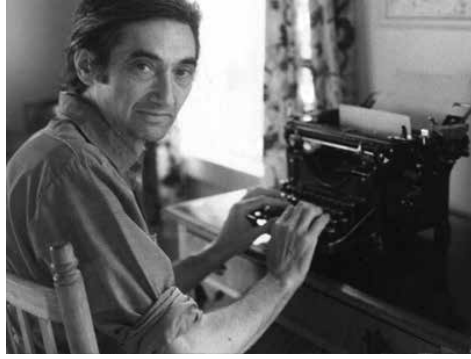
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This Is the Hour.  
Know your garden. Dig where you are.  
It’s time to speak your Truth.  
Create your community.  
Be good to each other.  
And do not look outside yourself for the leader.  
This could be a good time.  
There is a river flowing now very fast.  
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.  
They will try to hold onto the shore.  
They will feel that they are being torn apart ...  
Know that the river has its destination.  
The elders say we must let go of the shore,  
push into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open,  
and our heads above water.  
See who is there with you and celebrate ...  
The time of the lone wolf is over.  
Gather yourselves ...  
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in joyous celebration.  
—From the Orabi, Arizona, Hopi Nation Elders

# Howard Zinn on Memorial Day

Howard Zinn was invited by the Boston Globe to pen a biweekly op-ed column for the paper. He did that for about year and a half. The op-ed below appeared June 2, 1976, in connection with that year's Memorial Day. After this appeared, Zinn's column was cancelled.

By Howard Zinn



Memorial Day will be celebrated as usual, by high-speed collisions of automobiles and bodies strewn on highways and the sound of ambulance sirens throughout the land.

It will also be celebrated by the display of flags, the sound of bugles and drums, by parades and speeches and unthinking applause.

It will be celebrated by giant corporations, which make guns, bombs, fighter planes, air craft carriers and an endless assortment of military junk and which await the \$100 billion in contracts to be approved soon by Congress and the President.

There was a young woman in New Hampshire who refused to allow her husband, killed in Vietnam, to be given a military burial. She rejected the hollow

ceremony ordered by those who sent him and 50,000 others to their deaths. Her courage should be cherished on Memorial Day. There were the B52 pilots who refused to fly those last vicious raids of Nixon and Kissinger's war. Have any of the great universities, so quick to give honorary degrees to God-knows-whom, thought to honor those men at this Commencement time, on this Memorial Day?

No politician who voted funds for war, no business contractor for the military, no general who ordered young men into battle, no FBI man who spied on antiwar activities, should be invited to public ceremonies on this sacred day. Let the dead of past wars be honored. Let those who live pledge themselves never to embark on mass slaughter again.

"The shell has his number on it. The blood ran into the ground. ... Where his chest ought to have been, they pinned the Congressional Medal, the DSC, the Medaille Militaire, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, the Italian Gold medal. The Vitutea Militara sent by Queen Marie of Rumania. All the Washingtonians brought flowers. ... Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies."

Those are the concluding lines of John Dos Passos' angry novel *1919*. Let us honor him on Memorial Day.

And also Thoreau, who went to jail to protest the Mexican War.

And Mark Twain, who denounced our war against the Filipinos at the turn of the century.

And I. F. Stone, who virtually alone among newspaper editors exposed the fraud and brutality of the Korean War.

Let us honor Martin Luther King, who refused the enticements of the White House, and the cautions of associates, and thundered against the war in Vietnam.

Memorial Day should be a day for putting flowers on graves and planting trees. Also, for destroying the weapons of death that endanger us more than they protect us, that waste our resources and threaten

our children and grandchildren.

On Memorial Day we should take note that, in the name of "defense," our taxes have been used to spend a quarter of a billion dollars on a helicopter assault ship called "the biggest floating lemon," which was accepted by the Navy although it had over 2,000 major defects at the time of its trial cruise.

Meanwhile, there is such a shortage of housing that millions live in dilapidated sections of our cities and millions more are forced to pay high rents or high interest rates on their mortgages. There's \$90 billion for the B1 bomber, but people don't have money to pay hospital bills.

We must be practical, say those whose practicality has consisted of a war every generation. We mustn't deplete our defenses. Say those who have depleted our youth, stolen our resources. In the end, it is living people, not corpses, creative energy, not destructive rage, which are our only real defense, not just against other governments trying to kill us, but against our own, also trying to kill us.

Let us not set out, this Memorial Day, on the same old drunken ride to death.

Howard Zinn was an American historian, playwright, and socialist thinker who taught at Spellman College and Boston University. Author of the best-selling and influential *A People's History of the United States*, he was also a member of *Veterans For Peace* for over 20 years.

## Wasting Disease

... continued from page 1

"There is a lot of talk about returning to 'normal' after the COVID-19 outbreak," says climate activist Greta Thunberg, "but normal was a crisis."

Recently even economists with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and columnists in *The New York Times* have spoken about the urgent necessity of reordering economic and political priorities to something more human—only the thickest and cruelest minds today speak of a return to normal as a positive outcome.

Early in the pandemic, the Australian journalist John Pilger reminded the world of the baseline normal that COVID-19 exacerbates: "A pandemic has been declared, but not for the 24,600 who die every day from unnecessary starvation, and not for 3,000 children who die every day from preventable malaria, and not for the 10,000 people who die every day because they are denied publicly funded healthcare, and not for the hundreds of Venezuelans and Iranians who die every day because America's blockade denies them life-saving medicines, and not for the hundreds of mostly children bombed or starved to death every day in Yemen, in a war supplied and kept going, profitably, by America and Britain. Before you panic, consider them."

I was starting high school when Daniel Berrigan asked his question and at the time, while there obviously were wars and injustices in the world, it seemed as though if we did not take them too seriously or protest too strenuously, the

American Dream with its limitless potential was spread before us. Play the game, and our hopes would "march on schedule" was an implied promise that in 1969 looked like a sure thing, for us young white North Americans, anyway. A few years later, I abandoned normal life, dropped out after a year of college and joined the Catholic Worker movement where I came under the influence of Daniel Berrigan and Dorothy Day, but these were privileged choices that I made. I did not reject normalcy because I did not think that it could deliver on its promise, but because I wanted something else. As Greta Thunberg and the Friday school strikers for climate convict my generation, few young people, even from previously privileged places, come of age today with such confidence in their futures.

The pandemic has brought home what the threats of global destruction by climate change and nuclear war should have long ago—that the promises of normalcy will never deliver in the end, that they are lies that lead those who trust in them to the ruin. Daniel Berrigan saw this a half century ago; normalcy is an affliction, a wasting disease more dangerous to its victims and to the planet than any viral plague.

Author and human rights activist Arundhati Roy is one of many who recognizes the peril and the promise of the moment: "Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to 'normality,' trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink

the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next."

"Every crisis contains both danger and opportunity," said Pope Francis about the

Canterbury Justin Welby on Easter. "After so much suffering, so much heroism from key workers and the NHS [National Health Service] in this country and their equivalents all across the globe, once this epidemic is conquered we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all was normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal,



Daniel Berrigan at Cornell University circa 1970 in Ithaca, N.Y.

Photo: PL Gould/IMAGES/Getty Images

present situation. "Today I believe we have to slow down our rate of production and consumption and to learn to understand and contemplate the natural world. This is the opportunity for conversion. Yes, I see early signs of an economy that is less liquid, more human. But let us not lose our memory once all this is past, let us not file it away and go back to where we were."

"There are ways forward we never imagined—at huge cost, with great suffering—but there are possibilities and I'm immensely hopeful," said Archbishop of

something that links to the old but is different and more beautiful."

In these perilous times, it is necessary to use the best social practices and to wisely apply science and technology to survive the present COVID-19 pandemic. The wasting disease of normalcy, though, is the far greater existential threat, and our survival requires that we meet it with at least the same courage, generosity, and ingenuity.

Brian Terrell, [brian@vcnv.org](mailto:brian@vcnv.org), is a co-coordinator of *Voices for Creative Non-violence* and is quarantined on a Catholic Worker farm in Maloy, Iowa.



# 'You Can Find Us in the Break Room'

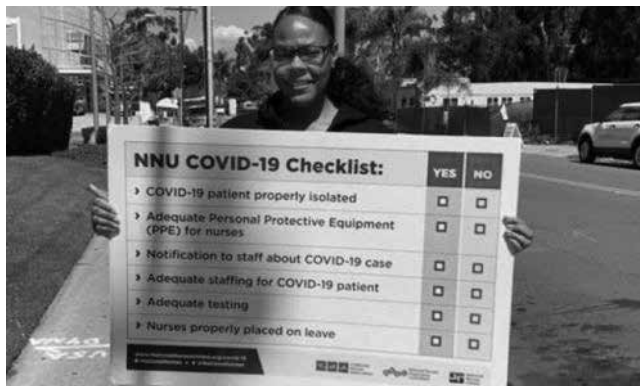
## How Nurses Got Masks

By Elizabeth Lalasz

I am a registered nurse at Cook County Hospital, the safety-net hospital in Chicago and the busiest hospital in the state. The people who come to this hospital are some of the most underserved patients, mainly people of color, immigrants—many undocumented, the uninsured and underinsured, the homeless, and the incarcerated. Our emergency room denies no one care and about 300 people per day come there for treatment.

We have yet to become a COVID-19 “hot spot” but my coworkers all know it’s coming. Nurses know our patients will be some of the hardest hit.

Already my hospital has changed drastically. We now have a whole section of the emergency room for COVID-19 patients, with isolation rooms. The critical



Nurses are using direct action at work to get the protective masks they need. Photo: NNU

care areas (for the severely ill) and the medical surgical units (for the less ill), where I work, also have COVID-19-only areas.

Nurses and other hospital staff are being exposed, showing symptoms, being tested, and being quarantined. The hospital says at least a dozen have been quarantined but my union, National Nurses United, estimates the count is higher.

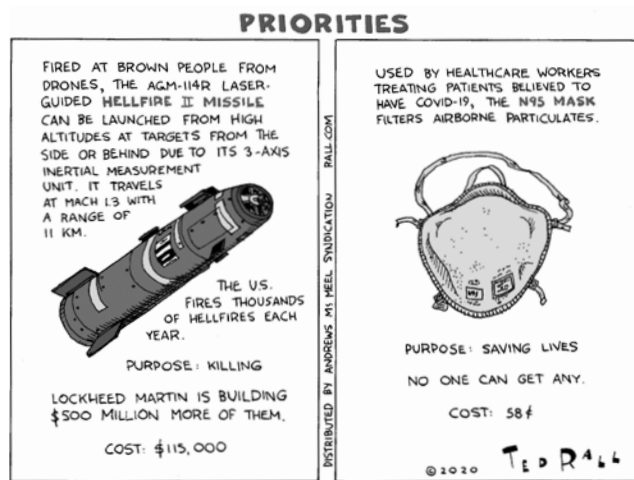
### Just-in-Time Training

With nurses out sick with COVID-19, nurses from the operating and recovery rooms are being reassigned to help out in the COVID-19-only areas—the emergency room, intensive care units (ICU), and medical-surgical units. Many have not worked in these areas before and are being given “just-in-time” training. This means a nurse is oriented to the basics of each area right before being sent to work there—much like the auto industry’s model of “lean production.”

The U.S. health care system has been run this way for years before this pandemic—on the edge, with no extra staff or supplies, to guarantee maximum profits.

All this has left nurses feeling anxious and scared. Since February, our core of stewards and activists had been pressuring management through emails and meetings to demand that the optimal personal protective equipment (PPE) of N95 masks be made readily available to us. We demanded in-person training where a qualified educator would show nurses how to correctly put on and take off the PPE and answer our questions.

In recent months, large numbers of essential workers in different industries have gone out on strike to fight for the protection they need to do their jobs safely. Nurses



and health care workers also have been speaking out. We have seen story after story about the lack of PPE in hospitals. Nurses have led socially distanced protests outside of health care facilities—six feet apart—and held car protests to demand PPE.

We are trained to help our patients. We are committed to this. Nurses have not struck, but that doesn’t mean we aren’t taking collective action. Although it may seem quieter on the outside of health care facilities right now, we are fighting back daily on the inside.

In mid-March, nurses received messages on our union leadership WhatsApp text group that a suspected COVID-19 patient had come into our emergency room. The patient needed to be intubated, but there was a problem.

There were no N95 masks readily available for the nurses and other workers helping this patient. They were locked up with the coordinator, under a new policy management had implemented to ration masks. This was despite stewards repeatedly demanding that upper management should make N95s easily accessible in our locked electronic medication cabinets (Pyxis) or on a PPE cart.

If PPE had been placed in either of these locations, steps away from where COVID-19 patients were being treated, the workers helping this patient would not have been exposed.

But it’s nearly impossible to intubate a person who is struggling to breathe and page a manager to obtain an N95 mask at the same time. Nurses, doctors, and other health care workers were exposed that day in my ER. It was criminal.

My chief steward wrote afterward, “I challenge management to prove that you can lead through this time, show concern for your employees, recognize and acknowledge the things that need to be improved, be willing to take the suggestions of those who are actually caring for these patients—the RNs—and place masks in the Pyxis. ... The ball is in your court.”

The mismanagement of this exposure in the ER was burned into nurses’ minds the following days, as an increasing number of COVID-19 patients came through the hospital doors. To ensure it didn’t happen again, groups of nurses began to organize small collective actions to demand that N95 masks be readily available.

The first instance was led by my chief steward, Consuelo Vargas, who had been at work when the ER exposure happened. It’s not surprising these actions started in our emergency room, the “hot spot” for our hospital.

Several days after the nurses were exposed, Vargas was assigned to the resuscitation area of the ER. When she entered the area, she saw that the doctors had a locked PPE cart, but the nurses had nothing.

She went to the ER coordinator and requested a PPE cart. The coordinator told her she would get one. After a short while Vargas returned to the area and still found no PPE cart for the nurses.

Several other nurses were working with Vargas. She asked them, “Are you with me?” and they said “Yes.” Vargas informed the doctors, “Once there is PPE available for us, come find us in the break room.”

The nurses walked away and sat down in the break room. Soon the ER coordinator came to demand, “What are you doing here?” The nurses replied, “Once you get us a PPE cart, we’ll come back.” The coordinator not

only found the nurses a PPE cart but handed Vargas a whole box of N95 masks.

The following week Vargas was assigned to the negative pressure room area for COVID-19 patients and again there were no N95 masks readily available. A group of nurses again went to the ER break room, saying they would come out once masks were provided.

The coordinator asked the nurses if they were having “another temper tantrum”—something management would say only to nurses, who are 80% to 90% women. But again she gave them a whole box of N95 masks.

Rank-and-file leaders discussed the steps it would take to duplicate these actions if needed throughout my hospital. We said we should have “temper tantrums” whenever and wherever we needed to, in order to get N95 masks.

There is a line to be careful not to cross. We don’t want to be seen as refusing to care for patients or lose our licenses or jobs, but we also need to protect ourselves and not get sick. It is critical for us to recognize we have power right now, even with the massive toll the pandemic is taking on us as frontline workers.

We know best how to get through this pandemic and take care of each other. Those who run the hospital know they need us.

*Originally published by Labor Notes.*

*Elizabeth Lalasz is a registered nurse in Chicago and a steward in National Nurses United.*

## Rewriting the Menu

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activists all over the world to re-set the table. We want to write a menu without ingredients of greed, violence and war.

Let’s consider nonviolence. There is much written today about the threat of armed gangs sweeping through our neighborhoods—we are being encouraged to fear either skinhead wannabe nazis or agents of the federal government, depending on your political inclinations and who you listen to for the news. What to do? Buy a shotgun? Lay

***Lastly, let’s include compassion. Not cheap pity for the suffering of others, not saccharine hand-wringing and faux-Christian platitudes that serve to distance us from the suffering of our neighbors but real compassion.***

out claymores? We prefer nonviolent activism. Some folks equate nonviolence with passivity—they might think that if you’re not prepared to violently respond to a threat, you are offering yourself up passively for sacrifice. But that’s not the way it has to be. Nonviolent direct action requires courage, discipline, commitment, and creativity. It involves going toward the malefactor, not turning aside. It is the only force that will, in the end, effectively countermand militarism and all of its offspring.

Lastly, let’s include compassion. Not cheap pity for the suffering of others, not saccharine hand-wringing and faux-Christian platitudes that serve to distance us from the suffering of our neighbors but real compassion that springs from empathy, intellectual rigor, and the unconditional love Dr. King referred to as *agape*. It’s a challenge of moral courage that we emerge from this portal as good neighbors and as smart citizens of the world. Let’s work together to save the earth and the life sustained on this living planet.

—Doug Rawlings

# Will the VA Be There for Future Veterans?

By Essam Attia

In the years after my military service in Iraq, I have walked the few blocks from my apartment to the Manhattan Veterans Affairs Medical Center hundreds of times to see my healthcare providers. The hospital, built in the wake of World War II for returning veterans, has provided me with excellent care for everything from emergency room visits and primary care to specialist visits in dermatology and otolaryngology.

As I shelter-in-place in the American epicenter of the world's worst pandemic in 100 years, I am, however, worried the VA will be unable to fulfill its missions to care for future generations of veterans or serve civilian sector patients in a national emergency.

The VA is lurching toward privatization, and quality of care is diminishing as a result.

That's because Congress has steadily weakened the Veterans Health Administration, the nation's largest healthcare system. First came the passage of the VA Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, then the VA MISSION Act of 2018. Both the Choice and MISSION Acts were supposed to offer veterans more "choice" by liberating us from the clutches of a big government bureaucracy. If I encountered a wait at the Manhattan VA, I would be sent to a private-sector doctor. The process was supposed to be both hassle-free and free of charge and I was supposed to get high-quality care in the private sector. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie assured veterans that the VA wouldn't be privatized and I'd still be able to get the same quality of care I'd received for the past 12 years.

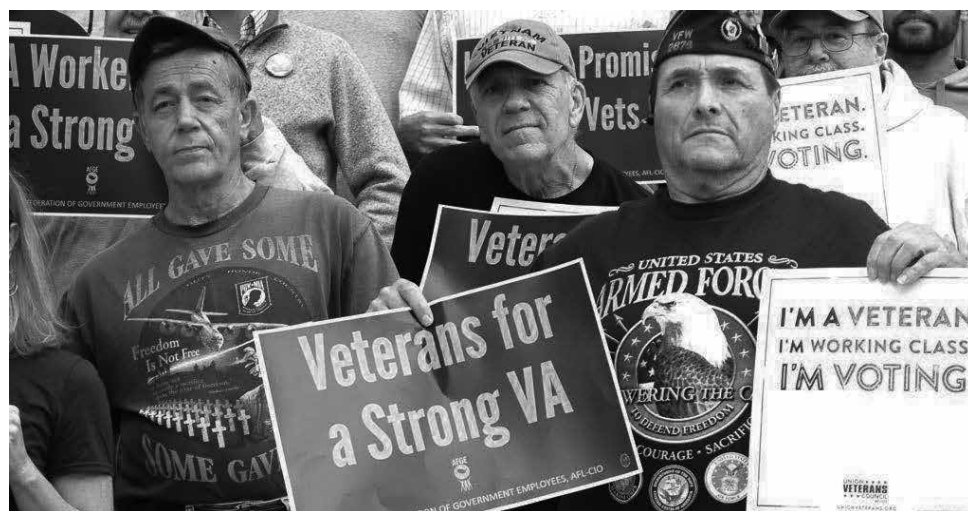
That's not quite how it worked out. Until about two years ago, when I would visit the VA, I rarely had to wait more than 15 minutes for appointments in any department. Doctors, nurses, and other staff were attentive and earnest. Most important, they understood my specific military-related health problems and the way military culture has shaped my life. Private sector doctors, as one RAND Corporation study of New York State providers documented, don't really understand military culture or veterans' specific healthcare problems. If an Iraq veteran like myself complains of respiratory problems, they don't think of burn pits, they think of run-of-the-mill asthma. If a female veteran is having nightmares, they may not ask about Military Sexual Trauma (MST), they may prescribe Ambien.

In all my years of getting VA care, I've paid a very minimal co-pay. When I used my Choice card a couple of years ago, I ended up having to pay \$1,500 out of pocket for a service the VA could have provided at no charge.

The MISSION Act has only made things worse. Because so much money and energy has been devoted to sending veterans to the private sector, there has been

little left to fill the 50,000 vacancies at the Veterans Health Administration. When I recently visited a gastrointestinal specialist, I experienced the results of this staffing shortage. The waiting room was so full that patients were sitting on the floor and spilling out into the hallways. Some were waiting up to five hours for their appointments. The doctors and nurses were clearly overwhelmed and had to turn patients away to return at a later date. Now, the VA in Manhattan is being asked to admit civilian patients because private hospitals are even more overwhelmed.

When I worked in the Army's geospatial intelligence service, we mobilized



a vast array of geographic data to provide detailed and accurate mapping products of Iraq to ensure the safety of my fellow servicemen and women during combat, rescue, and humanitarian missions. It doesn't require a background in military geurbanistics to see the cliff we are hurtling

towards. The nation's private healthcare system, which has always had trouble coordinating patient care and collaborating rather than competing, is at the point of collapse and Manhattan's major medical centers are dependent on help from the  
*continued on page 21 ...*

## From One Essential Worker to Another Demanding Safe Working Conditions Could Save My Life

*The walk-outs, die-ins, and strikes workers are undertaking around the country to fight for better working conditions or closures are one of our best defenses against the outbreak. One New York City nurse speaks out about the importance of these struggles and the combined fight of all essential workers, from healthcare to logistics sectors.*

By Jillian Primiano

The media has been saying that healthcare workers are on the "front lines" of the battle against COVID-19, but at work I've often felt like we are the final line, battling the enemy as it climbs over the walls of the fortress. The essential workers at the grocery stores, the delivery companies, the factories, the

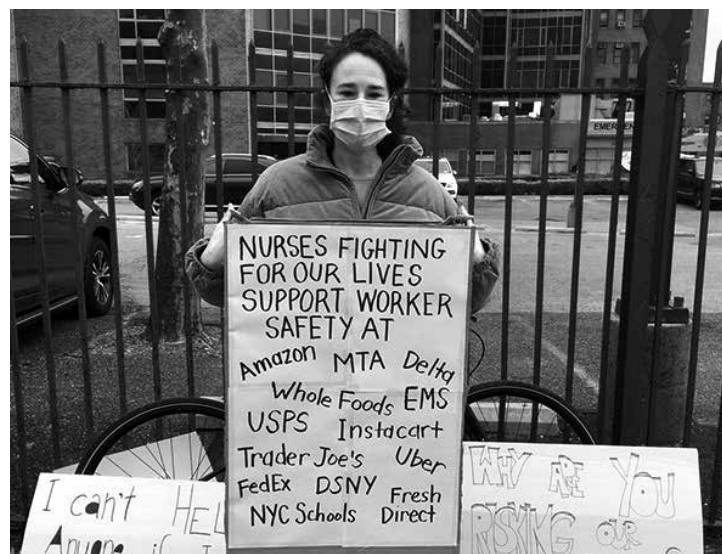


Photo: Luigi Morris

distribution centers—those are the true front lines of this pandemic, the soldiers in the war movies who run into battle on foot as horsemen with spears charge their defenseless bodies.

Since stay-at-home orders proliferated across the country, many Americans are home with their Lysol spray and Zoom meetings while essential workers are exposed every day to the virus, often in unsafe, unsanitary, and cramped working conditions, contracting the virus and then spreading it to their families and other people in the community. Rates of infection in areas around meat packing plants, for example, are 75% higher than other American counties.

Protecting the safety of those workers exposed in the communities is more effective than what we can accomplish at the hospital. We can fight the virus with high-flow oxygen, ventilators, and the most evidence-based medications possible for a months-old disease, but our efforts are often in vain. New data from Northwell Health shows that 88% of those placed on ventilators in New York have died (not including patients that remain hospitalized).

While Governor Cuomo refuses to cancel rent in New York and healthcare continues to be entangled with employment, essential workers are being put in the position of choosing between their lives and the roof over their heads, or their health and their health insurance. In the Midwest, President Trump has ordered meatpacking plants to remain open using the Defense Production Act (which nurses have been imploring him to use to produce more N95 masks) without providing any stipulations for increased safety measures. Meanwhile, if an essential worker quits, they cannot collect unemployment, which for many "essential" workers would reap more income than their labor.

It is clear that the government will not protect the working class. Instead, essential workers are forced to protect themselves, and in turn they are protecting everyone.

When Amazon workers demand that their facility be shut down for sanitation, they become healthcare workers.

When Instacart workers walked off the job to secure rights to face masks and hand sanitizer, they became healthcare workers.

When Walmart workers, reeling from news that two have died at one Chicago location, launched a worker-led system to track cases of the virus among employees and anonymously report working conditions, they became healthcare workers.

When MTA workers risked punishment to place duct-taped barriers between themselves and subway riders early in the pandemic, they became healthcare workers.

When Whole Foods workers call out sick en masse to demand sick time for self-isolation and the closures of stores with positive cases, they are healthcare workers.

When workers at a Smithfield pork plant where physical distancing is nearly impossible walk out to protest Trump's executive order that their plant remain open, they are healthcare workers.

An essential worker who demands good working conditions could save my life. I stand by them so I don't have to save theirs. Capitalism won't heal this crisis.

*Originally published by Left Voice, leftvoice.org.*

*Jillian Primiano is a nurse in the emergency room at Wyckoff Hospital in Brooklyn.*



*Want to Stop the Next Pandemic?*

# Start Protecting Wildlife Habitats

By Eric Roston

There are four critical facets of pandemic prevention, according to Lee Hannah, senior scientist at Conservation International. Three of them make immediate sense against the backdrop of our current emergency: stockpile masks and respirators, have testing infrastructure ready, and ban the global wildlife trade, including the open animal markets where COVID-19 may have first infected people.

His fourth recommendation is more grandiose: “Take care of nature.”

The assault on ecosystems that allowed COVID-19 to jump from animals to humans went far beyond merchants hunting and selling rare wildlife. Biodiversity—that is, the health of the entire ecosystem—can restrain pathogens before they ever leave the wild. “We need to tell people right now that there is a series of things we need to do once we’re out of this mess to make sure it never happens again,” Hannah says.

The role of biodiversity in disease prevention has received increased attention of late. In a 2015 “state of knowledge review” of biodiversity and human health by the United Nations, scientists wrote that “an ecological approach to disease, rather than a simplistic ‘one germ, one disease’ approach, will provide a richer understanding of disease-related outcomes.” Recent research has given more support to the idea

that biodiversity protection in one part of the world can prevent novel diseases from emerging and leaping into another.

It’s a numbers game, in part. Not all species in a community are equally susceptible to a given disease, nor are they all equally efficient transmitters. In diverse ecosystems well separated from human habitations, viruses ebb and flow without ever having a chance to make it to the big time.

But as people move in, those protections begin to break down. Disrupted ecosystems tend to lose their biggest predators first, and what they leave behind are smaller critters that live fast, reproduce in large numbers, and have immune systems more capable of carrying disease without succumbing to it. When there are only a few species left, they’re good at carrying disease, and they thrive near people, there may be nothing between a deadly pathogen and all of humanity.

“Virus spillover risk” from wildlife to people rises as contact increases between them, according to research published in April by a team of researchers led by Christine Kreuder Johnson of the One Health Institute at University of California, Davis. Almost half of the new diseases that jumped from animals to humans (called zoonotic pathogens) after 1940 can be traced to changes in land use, agriculture, or wildlife hunting. SARS, Ebola, West Nile, Lyme, MERS, and others all fit the



Old World monkeys at Son Tra Peninsula, Vietnam.

profile. There may be 10,000 mammalian viruses potentially dangerous to people.

“We are messing with natural systems in certain ways that can make them much more dangerous than they would otherwise be,” says Richard Ostfeld, a disease ecologist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies. “And biodiversity loss is one of those. Climate change is another.”

A longer-term strategy can help nations see the benefits of rethinking resource use. “The revenue from clearing new forest is extremely high—briefly,” says William Karesh, executive vice president at EcoHealth Alliance, a research nonprofit. “But the cost to the public-health system also goes up because you get very common diseases like malaria.” And as we’re now seeing, new zoonotic pathogens can be even more expensive to deal with.

Despite years of creative and resource-intensive work by governments and nonprofits, companies’ actions to mitigate habitat loss aren’t adding up. Many large

they were able to squint into the future and see where ecosystems might be saved from mass extinction if nations preserve 30% of natural habitats and meet U.N. limits for global warming. All told, meeting the goals would cut biodiversity losses in half.

The international community is positioned to make some progress. The Convention on Biological Diversity is a 196-nation effort to protect the richness of living things, tap natural resources sustainably, and share the benefits of the environment’s naturally occurring genetic innovations. (The United States and the Vatican are non-members.) The next phase of the biodiversity treaty, currently in draft form, proposes that at least 30% of land and ocean be conserved, up from 17% in the previous round. If governments agree to that goal, then nations and conservation scientists must take on the complicated step of figuring out which 30% is most important to protect and how to do it.

The way those areas are drawn today

*Disrupted ecosystems tend to lose their biggest predators first, and what they leave behind are smaller critters that live fast, reproduce in large numbers, and [are] more capable of carrying disease. ... When there are only a few species left, they’re good at carrying disease, and ... there may be nothing between a deadly pathogen and all of humanity.*

companies have pledged to halt deforestation, the largest driver of biodiversity loss, through initiatives like the Consumer Goods Forum, the Banking Environment Initiative and their Soft Commodities Compact. “All have missed the mark,” according to a new report by the Rainforest Action Network.

Hannah, of Conservation International, is working to make sure that the reasons to promote biodiversity, including its pathogen-dulling potential, align with the other endangered elephant in the room: climate change.

In February, Hannah and colleagues announced findings on what the effects of achieving climate and conservation targets might be. Using data on 290,000 species,

rarely reflects the scientific ideal of how to guard biodiversity. Looking at the existing protected lands, a paper in *Nature* this year found that 90% of conservation space fails to give bird, amphibian, and mammal species the full range of environmental conditions across their existing habitats.

“We could be doing a much better job of getting things in the right places,” says Hannah. “There’s going to be right places for disease control and they may largely overlap the right places for biodiversity.”

*Eric Roston is an award-winning journalist who has spent more than 15 years covering climate change in all its incarnations—from science, to technology, finance, business, and government.*

## My Name Is Jenny



If you met a horse with no owner wandering through a city, you’d probably assume it was lost. But not if you met Jenny.

Raphael Wöllstein was walking his baby in a stroller on his way to the train, when a white Arabian mare wandered over to say hello. It was nothing new, however. Jenny the horse has been taking daily walks through the Fechenheim district of Frankfurt, Germany, for the past 14 years. Visitors are often surprised to see her, but locals simply greet her as she passes.

Jenny’s owner, 79-year-old Werner Weischedel, opens the stable doors for the 22-year-old mare every morning. He used to take her on walks through town, but is no longer able to. So now Jenny walks herself.

Jenny wears a note that tells people she’s not a runaway—she’s just out

for a walk. Jenny’s halter has a plastic sleeve attached that holds a handwritten note: “I’m called Jenny, not a runaway, just taking a walk. Thanks.”

The note keeps Frankfurt police from having had to field concerned phone calls from people who aren’t used to seeing a horse wandering the streets by herself. Indeed, most of us would be worried she had gotten lost or run away, but Jenny has proven over the years to be perfectly happy and safe in her daily sojourns through town.

Weischedel says that he and his wife’s German shepherd, Evita, sometimes join Jenny on her walks. Police say they’ve never had an incident with her in 14 years. A local veterinarian gives her routine checkups and continues to find her to be healthy and showing no anxiety about her unique lifestyle.

# Capitalism

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dent, knows that climate change is real, and that the consequences may be catastrophic.

Climate change is the most extreme example of the crisis, but it is not the only one. Earth system scientists have identified nine planetary boundaries—global environmental conditions that define “a safe operating space for humanity.” Crossing any one of those thresholds could have deleterious or even disastrous consequences for civilization. Seven of the nine critical planetary boundaries are close to or already in the danger zone.

Such research leads irresistibly to the conclusion that modest reforms and policy shifts are not enough. We confront not individual problems that can be tackled separately, but an interlocked set of disruptions of Earth’s life support systems. Fundamental natural processes that have evolved over millions of years are being shattered in just a few decades.

Radical remedies are obviously required, but we won’t find a cure unless we identify the underlying cause, the systemic disease that is attacking our planet.

## Why Growth?

Corporate executives, economists, bureaucrats, and politicians all agree that growth is good and non-growth is bad. Unending material expansion is a deliberate policy promoted by ideologues of every political stripe, from social democrats to conservatives. When the G20 met in Toronto they unanimously agreed that their highest priority was to “lay the foundation for strong, sustainable, and balanced growth.” The word growth appeared 29 times in their final declaration.

Why, in the face of massive evidence that expanded production and resource extraction is killing us, do governments and corporations keep shoveling coal for the runaway growth train?

Some accounts present the drive for growth as a choice



shareholders and executives and top managers they act, in Marx’s wonderful phrase, as “personifications of capital.” Regardless of how they behave at home or with their children, at work they are capital in human form, and the imperatives of capital take precedence over all other needs and values. When it comes to a choice between protecting humanity’s future and maximizing profit, they choose profit.

In 2009, regulators in Europe and North America introduced strict limits on automobile nitrogen oxide emissions. All automakers had to submit their cars for testing. That was a big problem for the world’s second largest automobile company, Volkswagen, because much of their profit came from vehicles with diesel engines that did not meet the new standards.

But, as we are often told, capitalism encourages innovation. Just in time, VW announced that its engineers had solved the problem. They had invented technology that fully met or exceeded the new standards. They promoted it very heavily under the slogan “Clean Diesel,” and it was hugely successful. Between 2009 and 2016 Volkswagen sold over 11 million Clean Diesel cars worldwide.

Here was a giant corporation doing well by doing good, making huge profits while protecting the environment and human health.

Or so it seemed.

In 2016, thanks to investigations by some dedicated engineers, we learned that Clean Diesel was a hoax. Volkswagen had not invented new emissions technology. Volkswa-

more money back. They don’t care if Volkswagen makes cars or clothes and candy bars, so long as they get a return on their investment.

Corporations are giant social machines for turning capital into more capital. That’s what shareholders expect and want, and that’s what managers and executives must deliver.

A person who is unwilling to put the needs of capital first is not likely to become a major corporate executive. If the screening process fails, or if a CEO has an inconvenient attack of conscience, he or she will not last long in that position. It has been called the ecological tyranny of the bottom line. When protecting humanity and planet might reduce profits, corporations will always put profits first.

If nothing stops it, capital will try to expand infinitely, but Earth is not infinite. The atmosphere and oceans and forests are finite, limited resources, and capitalism is now pressing against those limits.

Capital must grow. A zero-growth capitalist economy simply cannot exist. As Marx wrote, the historical mission of the bourgeoisie is “accumulation for accumulation’s sake, production for production’s sake ... production on a constantly increasing scale.”

Of course, the fact that capital needs to grow does not mean that it always can grow. The drive to grow periodically leads to situations in which more commodities are

*[C]apitalism has caused unprecedented changes in the entire biosphere, Earth’s lands, forests, water, and air. In its endless search for profits, it is massively disrupting and destroying Earth’s life support systems—the natural processes and cycles that make life itself possible.*



that politicians and investors make, under the influence of a bizarre obsession. British Marxist Fawzi Ibrahim says, this “must be the first time in history that a necessity has been described as a fetish. You might as well describe fish having a fetish for water as capitalism having a fetish for growth. Growth is as essential to capitalism as is water to fish. As fish would die without water, so would capitalism drown without growth.”

Growth ideology doesn’t cause perpetual accumulation—it justifies it. Uncontrolled growth is not the root cause of the global crisis—it is the inevitable result of the profit system, of capitalism’s inherent drive to accumulate ever more capital.

As individuals, the people who run the giant polluters undoubtedly want their children and grandchildren to live in a clean, environmentally sustainable world. But as major

wagen had invented software that cheated on the tests. When the software detected that a test was being conducted, it reduced the engine’s power and performance. Under laboratory conditions, VW’s Clean Diesel cars met the emission regulations. On the road, they emitted up to 40 times more nitrogen oxide than the legal limit.

Seven years of Volkswagen pollution and seven years of big Volkswagen sales illustrate two fundamental characteristics of capitalism—short-term gains are always more important than long-term losses, and profit is always more important than protecting human health.

Volkswagen’s owners and executives are personifications of capital, and capital must grow, no matter who gets hurt.

Big banks and money funds and multimillionaires invest in corporations like Volkswagen in order to get

produced than can be sold. The result is a crisis in which immense amounts of wealth are destroyed. Individual corporations can and do go out of business in such situations, but over the long term, the drive for profit, to accumulate ever more capital, always reasserts itself.

That is the defining feature of the capitalist system and the root cause of the global environmental crisis.

The anti-ecological results of such a system were first analyzed in the 19th century, when the productivity of English agriculture was in decline.

In the mid-1800s, the German scientist Justus von Liebig showed that in its natural state, soil provides the essential nutrients that allows plants to grow and replenish nutrients from plant and animal waste. But when crops are produced for distant markets, as they increasingly were in 19th-century England, soil fertility suffered because food waste and excrement do not return to the soil. Liebig called this a robbery system, because nutrients were being stolen from the soil and not returned.

Marx studied Liebig’s work carefully. He seized upon the then-new scientific concept of metabolism, of biological and physical cycles essential to life, and made it central to his analysis of the relationship between humanity and nature.

Marx integrated Liebig’s explanation of the soil exhaustion crisis into his analysis of capitalism, concluding that “a rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system,” because the imperatives of capitalist growth inevitably conflict with the laws of nature.

Marx’s analysis of 19th-century British agriculture

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At the Climate Strike in New York City, Sept. 20, 2019. Photo: Ellen Davidson

## Capitalism

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provides the theoretical starting point for what is now known as metabolic rift theory, which is used by many radical ecologists to analyze and understand modern environmental crises.

The concept of metabolic rift expresses society's simultaneous dependence on and separation from the rest of nature. Like an auto-immune disease that attacks the body, capitalism is both part of the natural world and at war with it. It simultaneously depends upon and undermines the Earth's life support systems.

Capital's ecologically destructive impacts are driven not just by its need to grow, but by its need to grow faster. The circuit from investment to profit to reinvestment requires time to complete, and the longer it takes, the less total return investors receive. Competition for investment produces constant pressure to speed up the cycle, to go from investment to production to sale ever more quickly.

That's why it took 16 weeks to raise a two-and-a-half pound chicken in 1925, while today chickens twice that big are raised in six weeks. Selective breeding, hormones, and chemical feed have enabled factory farms to produce not just more meat, but more meat faster. The suffering of animals and quality of the food are secondary concerns, if they are considered at all.

But most natural processes cannot be manipulated that way. Nature's cycles operate at speeds that have evolved over many millennia—forcing them in any way inevitably destabilizes the cycle and produces unpleasant results.

Fertile land is destroyed, forests are clear-cut, and fish populations collapse. There is an insuperable conflict between nature's time and capital's time—between cyclical processes that have developed over hundreds of millions of years, and capital's need for rapid production, sale, and profit.

The metabolic rifts that Liebig and Marx knew of and wrote about were initially local or regional, but they have grown along with capitalism. Colonialism extended the damage by transporting products and nutrients from distant places.

Ireland was the first victim of the global robbery system. Describing how England imported food from poverty-stricken Ireland, Marx wrote: "England has indirectly exported the soil of Ireland, without even allowing its

cultivators the means for replacing the constituents of the exhausted soil."

Since the middle of the 20th century, capitalism has caused unprecedented changes in the entire biosphere, Earth's lands, forests, water, and air. In its endless search for profits, it is massively disrupting and destroying Earth's life support systems—the natural processes and cycles that make life itself possible. Metabolic rifts have become metabolic chasms.

That's why the environmental crisis can't be just a talking point for socialists—it's a planetary emergency that we must treat as a top priority. We need to initiate and join struggles for immediate environmental aims. We need to participate, not as sideline critics, but as activists, builders, and leaders. And, at the same time, we need to find the best ways to patiently explain how those struggles relate to the larger fight to save the world from capitalist ecocide.

In *Too Many People?*, Simon Butler and I wrote that "in

every country, we need governments that break with the existing order, that are answerable only to working people, farmers, the poor, indigenous communities, and immigrants—in a word, to the victims of ecocidal capitalism, not its beneficiaries and representatives."

Such a profound transformation will not just happen. In fact, it will not happen at all unless ecology has a central place in socialist theory, in the socialist program, and in the activity of the socialist movement.

Twenty-first-century socialists and greens must be ecosocialists, and humanity needs an ecosocialist revolution.

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*Ian Angus is a Canadian ecosocialist activist. He is the editor of Climate and Capitalism. He was a founding member and coordinating committee member of Eco-socialist International Network.*

## Remembering the Future

Seventy years ago  
I studied with wonder  
the cover of *Popular Science*  
with its intricately detailed drawing  
of a personal helicopter rising  
above a lawn-drenched suburb  
poised to sail off in a swarm  
of other commuting 'copters  
for a skyline of gleaming towers.

Inside pages promised everyone  
miraculous machines; the ultimate  
in labor-saving convenience  
for washing and drying clothes and dishes,  
mangling sheets and shirts, toasting waffles,  
automatically closing garage doors;  
the gear shift was about to disappear,  
along with hand signals.

Hopeful materialism masked  
the human tragedy of a war just concluded  
and all those to come,  
as I eagerly imagined

my own flying machine  
taking me to a job I liked,  
whatever that would be,  
taking me home again  
to the woman I truly loved,  
whoever that might be.

Yes, I now have a woman I love,  
have had several jobs,  
some liked some not,  
but no helicopter in my garage.

While I lived my hedonistic dreams,  
machines proliferated at frightful cost  
when spasms of obsolescence  
created mountains of rust,  
convenient wrappings over-filled dumps,  
plastics leaked from every civilized seam  
into acidifying oceans already  
choking on carbon emitted  
from fossil-fueled factories and power plants  
poisoning entire food chains,  
creating a new  
very different  
future to remember.

—Woody Powell



# Donald Trump Has Destroyed the Country He Promised to Make Great Again

By Fintan O'Toole

President Donald Trump has claimed he was being sarcastic and testing the media when he raised the idea that injecting disinfectant or irradiating the body with ultraviolet light might kill coronavirus.

Over more than two centuries, the United States has stirred a very wide range of feelings in the rest of the world: love and hatred, fear and hope, envy and contempt, awe and anger. But there is one emotion that has never been directed toward the United States until now: pity.

However bad things are for most other rich democracies, it is hard not to feel sorry for Americans. Most of them did not vote for Donald Trump in 2016. Yet they are locked down with a malignant narcissist who, instead of protecting his people from COVID-19, has amplified its lethality. The country Trump promised to make great again has never in its history seemed so pitiful.

Will American prestige ever recover from this shameful episode? The United States went into the coronavirus crisis with immense advantages: precious weeks of warning about what was coming, the world's best concentration of medical and scientific expertise, effectively limitless financial resources, a military complex with stunning logistical capacity and most of the world's leading technology corporations. Yet it managed to make itself the global epicenter of the pandemic.

As the American writer George Packer puts it in the current edition of the *Atlantic*, "The United States reacted ... like Pakistan or Belarus—like a country with shoddy infrastructure and a dysfunctional government whose leaders were too corrupt or stupid to head off mass suffering."

It is one thing to be powerless in the face of a natural disaster, quite another to watch vast power being squandered in real time—wilfully, malevolently, vindictively. It is one thing for governments to fail (as, in one degree or another, most governments did), quite another to watch a ruler and his supporters actively spread a deadly virus. Trump, his party, and Rupert Murdoch's Fox News became vectors of the pestilence.

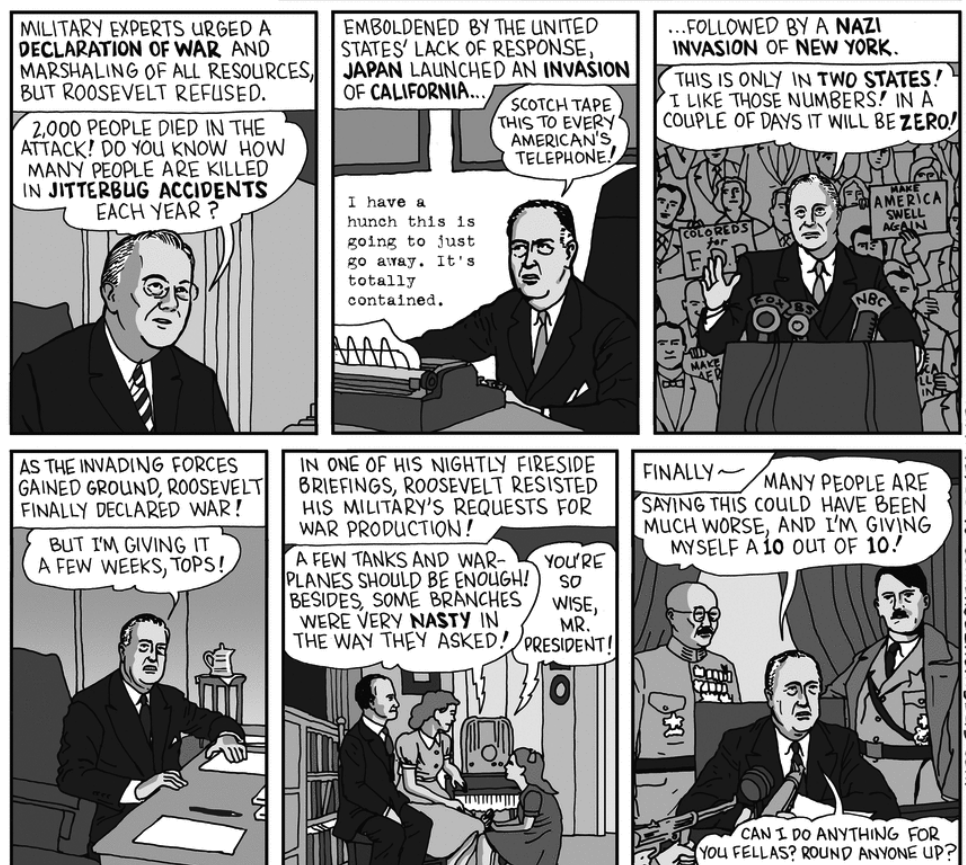
The grotesque spectacle of the President openly inciting people (some of them armed) to take to the streets to oppose the restrictions that save lives is the manifestation of a political death wish. What are supposed to be daily briefings on the crisis, demonstrative of national unity in the face of a shared challenge, have been used by Trump merely to sow confusion and division. They provide a recurring horror show in which all the neuroses that haunt the American subconscious dance naked on live TV.

TOM the DANCING BUG PRESENTS:

NEWS of the TIMES  
Historical Flashback - December, 1941

Japan Bombs Pearl Harbor

F.D.R. Calls Attack a "Hoax"



If the plague is a test, its ruling political nexus ensured that the United States would fail it at a terrible cost in human lives. In the process, the idea of the United States as the world's leading nation—an idea that has shaped the past century—has all but evaporated.

Other than the Trump impersonator Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, who is now looking to the United States as the exemplar of anything other than what not to do? How many people in Düsseldorf or Dublin are wishing they lived in Detroit or Dallas?

It is hard to remember now but, even in 2017, when Trump took office, the conventional wisdom in the United States was that the Republican Party and the broader framework of U.S. political institutions would prevent him from doing too much damage. This was always a delusion, but the pandemic has exposed it in the most savage ways.

What used to be called mainstream conservatism has not absorbed Trump—he has absorbed it. Almost the entire rightwing half of American politics has surrendered abjectly to him. It has sacrificed on the altar of wanton stupidity the

most basic ideas of responsibility, care, and even safety.

Thus, even at the very end of March, 15 Republican governors had failed to order people to stay at home or to close non-essential businesses. In Alabama, for example, it was not until April 3 that Gov. Kay Ivey finally issued a stay-at-home order.

In Florida, the state with the highest concentration of elderly people with underlying conditions, governor Ron DeSantis, a Trump mini-me, kept the beach resorts open to students travelling from all over the United States for spring break parties. Even on April 1, when he issued restrictions, DeSantis exempted religious services and "recreational activities."

There is, as the demonstrations in U.S. cities show, plenty of political mileage in denying the reality of the pandemic.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, when he finally issued a stay-at-home order on April 1, explained: "We didn't know that [the virus can be spread by people without symptoms] until the last 24 hours."

This is not mere ignorance—it is deliberate and homicidal stupidity. There is, as recent demonstrations in U.S. cities have

shown, plenty of political mileage in denying the reality of the pandemic. It is fuelled by Fox News and far-right internet sites, and it reaps for these politicians millions of dollars in donations, mostly (in an ugly irony) from older people who are most vulnerable to the coronavirus.

It draws on a concoction of conspiracy theories, hatred of science, paranoia about the "deep state" and religious providentialism (God will protect the good folks) that is now very deeply infused in the mindset of the U.S. right.

Trump embodies and enacts this mindset, but he did not invent it. The U.S. response to the coronavirus crisis has been paralyzed by a contradiction that the Republicans have inserted into the heart of U.S. democracy. On the one hand, they want to control all the levers of governmental power. On the other they have created a popular base by playing on the notion that government is innately evil and must not be trusted.

The contradiction was made manifest in two of Trump's statements on the pandemic: on the one hand that he has "total authority," and on the other that "I don't take responsibility at all." Caught between authoritarian and anarchic impulses, he is incapable of coherence.

But this is not just Donald Trump. The crisis has shown definitively that Trump's presidency is not an aberration. It has grown on soil long prepared to receive it. The monstrous blossoming of misrule has structure and purpose and strategy behind it.

There are very powerful interests who demand "freedom" in order to do as they like with the environment, society, and the economy. They have infused a very large part of American culture with the belief that "freedom" is literally more important than life. My freedom to own assault weapons trumps your right not to get shot at school. Now, my freedom to go to the barber ("I Need a Haircut" read one banner in St. Paul, Minn.) trumps your need to avoid infection.

Usually, when this kind of outlandish idiocy is displaying itself, there is the comforting thought that, if things were really serious, it would all stop. People would sober up. Instead, a large part of the United States has hit the bottle even harder.

And the President, his party, and their media allies keep supplying the drinks. There has been no moment of truth, no shock of realisation that the antics have to end. No one of any substance on the U.S. right has stepped in to say: get a grip, people are dying here.

That is the mark of how deep the trouble is for the United States—it is not just that Trump has treated the crisis merely as a way to feed tribal hatreds but that this be-

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# This Is How We'll Win Splitting the Ruling Oligarchy

By Mark Rudd

It feels a lot like being a fly on the wall, watching this crisis unfold while living in a comfortable home with a big garden, healthy, with a great partner, both of us retired, the kids and grandkids and extended family doing well on all counts, all financially secure. Outside, people are sick and dying, lonely in their apartments or homeless, in shock at losing their businesses, jobs, and incomes, not knowing where their next meal is. The dissonance, when I allow myself to feel it, is disorienting.

But today this fly finally saw how our side, that of collective morality and rationality, will win.

The ruling oligarchy is splitting between the rational corporate ruling class, which understands that the stakes are survival, and the irrational crazed profiteers and

*They told him that the turning point for them personally was when they realized that the antiwar movement was sitting with them at the breakfast table every morning.*

gangsters, the vulture capitalists of the healthcare and the military production mafias, the petrochemical industries that denied global climate change, all united under the banners of the mindless ideologues of the far-right whose only program is more of the same free-market anti-science crap that got us into this crisis.

In April, *The New York Times* endorsed the program of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party.

The entire Week in Review section of the April 17 *Times*, entitled "The America We Need," every page, every article, was devoted to the single theme, "Inequality." Finally, after years of daily attacks on the left's social-democratic program as suicidal and unfeasible, the *Times* tacitly ad-

mitted that Bernie and Elizabeth Warren and our progressive movement are not only right, but that if we want to survive, ours is the direction we need to move this country.

An amazingly comprehensive two-page editorial first lays out the previous national crises which proved to be historical turning points, the Civil War and the Great Depression, and how the solutions were in both cases a more just, more equal society. The solution now, the *Times* says, is to build a competent government that deals with social problems, that uses our collective social and economic resources to promote fairness and survival. The rest of the articles approach the situation from a wide variety of angles, such as access to healthcare, income equality, and structural racism. Others point to shifts in collective moral sentiment, which lead to a budding mass desire for governmental solutions.

The hard-core individualism of the Reagan/Bush/Trump years (which created the neoliberal Democratic Party, I should add) is dying a sudden and painful death, according to the *Times*. Only collective social and governmental solutions like the New Deal will get us out of this crisis by building a stable, fair society. We can beat not only the pandemic, but also solve the crisis of global warming by sharing the wealth of society.

How important is this shift? Only that it holds the key to our eventual victory. These are our allies now.

Consider the historical analogy of how the antiwar movement helped end the Vietnam War.

Back in the nineties, a brilliant young sociologist, Tom Wells, was a student of Todd Gitlin, whom I admire a lot, at University of California, Berkeley. Wells set for himself the dissertation question "How did the antiwar movement win?" He went and interviewed a bunch of the top war managers, McNamara, Rusk, et al. They told him that the turning point for them personally was when they realized that the antiwar movement was sitting with them at the breakfast table every morning. That dissertation became *The War Within*, an absolutely essential book to understand the anti-Vietnam War peace movement, the power of mass protest.

I assure you the antiwar movement never set as a specific goal to split all the ruling-class families. But that's what happened, because our opposition to the war made total sense, even to their children and wives. (The other

power prong of the movement, much more intentional, was the existence of an enormous antiwar movement within the military itself. This made the army, especially, unreliable and unusable in Vietnam. See the brilliant 2003 documentary, *Sir, No Sir!*)

The antiwar movement never attained political power in the sense of electing a true antiwar Congress and certainly never a President. But we won anyway. By splitting the ruling class.

(I'm analyzing all this within the context of the miraculous feat of endurance of the Vietnamese people and military in surviving the American industrial-military onslaught. Recognize, though, that the Vietnamese themselves have always thanked the international and the American antiwar and solidarity movement.)

Back to this historical moment. Finally, after realizing how incompetent and dangerous is the rule of the far-right ideologues and gangsters, the rational portion of the capitalist class has recognized the origins of the current pandemic and moved to our side. That split will eventually lead to our defeating the proto-fascists in power.

There's no choice; collective rationality and morality beats suicide. Even the New York Times Corporation recognizes this fact.

A page one article entitled "What the Next Year (or Two) May Look Like: Scientists Foresee Long Road for U.S." quotes leading scientists as saying that the end of the crisis is far from near, that we're in uncharted territory, that if a vaccine emerges in less than a year to 18 months, it'll be a miracle, that this pandemic will probably infect half or more of the population. Just to reopen the economy will take hundreds of thousands of tests each day! And that this country isn't prepared.

This is the condition under which the new consciousness will produce programmatic and political solutions.

It's also why we'll win. It may not happen in November, but it could. I sure hope to be able to live a few more years to see it all play out. Now that we're not alone, that a major U.S. corporation has broken the wall of fascism, we will, as a just society, survive.

The Coronavirus is deadly. Please, God, I beg you for just two more years so I can live to see what direction we'll be going in.

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## The Trump Disease

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haviour has become normalized. When the freak show is live on TV every evening, and the star is boasting about his ratings, it is not really a freak show any more. For a very large and solid bloc of Americans, it is reality.

And this will get worse before it gets better. Trump has at least eight more months in power. In his inaugural address in 2017, he evoked "American carnage" and promised to make it stop. But now that the real carnage has arrived, he is revelling in it. He is in his element.

As things get worse, he will pump more hatred and falsehood, more death-wish defiance of reason and decency, into the groundwater. If a new administration succeeds him in 2021, it will have to clean up the toxic dump he leaves behind. If he is re-elected, toxicity will have become the lifeblood of American politics.

Either way, it will be a long time before the rest of the world can imagine America being great again.

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# They Almost Killed Him

*Veteran who came home safe from Vietnam almost loses his life to U.S. government agents*

Scott Camil served two tours of duty in Vietnam as a forward observer for the Marines. His activism against the war began once he was out of the military. He began coordinating demonstrations and rallies, which eventually caught the attention of federal authorities including the FBI.

**Matthew Breems:** Scott, you volunteered to serve in Vietnam. Can you explain what your mindset was when you signed up to join this war that you knew was going to be dangerous?

**Scott Camil:** I grew up in a time that there was a draft. My father was a member of the John Birch Society. We were a rightwing, anti-communist family. I was taught that it was my duty when I graduated high school to serve in the military. When the recruiters came to my high school, they said, "All you guys are going to get drafted and sent to Vietnam as soon as you graduate. But if you join up now, you have more benefits." So, I thought, "Well, if I'm going to get drafted anyway, more benefits sounds better for me." So, I enlisted in the Marine Corps. I thought that the Marine Corps was the best branch of service, and in high school we were required to write a career paper in order to graduate. In my career paper, I wrote that I was going to be a Marine, and in my mind I thought I could start off a private, and if I do really good, I'll end up a general. I didn't know that the breakup was really workers and management, and enlisted people were the workers, and the officers were the management, and I was always going to be a worker.

I went to Parris Island, and got there on a bus in the middle of the night. I got off the bus, walked up to the little red line, stepped on the line, and then somebody started yelling and screaming at me.

We were taught that the job of a Marine is to destroy the will of the enemy to resist the authority of the United States of America, and you do that by making the cost that they have to pay for resistance to the United States more than they're willing to do. And in order to do that, they have to make you into a Marine.

After my initial bootcamp training, I went to infantry training, then I went to California for guerrilla warfare school at Camp

Pendleton, mountain climbing, escape and evasion and demolition school. Then to Okinawa for the same stuff. And then I was sent to Vietnam.

**MB:** So, you arrive in Vietnam after all of your training. Describe some of your early experiences over there.

**SC:** My unit was called Alpha Battery, First Battalion, 11th Marines. It was an artillery unit, and I was a new guy in the unit, and I was assigned to guard duty. I got there March 24. On the night of April 18, 1966, around 1:30 in the morning, a trip flare went off to my left front, and as soon as this trip flare went off, all of these people stood up, and they had weapons, and they were already inside the wire.

In a fraction of a second, everything I'm telling you now happened. All of a sudden, all these people stood up, they were charging, they were shooting. We started receiving rocket fire. Three of the four posts were blown up. My post was the only post that survived. They were Viet Cong sappers. They entered the base from three sides. They destroyed the six 105 Howitzers. They destroyed the fuel dump, they destroyed the ammo dump, and they ran through the tents shooting people.

**MB:** So that was three weeks in, give or take, into your experience in Vietnam.

**SC:** That was my first battle. I had met a guy named Maine, he was from Jacksonville and I was from Hialeah. We were friends. The dead Marines were brought to a bunker and laid with ponchos covering them. I went and I pulled the ponchos off the face of the Marines, and I saw Maine, and when I saw him, everything changed for me. When I saw him, I realized that it was people's job to kill me. That was their job and that's what they were allowed to do. And that if I didn't pay attention, I was going to end up dead.

That day, I decided that I hated all of the Vietnamese, that I was going to get them back for what they did to us. I couldn't tell which Vietnamese liked us and which Vietnamese didn't like us. And all I knew is that if they were dead, they couldn't hurt us. So that day I decided I would have no empathy: I would kill every Vietnamese I came in contact with. I'm going to err on the side of safety, and the life



of one Marine is more valuable than the lives of all of the Vietnamese, both North and South. That's what I believed and from that point on I was ruthless. I had no empathy and I just wanted to kill them and get them back for what they did to us.

**MB:** You've had this sea change in your attitude after this battle experience, or really as like a protection mechanism almost, you had to just get rid of any empathy. What did the next phase of your combat time over there look like?

**SC:** The next night, I was sent to that same bunker on guard duty, and as soon as it got dark, I started shaking, and I couldn't

stop shaking till the next day. During a battle, I was fine. When waiting for the battle to start, I would be shaking. Once the battle started, I was cool. Once it was over, I'd be shaking again.

I get sent to this post and it's dark, and I'm shaking, and I'm waiting for them to come and waiting for them to come. And it was terrible thinking that I would rather have the job of hunting for them than sitting in the bunker waiting for them to attack me. So I volunteered to be a forward observer, and I got sent out in the field attached to the infantry. Being a forward observer is the best job that I could have had.

I had a great relationship with

the infantry commanders, because they needed somebody who could read a map and a compass. The first time I was wounded was on February 18, 1967. I had climbed over a dyke. I had turned my back on the village, and I reached my hand down and grabbed my radio operator, and was pulling him up over the dyke, and all of a sudden, I heard an explosion. It seemed really close to me. I could smell the explosion, and then I noticed that the ground was coming up. And then I woke up.

They patched me up. I didn't need a medevac. I stayed with the unit. I don't think that I could convey to a civilian the psycho-

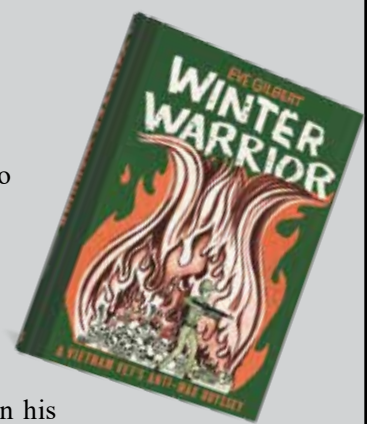
## Winter Warrior

Scott Camil, Eve Gilbert

The extraordinary life of Scott Camil, from hardened marine to longhaired antiwar activist—as told by the man himself.

The year is 1965. Fresh out of high school and gung-ho to serve his country, Scott Camil joins the marines and soon finds himself in the thick of combat in Vietnam. He can never forget what he witnesses there: corrupt and incompetent leaders, the constant, sudden death of his close friends, the sadistic rape and slaughter of Vietnamese women and children—all of which bears heavily on his conscience. Returning to civilian life, Camil adopts a righteous cause: tell the American people about what's really going on in Vietnam.

Through the unflinching personal journey of a hardened marine turned dogged antiwar activist, *Winter Warrior* reveals the brutal reality of the Vietnam war and the bleak political reality on the domestic front. Cartoonist Eve Gilbert renders Camil's story with empathy, nuance, and a dash of humor, her impressionistic imagery a perfect complement to his blunt words. As the American military continues to wage war throughout the globe, Camil's anti-authoritarian attitude and fearless whistleblowing is as vital today as it was then.







low me to stay. He told me that I had been through enough, and he sent me home, and I was so grateful for him.

**MB:** What were the first steps for you back in the civilian world?

**SC:** Well, this was going to be the first time in my life where I was actually responsible for where am I going to live, how am I going to get a job, what am I going to do? And I didn't have a clue. I really didn't have a clue. And so I thought, "I could get money on the GI Bill if I go to school."

I applied to go to school on the GI Bill and I got a degree in pre-law, got a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and qualified to be a pilot.

The other part of that was learning history. In school, I took all the history classes, but I didn't believe what the history books were telling me. So I set up an appointment with my history professor, and I told the professor that I was a Vietnam veteran and that what the book was saying about Vietnam was wrong. He smiled at me and gave me a bunch more stuff to read.

One of the books was *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn, and I read the Pentagon Papers, and I'm reading all of this stuff, and starting to feel like I was used and wasn't told the truth about Vietnam. Then Jane Fonda came to speak, and said that "in order for a democracy to function, people have to have access to the truth. The government is lying about Vietnam, and it's the duty of Vietnam veterans, patriotic Vietnam veterans, to tell the public the truth about what's being done in their name with their money."

I thought, I'm a patriotic Vietnam veteran. I understand duty, I believe in democracy. I think the public has the right to know. So, I went up and I gave them my name. All of a sudden, I was in contact with a group called Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I went to Detroit, Michigan, to testify at the Winter Soldier Investigation and there, we talked about what we did in Vietnam and why we did it, what our orders were. It lasted for three days. There's a documentary out called *The Winter Soldier*. I highly recommend it.

On that film is where my conversion takes place from being a Vietnam veteran who knows things about Vietnam, to being a Vietnam veteran who realizes that the war is wrong, that the government is lying about it, and that I have a duty as a veteran to the public to tell them the truth.

When civilians are telling them that the war is wrong, they're being called communist sympathizers; they're being

called cowards; they're being called people who aren't willing to serve their country. But a veteran, they can't say that you're a coward, that you don't know what you're talking about, or you're not willing to serve your country.

In my mind, it was a job that I inherited because I was qualified to do this job, and it was a job that had to be done. And I helped organize Winter Soldier investigations all over Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. All of a sudden, I started getting arrested, and I didn't really understand what was happening.

I learned much later the full story from the Freedom of Information Act that I was targeted by the FBI as a threat to national security. J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to the FBI calling for my neutralization as a threat to national security, and authorizing pretext operations and counter-intelligence techniques. A pretext operation, well, they bust you. They put a bullet in you. They stick some drugs in your pocket. They say that you



for two and a half days. And the purpose of our demonstration was to inconvenience the public in order to make them think about the war in Vietnam.

The main duty of a citizen in a democracy is to control their government. Our government is out of control, and it's the duty of the citizens to do something about it. And when the police are trying to stop us from doing that, we're going to resist them. And we basically used the mini-

*I'm defending my constitutional rights, and it doesn't matter to me whether it's the fucking FBI or the communists that are trying to take away my rights. If the rights are worth defending halfway around the world, why wouldn't they be worth defending right here?*

were selling drugs. They say you were resisting arrest. They say that you attacked the FBI agents, and that they had to shoot you in self-defense.

**MB:** What activities were you doing that caused such fear in the FBI and in federal authorities that they wanted to arrest you?

**SC:** I was being a Marine, exercising my constitutional rights, and basically—we started having demonstrations. They started busting up the demonstrations, and we fought back with violence. And I felt that I'm defending my constitutional rights, and it doesn't matter to me whether it's the fucking FBI or the communists that are trying to take away my rights. If the rights are worth defending halfway around the world, why wouldn't they be worth defending right here?

So, there was an issue when the United States mined the Haiphong Harbor, and we considered that an escalation in the war.

So, we blocked the main intersection of the city of Gainesville

activities done by Vietnam Veterans Against the War in their region.

When the Republicans and Democrats decided to have their convention in Miami, that came under my authority because I was the regional coordinator. But one of the things that I didn't realize is that my organization had been thoroughly infiltrated by undercover agents. Well, one of them was also a regional coordinator. But he was also working for the FBI.

He had information that the government was going to shoot somebody at the demonstrations on the beach, that they were going to blame it on the antiwar movement, that they were going to raise the five drawbridges that connected the beach to Miami, and that they were going to wipe out the antiwar movement.

Security was part of my job. What if that was true? What were we going to do? We made plans to capture those five drawbridges, to lower those drawbridges, and to blow up the mechanisms so the bridges could stay down.

When I came back from Vietnam, one of the things I became was a riot-control NCO for the 10th Marine Regiment—that's a thousand men and I was senior NCO. And you're taught to use the minimum amount of force to protect lives and property. All of the rules that I taught the Marines for riot control is what I now taught our people, how they would respond if we were attacked by police.

In riot control, you're taught that you're controlling an avenue of access. So if they raised the five drawbridges and boxed us in, it was clear to me that they wanted to hurt us. They weren't planning to just break us up. They wanted to hurt us. We were not going to allow them to do that. We'd take those drawbridges, lower them, blow up the mechanisms. We also didn't have the ability to fight all of them on the beach.

We needed to get the cops off the beach. I planned contingency actions that called for attacking all police stations, all federal sta-

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# Can Women's Grassroots Resistance Stop the Rise in Violence Against Women?



A panel discussion about how the Zapatista community came to self-organize and self-govern.

By Laura Carlsen

When 4,000 women from 49 countries met in a Zapatista community in March to find ways to end violence against women, we knew what we were up against. Many, if not most, of the women brought with them the scars of gender violence.

The second “Gathering of Women Who Struggle” faced two big questions: How do we take personal pain and forge it into collective action, and what do we need to be doing differently to reduce a form of violence that has proved not only intransigent, but resurgent?

There was no program or set of issues defined beforehand, which made for a loose-knit and sometimes chaotic situation. The first day scores of women stood up at a mike on a wooden platform to describe the abuse they’ve suffered, and the paths they built, collectively, to get out of abusive situations, heal themselves and help others. Their stories demonstrated the degree to which violence against girls and women permeates society and how it has been normalized through socially accepted practices that isolate the victim and her pain. Each woman who spoke was met with a cry of “You are not alone!”

The second day participants broke into groups to discuss strategies to deal with the frustrating truth that after decades of identifying, legislating, institutionalizing protection mechanisms and organizing around violence against women, we are no closer to eradicating it. In most of our countries, femicides—murders of women for being women—have gone up.

In El Salvador, murders of women more than doubled between 2013 and 2017, with Honduras and Guatemala close behind. Mexico faces an epidemic in violence against women. The United Nations reports that nine women are killed every day, and the Mexican Institute of Statistics and Geography found that 44% of women have suffered violence from a partner and 66% have experienced some form of violence.

The statistics don’t reflect the full extent of the problem, since many cases

aren’t reported. Most of the women who told their stories at the Zapatista meeting described a process of years, if not decades, to dare to speak out about the attacks. In many legal systems, women who suffered abuse as young girls can’t report the crime due to statutes of limitations. The stories of the abuse of women as little girls were the hardest to listen to.

The testimonies also bore out the fact that discrimination, racism, homophobia, and poverty compound the risk. Native American women in the United States face a murder rate more than 10 times the national average. Undocumented migrant women are increasingly afraid to report violence for fear of deportation, putting them at far greater risk and allowing situations of domestic violence to escalate. An estimated 60% of migrant women who pass through Mexico are raped. Attacks against members of the LGBTQ community have become particularly common and vicious, and women workers face systematic violence that often includes economic blackmail.

At the same time, feminist movements have made great strides in raising the issue. From the #MeToo movements that publicly denounce sexual abuse and harassment, to the Chilean women’s viral performance of “A rapist in your path,” to demonstrations throughout the world, including the current wave of student strikes and occupations against gender violence in Mexico, a new generation of feminists is spearheading organizing to reclaim the right to live without fear, injecting a new anger and urgency in women’s movements, as well as new tensions and challenges.

The opening speech of Zapatista Comandanta Amada reflected the frustration of living in societies where there’s more awareness of women’s rights, but also more violence. “They say that women are now taken into account, but they continue to kill us. They say there are now more laws that protect women, but they continue to kill us,” Amada told the crowd. She criticized apparent progress on women’s issues—toward equal pay, presence in the media, men in the

movement, and, as in Mexico’s government, equal representation in government—ending every advance listed with the dictum: “but they continue to kill us.”

The Zapatistas announced that in 2019 not a single woman was murdered or disappeared in their communities, located in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. As always, they emphasized that theirs is not a model to be applied elsewhere, but a call to organize, in different ways, in different places, toward the goal of eliminating violence against women. Their success reminds us that the fundamental demand to live without the reality-based fear of attack by men is not impossible.

Comandanta Amada emphasized three issues that constitute major challenges for modern feminists: the development of an anti-capitalist analysis and practice, the

and political feminism. Although the gap that exists between a critique of capitalism and feminism wasn’t broadly debated at the gathering, the linkage must be understood and deepened, not only in updated feminist theory, but especially in practice. It’s no accident that the anthem of the contemporary feminist movement, “A rapist in your path,” emerged in the context of the massive movement against neoliberal policies in Chile. A vision of women’s liberation that does not confront the economic model ends up including only women with privilege, and even for them is ultimately doomed to fail.

Second, the Zapatistas issued an explicit call to respect “mujeres de juicio”—“women of judgment, that is, of age.” The reference spoke to a widening gap between younger feminists and older generations that has opened up in the context of recent mobilizations. Unfortunately, it’s not just a gap, it’s a wedge, with misunderstandings on both sides and few spaces for open discussion about the differences. Comandanta Amada ended with an admonishment that must be taken to heart: “If we don’t let geographies divide us, then let’s not let calendars divide us either.”

Third, during the discussions and in the speeches almost no one emphasized the government’s role in ending violence against women, except to say that it has failed. Violence against women continues to rise and most of the attackers continue to face no consequences.

Even governmental programs that seem to have worked prove to be vulnerable and too often ephemeral. The 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in the United States has been credited with reducing domestic violence by 60% and yet it was allowed to expire and renewal is currently stalled in Congress.

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*‘It seems like our violent deaths, our disappearances, our pain—they all profit the capitalist system. Because the system only allows that which brings it profit. That’s why we say that the capitalist system is patriarchal.’*

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generation gap, and the relationship of women’s movements with governments.

“It seems like our violent deaths, our disappearances, our pain—they all profit the capitalist system. Because the system only allows that which brings it profit. That’s why we say that the capitalist system is patriarchal.” She concluded, “To fight for our rights, for example, the right to life, it’s not enough that we fight against machismo, patriarchy, or whatever you want to call it. We must also fight against the capitalist system.”

Among the thousands of women at the gathering from all kinds of organizations and collectives, some include anticapitalism as a central tenet of their work, some do not, and many, probably the majority, seem to consider the capitalist system an abstraction that isn’t particularly relevant to their cultural, social,

The Republican-controlled Senate has refused to renew it because the House passed a strengthened version last spring that broadens a prohibition on the sale of firearms to those convicted of domestic violence. U.S. studies show women are five times more likely to be murdered by men if there is a gun in the house. Similar studies in Mexico and Central American countries where the U.S. exports massive amounts of firearms also show the lethal link between guns and femicide. But apparently, for Republicans in Congress the political clout of the National Rifle Association trumps women’s lives.

Where rightwing governments come to power—Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil come to mind—hard-won protections for women are being rolled back at mind-boggling speed.

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# Scott Camil

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tions, all federal buildings, and all fire stations in two counties in Florida. And that would be the two counties, Dade and Broward Counties, where all mobile enforcement would be coming from. If we attacked those buildings, not to hurt people but just to create problems, they would have to leave the beach and go back and protect their own fucking turf. And that would allow us to lower the bridges and evacuate the people whose rights were being violated.

So yes, our plans called for using weapons, explosives, and actually fighting them. But every sentence said, "This will be done for defensive reasons only."

At the Gainesville Eight trial, the jury got to read the plans that I wrote, all of these things that I just told you. The jury read all of that stuff. The jury ruled that it was defensive and found us not guilty.

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*All of a sudden, the guy in the back seat grabbed me around the neck, and pinned my head to the headrest, and started beating me in the head with a gun.*

---

After I was found not guilty on that case, and before that there was a drug case and there was a kidnapping case, and I was found not guilty in all of those cases. Then there was the J. Edgar Hoover move—the J. Edgar Hoover document calling for my neutralization and authorizing counter-intelligence techniques and pretext operations.

**MB:** Clarify what you think they meant by neutralization.

**SC:** That means "to kill." One day this girl comes to my door, knocks on my door. She needed to borrow my telephone. This is before cell phones. I let her come in and use

the telephone. She's very pretty. She turned out to be an agent working for the FBI. She introduced me to two of her friends, who turned out to be federal agents for the DEA.

Another day her friends came to my house and they said they were in town to get some cocaine. I didn't want to give them my money so I went with them to get the gram of cocaine. All of a sudden, the guy in the back seat grabbed me around the neck, and pinned my head to the headrest, and started beating me in the head with a gun. And I grabbed his wrist. I pinned it to the headrest. The driver hit the brakes, took his hands off the steering wheel, grabbed both of my hands and pulled them, and was holding both of my hands behind my head. And the other guy pulled his hand loose, put the gun up to my back, and fired.

The bullet went in behind my back. It cracked a couple of ribs. It collapsed my lung. He hit my kidney and my liver, and I was laying in the street. He jumped out of the car, sat on top of me, put the gun to my face. Just then the police pulled up, and somebody in a restaurant had seen the car driving down the road with somebody with a gun beating someone. They called the police. The police were there immediately, and the police arrested them, and I went to the hospital.

I was charged with possession and delivery of drugs, assaulting federal agents, resisting arrest with violence. I represented myself. The federal jury came back, found me not guilty, and the federal jury recommended that the agents be indicted for attempted murder. So then, after I was found not guilty, I was really tired of going to jail, being arrested, getting bond, going to jail, being arrested, getting bond, going to court. I was really tired of it.

I always had wanted to have a family. I decided that I wanted to get married and have a family.

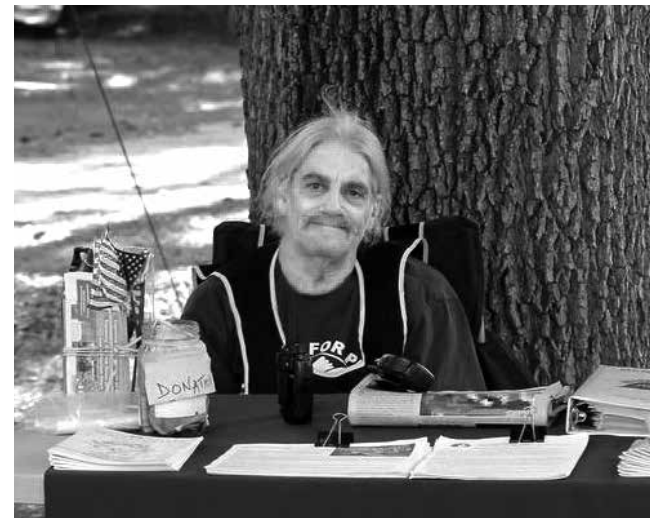
My activism now is more local. I'm in Veterans For Peace, and Veterans For Peace is against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and I support all of that kind of stuff. But I feel that I have more power in local politics. I'm the political chair of the Sierra Club. And as political chair, I've gotten to know all of our representatives by name. I'm able to meet with them, to lobby them. They all come before us for our endorsement.

So I have some clout with our elected leaders here in Alachua County, and I'm able to get a tremendous

amount accomplished locally, and that's what I do. I manage elections, and I lobby our elected officials mostly on environmental issues.

I've been an antiwar activist for about 49 years, and in those 49 years, things have gotten worse. So I'm not quite sure that I have the answer as far as, "If you do A, you'll get the result B." We have to try to hold our government's feet to the fire. You have to be active, and you can't be afraid to speak out, and most important, the idea that you don't have the right to criticize the government, that's an anti-democratic idea. And when the government is not being responsive to you, it's incumbent upon you to go and get in their face. Don't let the government or other people tell you how to think. Do your own research. Find the facts and think for yourself.

*Matthew Breems creates podcasts of interviews with Vietnam veterans that are published by [couragetoresist.org](http://couragetoresist.org) and [vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org).*



Scott Camil staffing a table at the Gainesville, Fla., Memorial Mile, a project he initiated in 2006. Every Memorial Day, the chapter sets up tombstones for U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The display has grown over the years to take over both sides of the road and attracts hundreds of visitors, including many family members, who write messages to their loved ones on the tombstones.

## Women

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It's no wonder that proposals from the gathering focused on women's grassroots organizing and collective self-protection rather than seeking government fixes.

### Organizing Among Us

While women practiced self-defense training on the community soccer field, others discussed their work in accompanying women who have to take dangerous routes to and from work, creating "safe spaces," publicly denouncing abusers, forming brigades to search for women who have been forcibly disappeared, adopting security protocols in their organizations, creating victims' support groups, developing popular education programs, providing translators for indigenous women, defending migrant women en route, setting up counseling services and all kinds of creative healing therapies, visiting women in prison and providing re-entry services, campaigns for women tourists to prevent abuse and assault in resort areas, performances and street art to raise consciousness, networks of women human rights defenders, fighting for access to land and economic se-



A soccer match on the first day of the meeting.

curity for rural women, running shelters, sharing basic needs, and creating an infinitely wide range of ground-up initiatives.

The idea is to build feminist caring communities that don't necessarily give up on law enforcement but take matters into their own hands. For many, the state has lost credibility as a guarantor of basic safety for women. Many groups continue to document and denounce abuses, while at the same time protecting and providing among themselves. Territorial autonomy and self-government, like the Za-

patista community where the gathering took place, isn't a viable goal for women's organizations in most places, but the development of autonomous practice and grassroots protection has taken deep hold in feminist groups in Mexico and around the world.

The Second Gathering served to energize women and their organizations. For many, it was the first time they had been at an all-women's gathering (only boys under 12 were allowed, as men were given outside support roles), the first time in an

autonomous Zapatista community, the first time talking directly with Zapatista women, including those who participated in the 1994 insurrection and those who were born and raised in communities governed by the Revolutionary Law on Women. Once again, the international gathering showed the political acumen and convening capacity of the Zapatistas, a central actor in the anti-globalization organizing of the nineties and of the continued resistance of indigenous peoples. It also showed the momentum behind this new wave of the women's movement, fueled by outrage, the power of a new generation and the capacity to cross traditional barriers between us to build together.

Today's women's movement aims not only to "take back the streets," but to take back every nook and cranny where we as women live our lives. To spend three days in an encampment of thousands of women committed to ending violence—without men, without fear—provided an exhilarating glimpse of the freedom we want and need.

As feminists, we know that those battles for nooks and crannies are precisely where real transformation is born.

*This article was originally published in Counterpunch Magazine.*

*Laura Carlsen is the director of Americas Program.*



# 'Either Socialism Will Defeat the Louse or the Louse Will Defeat Socialism'

By Vijay Prashad

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) says that the Great Lockdown, which has no end date, could very well lead to a loss of \$9 trillion to global Gross Domestic Product over the entirety of 2020 and 2021; this number is greater than the combined economies of Japan and Germany. This scenario, the fund's managing director Kristalina Georgieva admits, "may actually be a more optimistic picture than reality produces."

There are calls within Europe for the mutualization of debt, there are calls on the global stage for debt moratoriums, and there are calls for the IMF to issue trillions of dollars of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). But old habits do not die. Germany and the Netherlands do not want to bail out the southern European economies, while the U.S. Treasury and the creditors are not keen on debt relief for the catastrophic pandemic, the U.S. government has decided to withhold its financial contribution to the World Health Organization (WHO).

There are now over 5 million people infected by

to the United States and 750,000 masks to France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Within living memory, the United States, with assistance from its European allies, dropped seven and a half million tons of explosives, including chemical weapons (napalm and Agent Orange), which devastated Vietnam's society and poisoned its agricultural land for generations; this is 100 times greater than the power of the atom bombs that the United States dropped on Japan. Yet, it is Vietnam whose government and people have used science and public action to tackle the virus and who sent—in solidarity—equipment to the United States, where the absence of science and public actions has paralyzed society.

A hundred years ago, in 1918–19, an influenza pandemic swept the world, traveling on ships carrying troops to and from the battlefields of Europe in the throes of World War I. At least 50 million people were felled by what was erroneously called the Spanish Flu (the virus was first detected in Kansas in March 1918). This influenza followed another pandemic—in 1889–90—whose



SARS-CoV-2 across the world, with deaths increasing, a general sense of gloom falling like heavy winter snow on our human capacity for optimism.

But then there are sparks of hope, mainly coming from parts of the world committed to socialism. At the end of January, when most of the world was cavalier about the news from Wuhan (China), Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc assembled a team and began to create measures to tackle the spread of the virus. "Fighting the epidemic is fighting the enemy," he said at that time. Vietnam's government began to trace those who might be infected, test their contacts, quarantine anyone who interacted with them, and bring in the entire medical establishment—including retired doctors and nurses—to deal with the emergency. Vietnam's Military Medical Academy and Viet A Corporation developed a low-cost test kit based on WHO guidelines, which allowed the country to begin testing people with symptoms. Crucially, the government repeatedly cautioned the population against xenophobia.

Until now, there have been no deaths from COVID-19 in Vietnam.

Last week, Vietnam shipped 450,000 protective suits

swift diffusion has been blamed on the rapid movement of humans by steam transportation by sea and land. While the 1889–90 influenza mainly killed children and the elderly, the influenza of 1918–19 also killed young adults for reasons that are still not fully explained.

Troops, who, in the words of the poet Isaac Rosenberg, "Drained the wild honey of their youth" in the mud, lice, and mustard gas of the ghastly trenches now had to confront the infectious flu at home. As the war ended, the belligerent countries set up the League of Nations, which created the Typhus Commission, quickly renamed the Epidemics Commission. Disease was the close cousin of war, with a volt of diseases—such as typhus, typhoid, dysentery, smallpox, cholera, and influenza—aflame amongst the demobilized soldiers. The Epidemics Commission visited Poland, where it recommended the establishment of a cordon sanitaire to prevent the diseases from spreading further and worked with the government to create emergency hospitals and clinics. It was this commission that would be folded into the Health Organization of the League, and—after World War II—the World Health Organization (WHO).

The young Soviet Union, established after the October

Revolution of 1917, faced the wrath of what was known as *ispanskaya bolezni*, or the "Spanish Disease." By late 1918, the Soviets saw 150 cases per week, although it was not as much of a problem as typhus, which brought 1,000 cases per week to the hospitals. It was because of typhus—caused by lice—that Lenin said, "Either socialism will defeat the louse, or the louse will defeat socialism." The Soviet Union inherited a broken medical system and a population in poverty and ill health; civil war, disease, and famine threatened the total collapse of society. It was in light of this that the Soviets hastily acted in several key ways:

- **Create a commissariat for public health.** On July 21, 1918, the USSR centralized the various health agencies and put Nikolai Semashko in charge; this was the first such institution in the world (by comparison, the United States did not create a Department of Health until 1953). The commissariat was charged with ensuring that health care was a right and not a privilege; therefore, medical care had to be free.

- **Expand and democratize the health sector.** The USSR hastily built hospitals and polyclinics, trained doctors and public health experts, and expanded medical schools and bacteriological institutes. Dr. E. P. Pervukhin, commissar of Public Health of the Petrograd Commune, said in 1920, "New factories for medicines have been erected, and great stocks have been confiscated from the speculators in medicines." The profit motive was removed from the medical sector.

- **Mobilize the population.** Health care could not be left in the hands of the doctors and nurses alone; Semashko made the case for the mobilization of workers and peasants into the struggle to build a healthy society. The Workers' Committees to Combat Epidemics were established in 1918 in both cities and villages; the representatives of these committees—workers and peasants themselves—communicated scientific information about health and sanitation, ensured that the public baths (*banyas*) were clean, and monitored their communities to ensure that any sign of disease would lead to professional medical care. In 1920, Semashko wrote, "We may say without exaggeration that the epidemics of typhus and cholera were stopped chiefly by the assistance of the workers' and peasants' committees." Public action was an integral part of Soviet health care.

- **Strengthen preventive measures.** The Soviet public health officials believed that more resources had to go toward prevention, whether toward public health instruction or toward improving the living conditions of the workers and the peasants. Dr. Pervukhin told a Norwegian journalist in 1920 that in the Soviet Union, "all dwellings are nationalized, so no one any longer lives in the surroundings so dangerous to health which many had to put up with under the old regime. By means of our grain monopoly, foodstuffs are guaranteed first of all to the sick and weak." Better living conditions and more frequent medical attention would be able to stop the spread of disease.

## Lashed to the Mast of Profit

No wonder, then, as Dr. Pervukhin said, that "we overcame the Spanish influenza better than the Western world did." Reading these texts shines a familiar light on the way that Vietnam and Kerala, China, and Cuba are tackling the coronavirus pandemic today; it underlines the gap between the socialist order and the capitalist order, one with a disposition to put people before profit and the other lashed to the mast of profit. Reading Jessica Lussenhop's magnificent story about how the Smithfield pork plant in South Dakota refused to shut down when multiple cases of COVID-19 broke out along their production line, instead pressuring workers who had little choice but to keep coming to work, tells you something about the compulsions of the capitalist order in the face of a pandemic. Tim, one of the Smithfield workers, said he had to keep working because "I got four kids to take

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Across the planet, citizens are helping out their neighbours, from buying groceries to cooking meals for those in need: In Naples, Italy, people have been leaving 'solidarity baskets' for those who are struggling. The note reads: 'Put in if you can. Take out if you can't.'

# Excerpts from Arundhati Roy's Essay 'The Pandemic Is a Portal'

Who can use the term “gone viral” now without shuddering a little? Who can look at anything any more—a door handle, a cardboard carton, a bag of vegetables—without imagining it swarming with those unseeable, undead, unliving blobs dotted with suction pads waiting to fasten themselves on to our lungs? Who can think of kissing a stranger, jumping on to a bus or sending their child to school without feeling real fear? Who can think of ordinary pleasure and not assess its risk? Who among us is not a quack epidemiologist, virologist, statistician, and prophet? Which scientist or doctor is not secretly praying for a miracle? Which priest is not—secretly, at least—submitting to science? And even while the virus proliferates, who could not be thrilled by the swell of birdsong in cities, peacocks

dancing at traffic crossings, and the silence in the skies? The number of cases worldwide this week crept over a million. More than 50,000 people have died already. Projections suggest that number will swell to hundreds of thousands, perhaps more. The virus has moved freely along the pathways of trade and international capital, and the terrible illness it has brought in its wake has locked humans down in their countries, their cities, and their homes. But unlike the flow of capital, this virus seeks proliferation, not profit, and has, therefore, inadvertently, to some extent, reversed the direction of the flow. It has mocked immigration controls, biometrics, digital surveillance, and every other kind of data analytics, and struck hardest—thus far—in the richest, most powerful nations of the world, bringing the engine of capitalism to a judder-

ing halt. Temporarily perhaps, but at least long enough for us to examine its parts, make an assessment and decide whether we want to help fix it or look for a better engine. The mandarins who are managing this pandemic are fond of speaking of war. They don't even use war as a metaphor, they use it literally. But if it really were a

*[I]n the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.*

war, then who would be better prepared than the United States? If it were not masks and gloves that its frontline soldiers needed, but guns, smart bombs, bunker busters, submarines, fighter jets, and nuclear bombs, would there be a shortage? What is this thing that has happened to us? It's a virus, yes. In and of itself it holds no moral brief. But it is definitely more than a virus. Some believe it's God's way of bringing us to our senses. Others that it's a Chinese conspiracy to take over the world.

Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality,” trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it. Arundhati Roy is an activist and author of fiction and nonfiction. Her latest novel is The Ministry of Utmost Happiness.

## Lives Lost

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Jews were forced from their homes and neighborhoods into the ghettos, everything they had was taken, but not all musical instruments. The Germans enjoyed music but also enjoyed tormenting the Jews by forcing them to play for the pleasure of the tormenters. They played in the ghettos and they played in the death camps. When a trainload of new prisoners arrived, they were greeted by a symphonic sound. For the prisoners in the orchestra, they played their instruments to stay alive. After the liberation, many instruments were smashed or burned while many simply went mute, the musician refusing to ever play it again. Violins were stuffed away in attics. One violin was brought to the shop of Amnon Weinstein. The violin's owner told Amnon he could buy the violin, or it would be destroyed. Amnon bought it, and over time collected 87 violins, and a few violas and cellos, that had made their way through the Holocaust. He brought every one of them back to life and put them in the hands of musicians, and by doing so defied the Nazis. They'd meant to destroy the Jews and their way of life but through the violins that Jewish life lives on. Many of the visitors to *Violins of Hope* were Jewish. Their lives have been touched every day by the Holocaust. People told me of death camps they'd visited in tribute to grandparents and family who died there. The exhibit was wrenching but what put me over emo-

tionally, what told me clearly that I had never plumbed the depth of what had happened to the Jews, was a short film clip included in the video loop. It was of people coming down the gangplank of a refugee ship at a pier in British Palestine, recognizing someone and rushing to them, hugging, crying, looking into each other's eyes. “I never thought I'd see you again!” That shook me up but I watched it over and over. The Holocaust had been like wallpaper to me, the background to a friend's life but a place I could come and go from and never notice. Now it was real. I remembered a trip I took to Cavan, Ireland, where the Rileys are from. Originally spelled Raghallach, the record there of my family goes back to the 12th century. If you travel to Cavan and say your name is Riley, you will be told there are Rileys all around there. Amnon Weinstein's father Moshe, who began the luthier business in Tel Aviv, had emigrated from Vilnius, Lithuania, in 1938. None of the relatives Moshe left behind survived the Nazis. Moshe once showed his son Amnon a photo of an empty field near Vilnius and said, “Look at that. That is your family.” After all this, I come back to the football coach. Maybe after the COVID-19 virus passes, the coach could do his sensitivity training at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park in Atlanta in the company of people whose lives have been unjustly distorted by the horrors a noose brings to mind. Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of our war in Vietnam, a writer, and a member of San Francisco Veterans For Peace Chapter 69.

## Penguin in the Shedd Aquarium\*

Wellington, a penguin in the Shedd Aquarium, was allowed to wander around the building Wellington waddled Just couldn't stop waddling around, curious as hell. And so do I! First thing in the morning for at least four minutes I'm Wellington's soul mate waddling from bedroom to bathroom brushing my teeth, glad for mintiness then I waddle down the stairs ensconce myself at the kitchen table and read the NYT. After that, waddling sort of wears off.

—Kathy Kelly

\*Penguins at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago explored the empty aquarium after it closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.



# Love in a Dangerous Time

By Mike Ferner

“It’s like we’ve all been sent to our room to think about what we did.” My friends, there is great truth in that anonymous meme making the rounds. If there ever was a nation that needed a “time out” for that purpose, it’s ours.

With nearly every minute of round-the-clock news cycles dedicated to updates on the COVID-19 pandemic, one needn’t restate examples of the plague’s panic, suffering, fear, or insecurity. It’s all right there, worsening with each iteration.

Fortunately, we’re also witnessing an abundance of human compassion that assuages some of the pain and fear. Every day people find creative ways to express their concern and confirm our common humanity.

In a stellar essay, *New York Times*



Young Iraqi girl displaced from her home.

columnist David Brooks reflects, “Already there’s a shift of values coming to the world. We’re forced to be intentional about keeping up our human connections. There’s a new introspection coming into the world too. (People seem) eager to have deeper conversations and ask more fundamental questions. ... If your lungs filled with fluid a week from Tuesday would you be content with the life you’ve lived? What would you do if a loved one died?”

I’ve heard some of the same conversations and perceived some of the same transformations Brooks writes about. And it gives me hope that maybe, just maybe, this newfound compassion and introspection will continue and expand beyond our borders. Perhaps the hearts of Americans will feel just a portion of the suffering and grief our government has caused around the world—suffering for which we have each paid dearly in blood and treasure.

Certainly no one would minimize the traumas that have already and will yet hit the United States. Millions will be affected along a continuum ranging from sickness, death, unemployment, and grief to where, spared by fate from the above, it will mostly be an inconvenience mixed with anxiety over the supply of toilet paper.

Will those on the lucky end of the spectrum have the further good fortune to take this once-in-a-century opportunity to go to our room and think about what we did?

For those who do, here is some raw material for the imagination.

When the U.S. invasion of Iraq was in only its third year, a Johns Hopkins University study concluded that 655,000 people had already been killed in that war.

Prior to that, the United Nations estimated that prewar sanctions enforced on Iraq at the behest of the United States had killed over 500,000 children under the age of five.

Based on the Johns Hopkins estimate of Iraqis killed, a conservative estimate of the wounded from that same period was 2.6 million people. Additionally, the United Nations estimated between 1.5 million and 2 million Iraqis were “internally displaced” by the fighting and roughly the same number had fled their country, among them disproportionate numbers of doctors.

Take a moment to let that sink in ...

Now, conjure your most empathetic vision and imagine what those numbers would look like if we applied them comparably to our own population. As hard as it is to believe, here’s what our dear nation would look like.

- In the former cities of Atlanta, Denver, Boston, Seattle, Milwaukee, Fort Worth, Baltimore, San Francisco, Dallas, and Philadelphia every single person is dead.
- In Vermont, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, Kansas, Mississippi, Iowa, Oregon, South Carolina, and Colorado every single person is wounded.
- The entire populations of Ohio and New Jersey are homeless, surviving with friends and relatives or under bridges as they can.
- The entire populations of Michigan, Indiana, and Kentucky have fled to Canada or Mexico.
- One in four U.S. doctors has left the country. Last year, 3,000 doctors were kidnapped and 800 killed.
- Only the well-off can afford bottled water. What comes out of the tap is guaranteed to at least make you sick and very frequently kill your children.
- On a good day we have three or four hours of electricity to preserve food or cool the heat ... all summer ... in Arizona, Florida, and the other 48 states.
- Three times as many of our fellow citizens are out of work as during the Great Depression.
- In every major city, hospitals are seriously degraded by years of sanctions or outright destroyed by bombing.
- Roads are at best a time-consuming hazard.
- Trying to care for the sick and wounded in these conditions consumes an ever-larger portion of our personal time and national resources, debilitating the economy even further.
- Anxiety, depression, and suicide rates increase dramatically.



Did these Iraqi children deserve this?

- It begins to sink in that nobody “out there” is coming to save us. We are in hell. Alone.

If you’ve not yet stop reading this article in disgust or horror, open your heart further to understand that the above comparisons are based on one nation’s reality but our taxes have provided the Pentagon and CIA the wherewithal to make life equally damnable for our fellow humans in Iran, Libya, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, Republic of the Congo, and who knows how many places. Much of the world calls it war crimes. We passively accept it as foreign policy.

David Brooks observed, “We learn more about ourselves in these hard times.

The differences between red and blue don’t seem as acute on the gurneys of the ER, but the inequality in the world seems more obscene when the difference between rich and poor is life or death.”

True indeed and worth taking to heart. Then, if we can expand our consciousness and compassion, we can begin to comprehend our government’s behavior in the world and come out of this pandemic demanding to be better members of the human family.

Mike Ferner is a former Navy corpsman, national president of Veterans For Peace, and member of Toledo’s City Council. Email him at [mike.ferner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mike.ferner@sbcglobal.net).

## The Louse

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care of. That income is what provides a roof over my head.”

On March 24, the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o wrote a poem called “Dawn of Darkness”:

*I know, I know,  
It threatens the common gestures of  
human bonding  
The handshake,  
The hug  
The shoulders we give each other to  
cry on  
The neighborliness we take for granted  
So much that we often beat our breasts  
Crowding about rugged individualism,  
Disdaining nature, pissing poison on it  
even, while  
Claiming that property has all the legal  
rights of personhood  
Murmuring gratitude for our shares in  
the gods of capital.*

*Oh, how now I wish I could write poetry  
in English,  
Or any and every language you speak  
So, I can share with you, words that  
Wanjikũ, my Gĩkũyũ mother, used to  
tell me:  
Gũtirĩ ũtukũ ũtakĩā:  
No night is so Dark that,*

*It will not end in Dawn,  
Or simply put,  
Every night ends with dawn.  
Gũtirĩ ũtukũ ũtakĩā.*

*This darkness too will pass away  
We shall meet again and again  
And talk about Darkness and Dawn  
Sing and laugh maybe even hug  
Nature and nurture locked in a green  
embrace  
Celebrating every pulsation of a  
common being  
Rediscovered and cherished for real  
In the light of the Darkness and the  
new Dawn.*

This darkness too will pass away. The light that welcomes us will not be, as Ngũgĩ writes, the old light, but a new dawn.

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Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian and journalist. Prashad is the author of 30 books, including *Washington Bullets*, *Red Star Over the Third World*, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World*, and *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*. He is the chief correspondent for *Globetrotter* and a columnist for *Frontline (India)*. He is the chief editor of *LeftWord Books (New Delhi)*. He has appeared in two films, *Shadow World* and *Two Meetings*.



# To Those Lost in the Vietnam War

*One of the many benefits of the teaching profession is being given the opportunity to listen to the voices of younger generations. In the Peace Studies course I teach at the University of Maine, we examine the history of nonviolence in America. One of the writing assignments I offer my students is to write a letter to the Vietnam Memorial Wall if they are so moved. I realize that this is akin to asking me, as a first-year student in 1964, to write a letter to a WWI monument. It's not for everybody. But when this opportunity takes hold in some students' minds, the fruits of their labors invariably cause me to rekindle a degree of hope for the future. This is an essay written by Riley Ferrigan. What I appreciate so much is her conversation with soldiers from decades ago—young men and women who died when they were not much older than she is now. Her wonderful series of questions is generated not from some abstract notion of war, but, rather, genuinely rises up from concern for her 19-year-old friend, Adam, who is being deployed to Afghanistan. Listen to her voice. She is the future.*

—Doug Rawlings

Adam is 19 years old; a boy who finds comfort in fishing, long aimless drives with country tunes, sunsets on the lake and one of my only friends left with a childish spark in them. Adam was my first crush, first boyfriend, and the first boy I ever loved. Adam is the type to grab your hand and slow dance with you in the living room. He is a boy of few words, and when words come short you can count on his eyes to give him away. When I look at him, I see the same young and innocent boy I grew up with. He is close in age with many

of you, fresh into adulthood when you witnessed the horrors of the Vietnam War. My friend is currently stationed in Kansas, and patiently awaiting his deployment to Afghanistan. When he told me where he was headed, I asked him how he felt. He simply said, "I just don't want to have to tell my mom." I held back any tears I had and let him talk to me. Now, I am not here to tell you what you already know; I could never fathom what you all experienced. I am, however, here to ask some questions. How do I support my friend without supporting the system that needlessly sacrifices innocent lives? How do I help him when he comes home? Should I send him letters like I am sending to you today? What helped you when those terrible days came and what gives you solace now? I hope that looking back in time and reading pieces written by your brothers and sisters will answer these daunting questions, and I want to share this exploration with you.

I am not the first to ask you questions, to send you a letter. I have visited your walls once before and saw your names etched on smooth dark stone. I visited with Adam and the rest of our class. A girl in my class cried at the Holocaust Museum as well as in front of your solemn wall. Though, I think she cried for the families and friends that left flowers, notes, and mementos. I never read the intimate contents of the letters or touched what was left for you. I just brushed a hand along your names and tried to read as many as I could. I hoped that by reading your names I could pay my respects, maybe call you back to earth for a moment to see what they had left for you. I felt all of you deserved to be seen, felt, known. I remember looking at the boys on the trip, 13- and 14-year olds, and hop-



Doug Rawlings delivers a letter to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.  
Photo: Ellen Davidson

ing this never happened to them. Michael Uhl, one of the many who stood beside you, wrote something powerful I think should be shared again. "Entering the aura of the dead, our faces melt to tears. It is not strange or exceptional to witness two aging men hugging each other, sobbing, shamelessly, inconsolably. They are still grieving the fate of a fallen brother, reliving horrors of their war, crushed by the heaviness of the wound of survival they will carry to their graves." Michael then confesses he too sobs at the wall, though usually void of tears. I fear that Adam too will carry scars with him after his war, visible and invisible. How can I console someone as they cry inconsolably? How could I aid him in his grief? Do you help the men who leave tears on your ground? Does it help them seeing your names and remembering your faces?

For as long as I have known him, Adam has wanted to serve in the U.S. Army. So, for as long as I have known him, I have supported him in that choice. Up until this past semester, my eyes have been virtually closed when it comes to war and violence. I never realized the extent to which we have harmed the men and women in our military. My father always spoke so highly of the Marine Corps and whenever I see a decorated man or woman, a veteran, or an active duty soldier, I make it a point to thank them for their service. I never truly realized what I was thanking them for. I know for a fact I will always show respect to those who have worked for our military. This is where I have gotten a little lost. How can I show these men and women respect without accepting the wars they fought in? Scott Camil lost a dear friend in Vietnam and says, "My country did not learn anything from our sacrifices in Vietnam and this is what causes me the most pain." Though he also states if we had learned something from this war, then the sacrifices would have been invaluable. I hold onto the hope that we still can. I think that by lending these surviving men and women an ear, listening to their stories and passing them along, we can show them the respect they deserve and work toward a solution.

Brian Willson was drafted into the Vietnam War and for the first two years of his service, he felt fine. Then he was given orders and stationed in Vietnam. Here, he began to question the legitimacy of the war

he fought. He refused bayonet training as he thought it was repulsive, and cared for the Vietnamese people he met. When he finds a young Vietnamese mother dead after a bombing he speaks out to his superiors. "My God, this bombing, this war, is a lie. I've been living a lie. What does this mean? These people are just persons, just human beings." A part of me hopes my friend will come to a similar realization, and part of me hopes, selfishly, that he can remain untouched by the trauma of war. He has always spoken with so much passion about his commitment to be part of the U.S. military and I have always cheered him on. Now that I have learned what war really is, I struggle to find a way to share this with him. I think of telling him of his fallen brothers and sisters and how they were used as pawns in a sadistic game. Would that help him, or should he learn from his own experiences? Do I continue to support him endlessly and without criticism? I know that I will continue to try my best and support him no matter what, because that's what friends do. I will listen to his experiences without judgment, always. Politics should not come between relationships.

My professor says he and his friends prefer not to be thanked for their service in this most atrocious war. Therefore, I would like to thank you for your guidance and presence. Your stories and experiences have been documented; they help me learn from our country's mistakes. I wish to take this newfound knowledge and use it. I will use it to help Adam as much as I can. I will show it to others and pass your stories along, so that our country can learn from this war that most hoped would be our last. I think we can still learn from the Vietnam War and change our country's ways. I hope this brings peace to you, to know your lives were not lost for nothing. We should be spreading the stories of your lives, too early interrupted and the stories of the survivors who walk through each day crippled by the scars they hide. I will do my best to make sure our next generation does not face the same fate. And, if I may ask one more thing of you all, please look after those men and women that are owned by the United States. Please look after Adam.

Thank you,  
Riley Ferrigan

## Conscientious Objector

I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death.

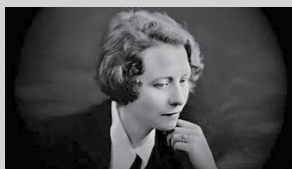
I hear him leading his horse out of the stall;  
I hear the clatter on the barn floor.  
He is in haste; he has business in Cuba, business in the Balkans,  
many calls to make this morning.  
But I will not hold the bridle while he cinches the girth.  
And he may mount by himself: I will not give him a leg up.

Though he flick my shoulders with his whip, I will not tell him  
which way the fox ran.  
With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him where the black boy  
hides in the swamp.  
I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death; I am not  
on his payroll.

I will not tell him the whereabouts of my friends nor of my enemies either.  
Though he promise me much, I will not map him the route  
to any man's door.  
Am I a spy in the land of the living, that I should deliver men to Death?  
Brother, the password and the plans of our city are safe with me;  
never through me  
shall you be overcome.

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

An American poet and playwright, Millay received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923, the third woman to win the award for poetry, and was also known for her feminist activism.





*The Mountains Sing*  
By Nguyen Phan Que Mai  
Workman Publishing, 2020, 352 pages,  
\$26.95

By Matthew Hoh

I was born near New York City in 1973, the year the United States officially ended its war in Vietnam and brought home the last of its combat troops. The Vietnam War, known to the Vietnamese as The American War, was always something removed from me, even as I read history after history, watched documentaries and, as a Marine Corps officer, researched copies of wartime Marine Corps manuals. Although the war waged for another couple of years after my birth for the Vietnamese people, the peoples of Cambodia and Laos suffered mass killings and atrocities while I was a boy, and to this day, both Vietnamese and American families, in the millions, suffer death and disability from Agent Orange and the unexploded remnants of millions of tons of U.S. bombs, the war had little personal effect on me. Even with my connection now to many Vietnam veterans and my experience meeting scores of people who have lost husbands, fathers and brothers to Agent Orange, a connection between the war in Vietnam and my own life and experiences at war in Afghanistan and Iraq has been simply academic or theoretical.

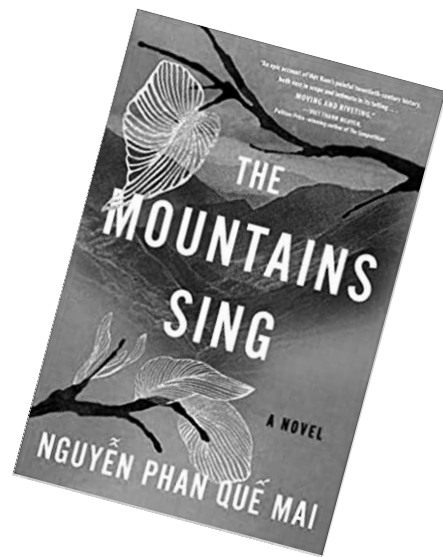
The year I was born Nguyen Phan Que Mai was born in the north of Vietnam. Like all Vietnamese, Que Mai would experience The American War, its distant genesis, its rancid execution and its omnipresent aftermath, in entirely personal terms. For Que Mai the war would be directly and indirectly at the root of all things, nothing could be composed or expressed without some substance of the war attending. The war in all things was true for all Vietnamese, but for Americans was true only for those sent to kill and be killed on the battlefield of latent colonialism and Cold War hysteria and for their families. Que Mai would work to survive as a farmer and street vendor for many years until a scholarship program sent her to Australia to study. From Australia she would begin a career in development work to improve the lives of people not just in Vietnam, but throughout Asia. Que Mai would also begin a process of writing that would contribute equally



U.S. Marine Corpsman carries injured child away from battle at Hué. Photo: Don McCullin

to the healing and recovery from war and to the development work she took part in and led.

*The Mountains Sing* is Que Mai's ninth book and her first in English. It is a novel of one family attempting to survive in the north of Vietnam from the Second World War through the years following the defeat of the South Vietnamese govern-



ment by the North. It has received rave reviews from a wide variety of critics such as *The New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *BookPage*, and has 4.5 and

4.9 scores on Goodreads and Amazon, so my comments will not reflect the intense and beautiful qualities of Que Mai's prose or her haunting and compelling storytelling. Rather, I simply want to say people in the United States should read this book to understand what we in the United States have done to so many outside the United States.

For many years now, when asked what books should be read in order to understand the current U.S. wars in the Muslim world, I have recommended two books, both about Vietnam: David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* and Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*. Read those books, I say to people, and you'll understand why the United States is in these wars and why these wars won't end. However, those books tell little about the people of the wars: their experiences, sufferings, triumphs, and existence. As Halberstam and Sheehan do for understanding the United States in these wars, so Que Mai does for understanding the people pinned underneath, exploited, struck down, and shaped by them.

There were several occasions while reading *The Mountains Sing* that I thought of stopping. The book induced nausea and feverish panic in me as I read Que Mai's words about her family (although it is a

novel, it can be understood to have been taken in large part from her family's own history). The book aroused the memories of the many Iraqis and Afghans I have known, many still in their home countries, most of them still living and surviving through continued war or perhaps one of its pauses. Guilt over the wars, what I took part in, and what we as a nation did to so many millions of innocents, drives my suicidal ideation, as it does for many other U.S. veterans, and as maybe it should be ...

What *The Mountains Sing* details and explains about war—not just the details of the grief, horror, futility, trials and meanness of it, but of its lasting effects across generations, of its constant requirements for sacrifice, and of its breeding of political, cultural, and societal extremism—is not limited to the Vietnamese experience, but extends to all touched by the force and whims of war. Surely there are elements and aspects of *The Mountains Sing* that are specific to the Vietnamese experience, just as there are elements and aspects to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen that are unique to each country. Yet even in that difference, there is a sameness, as the cause of the war, the reason for such things, is us, the United States.

Que Mai has written a timeless book of sadness and loss, and of gain and victory. Whether consciously or not, Que Mai has spoken for generations outside of Vietnam, millions upon millions of people bombed out, put underground, forced to flee and desperate to live; people who are crazy yet lucid in their desire not just to escape and survive but to ultimately outlast and supersede the U.S. war machine. It's a book for Americans too. Not a mirror for us by any means, but a window, a view into what we have done and continue to do to so many all over the world, from before I was born through now as I age.

*Originally published by Counterpunch.*

Matthew Hoh is a member of the advisory boards of *Expose Facts*, *Veterans For Peace*, and *World Beyond War*. In 2009 he resigned his position with the State Department in Afghanistan to protest the escalation of the Afghanistan War by the Obama Administration. He previously had been in Iraq with a State Department team and with the U.S. Marines. He is a Senior Fellow with the Center for International Policy.

## Please Don't Shoot The Orphans

for Barbara Dudley

"... by day I rode a motor scooter out to U.S. Military Assistance Command Headquarters at Long Binh, about 30 minutes on an empty road that had been the site of fire fights the night before. Every morning I passed a beautiful if dilapidated French villa set back off the road which had been converted into an orphanage. The hand painted sign in front of the villa read in English, 'Please don't shoot the orphans.'"—Barbara Dudley

Imagine if every city in our land of the free welcomed travelers in with billboards reading:

"Please don't shoot the orphans"

Would that not cause the casual motorist to pause and ask how were they orphaned?  
Who were their parents?

What did these parents do to deserve death?  
Who meted out such a punishment?  
Who are these orphans anyways?

Imagine all the interstates in and out of our cities clogged with cars brought to a standstill by  
"Please don't shoot the orphans" plastered on placards

their drivers stumbling out of their seats onto the median strips crisscrossing this land of the mobile and free to question

if not just for a minute how their own busy lives can possibly be intertwined with the lives of orphans

their hearts in their mouths when they realize the hands on their steering wheels the fingers dancing across their radio dials

hold the answer to those questions

—Doug Rawlings



## A Journey of Remembrance

# Glenna Goodacre's Vietnam Women's Memorial Sculpture

By Denise Kusel

Almost every aspect of the war in Vietnam tingled with opposition. A battle to convince the powers that be in Washington, D.C., that women deserved to be honored for their own work in that conflict was no exception.

The idea was a simple one: something to honor the approximately 11,000 American military women, nearly all volunteers, who were stationed in Vietnam during the war and put their own lives on the line. But then nothing about the Vietnam conflict was simple. That idea turned into a 10-year crusade first waged by Diane Carlson Evans, a former captain in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) who was 21 when she was deployed to the war zone in August 1968.

"I thought this wouldn't be difficult. Who would be against these women and all that they sacrificed? I quickly found out differently. There was this huge push-back, vicious and mean-spirited," Evans says from her home in Helena, Montana. "What followed was a journey of unexpected bureaucratic obstacles, wrought with deep-seated sexism. But we didn't give up. In the end, those wounded soldiers who had survived proved to be there for their sisters-in-arms, joining their fight for honor."

Evans eventually reached out for help, forming the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, whose membership was composed of nurses like her. She called former ANC captain, Jane Carson.

"Early in 1983, Diane asked if I would help her raise money to get a memorial placed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.," says Carson, who now lives near Eldorado, N.M. After a decade of bickering with authorities, Congress passed such a bill and President Ronald Reagan signed legislation in 1988.

The foundation quickly put their plan into action.

This is where Santa Fe sculptor Glenna Goodacre stepped in. The committee chose her work to make their idea a reality.

"Glenna was the kind of person you immediately love," says Evans, who served in the Army for six years. "Joyful, a wonderful sense of humor." Two weeks after being selected, Goodacre flew to Washington to meet with the Washington Fine Arts Committee. She brought along a 24-inch maquette, a clay likeness of four figures she had envisioned the final project would portray.

"Glenna walks in, poised, elegant, beautiful. Just Glenna, with this wonderful cheerfulness about her. But then, before she could even speak, the head of the seated figure of a nurse fell off and rolled onto the floor."

Evans paused for a breath. "Glenna im-

mediately puts her hand on her hip, looks up at us, and says, 'Doesn't that beat all.' She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a bunch of toothpicks, and places that head right back on, immediately disarming the entire gathering.

"She told us that she spoke with some women who had served in Vietnam and said, 'The setting is sandbags. From what I read about Vietnam, there were sandbags everywhere.'"

"Glenna said she included the figures of a wounded soldier being cradled by a nurse because for those of us women who went to Vietnam, about 85% to 90% were nurses tending to these soldiers. [Goodacre's] soldier has field dressing covering his eyes. He has no insignia. He is anonymous. He is everyone's son," Evans explains.

"The third figure is of a woman of color. In fact, all women who served were black, white, Asian, Hispanic. This woman is looking up to the sky, looking for the helicopter or God. Because for the wounded, the helicopter was God. It was their savior. Soldiers called us their angels.

"The fourth figure is a kneeling woman who reflects the anguish and futility of war," Evans says. "She looks the way we felt at the end of the day. She is holding an empty helmet."

After completion, the 2,000-pound bronze statue, which stood 6 feet and 8 inches high, was loaded onto a flatbed truck in Santa Fe to begin a 21-day journey to the National Mall. Along the way, it stopped at Goodacre's hometown of Lubbock, Texas; the Mall of America in Minnesota, and other public gathering spots.



Goodacre's Vietnam Veterans Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Photo: Darcy A. Otranto

"Glenna Goodacre was a young mother raising two kids," explains Dan Anthony, who was her studio assistant and manager for 33 years. "She was shocked and moved by the lady Vietnam vets she met.

"They were just kids, volunteers who were put in charge of these lives. She wanted to show all the emotion, sadness, and drama in the statue. We had Vietnam vets who dropped by the studio, and they would tell stories, and some would push a wad of clay onto the sculpture as they talked."

The Santa Fe resident says that after the statue was loaded onto the truck, "a bunch of American Indian vets from different tribes, including a couple of Navajo code talkers, showed up. A number headed out onto the trail, eventually walking from Santa Fe to Washington. They were there when the statue was dedicated on the National Mall on Nov. 11, 1993."

Jane Carson had the honor of traveling with the statue to cities along the way, from St. Louis to Arlington, Va. "It was so moving to meet with people who came by the hundreds to view the statue at various stops along the route.

"A young man in a wheelchair who had lost both legs from an explosion of a Bouncing Betty mine said he came to see the statue to thank the nurses who had saved him.

"A woman came up to me and shyly asked who the statue honored. She said she served in Germany from 1968 to 1972. I assured her the memorial was to honor woman veterans who had served anywhere in the world during the Vietnam War," Carson says. "Tears came to her eyes and she hugged me: 'Thank you for doing this for all of us.'"

Armed with a stipend from Santa Fe writer and philanthropist Sallie Bingham, this reporter went with the statue from Santa Fe to a number of destinations along the way. One night in New York City's Bryant Park, shadows of men and women approached the one-ton statue, still loaded on the truck. Some tenuously held onto shopping carts, stuffed with their belongings, while silently reaching up toward the statue to stroke it.

A book written by Evans, *Healing Wounds: A Vietnam War Combat Nurse's 10-Year Fight to Win Women a Place of Honor in Washington, D.C.*, is scheduled to be released by Permuted Press on Memorial Day.

"It's a memoir of my service in Vietnam and how proud I was with the women I served with," Evans says. "I am just so sorry that Glenna Goodacre will not be here to read it since she is one of the heroes of the book."

Goodacre died on April 13 at her Santa Fe home following a long illness.

Denise Kusel is a former editor and humor writer for The Santa Fe New Mexican.

## MISSION Act

... continued from page 6

VA, not the other way around. In one of the great ironies of this pandemic, civilian patients are finding the VA, not the private sector, is in some cases, their only choice for emergency or hospital care.

In New York City, they say things are slowly getting better. Many problems will, however, persist even after we have a vaccine and/or effective treatments for COVID-19. Nor will COVID-19 be the last threat we encounter. The VA will once again be called upon for help. Will it be able to respond? How will the VA be able to care for the thousands, perhaps millions of veterans who have lost their jobs and their health insurance due to this pandemic and who find that the VA is their only reliable healthcare provider?

This should lead Congress to challenge the wisdom of efforts to privatize the VA rather than strengthen and improve it. It is incumbent on President Trump and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie to



do everything in their power to save American lives—veteran and civilian alike—by making sure the VA is fully funded and staffed. Revitalizing the VA through a repeal of much of the MISSION Act and other deleterious legislation should be a top priority for lawmakers moving forward. We need to use all the resources at our disposal to prepare for the next epidemic and

the VA is a central element of that response.

Originally published by The Independent, *independent.org*.

Essam Attia is a U.S. Army veteran who served in the Iraq War. He is a visual artist who lives in Manhattan and is active in Veterans For Peace's Save Our VA campaign and Common Defense.





A militia group stands in front of the governor's office in Lansing, Mich.

# Trump Following Hitler's Playbook

By Tarak Kauff

I was born in 1942 but I remember the war. It made a deep impression on me. When I was two years old, I shocked my parents by being so disturbed at the radio news about the Nazis that I stormed into their bedroom and announced angrily that if anyone tried to destroy my world, I would destroy them. My Jewish mother was terrified. This was her son?

Hitler was responsible for the killing of Jewish, Roma, and many other children. Never again, it's been often said, but hateful white nationalism and racist parallels to Nazi Germany are still alive today right here in the U.S.A.

Trump's first wife, Ivana, told her lawyer, that from time to time her husband read from a book of Hitler's collected speeches. That may or may not be true, but Trump, possibly only semi-consciously, is following almost step by step, Hitler's playbook.

Decades ago, especially after eyes were opened by the criminality of the American war in Viet Nam, many saw a new kind of disguised totalitarian fascism coming here to America. Actually, for many oppressed people, it was already here.

But now even progressives say that's being rash; we are not anything like Hitler and the Nazis. They say it's a bad comparison, it turns people off. If you even use the word fascist, they debate that. After all, we don't have gas chambers, we haven't yet tried to exterminate an entire people like the Germans did to the Jews. People don't say "Heil!" with their arms held stiff in the fascist salute. Or do they?

Was Hitler unique, was the Third Reich unique in its evil? Did nobody suffer like the Jews? Was the Holocaust unique?

Not in the view of Native Americans, a people and culture that has been terrorized and almost exterminated, not just for decades but for centuries by white Americans and our government—an ongoing genocide well before Hitler's Holocaust. There were an estimated 5 million to 15 million indigenous people living in North America when Columbus arrived in 1492. By the

end of the Indian wars in North America, there were fewer than 238,000 left.

"A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers, but when I go up to the river I see camps of soldiers on its banks. These soldiers cut down my timber, they kill my buffalo and when I see that, my heart feels like bursting."—Satanta, Kiowa Chief

The Nazis got many of their ideas from our so-called democracy. Many of Hitler's propaganda ideas came directly from American advertising. Joseph Goebbels, minister of propaganda under Hitler, learned from Edward Bernays' books, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and *Propaganda*, both published in America, how to convince Germans that the Jews were the source of their misery and misfortune. Bernays wrote, "If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, it is now possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will

Americans often don't seem to perceive, either historically, or in the present, how so many people are being oppressed by a racist classist system and the oligarchs who profit from it. It's a patriarchal, race-based system of control that goes back to Columbus. Fast forward to the so-called "founding fathers" of our country—themselves elitist slave holders, Indian exterminators, gentlemen—wealthy white men, like Jefferson, who over the course of his life owned 600 human beings. No less than 41 of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence were slave holders. Almost all of them—with the exception of a few visionary radicals, like John and Sam Adams, and Thomas Paine—held racist views that were at the time acceptable.

Washington owned slaves all his life and in 1779 gave the genocidal order to General John Sullivan to destroy the villages

*Native Americans, black people, and now migrants at our border have had their children and culture violently taken from them. It was and is genocidal.*

without them knowing it."

Hitler's ideas about concentration camps, eugenics, and gas chambers came from studying American history. In the 1920s U.S. border police at the Santa Fe Bridge deloused and sprayed the clothes of Mexicans crossing into the United States with cyanide-based Zyklon B. This was done in a building that officials called, ominously enough, "the gas chambers."

The practicality of genocide owed much to Hitler's studies of English and U.S. history. He admired America's system of reservations, starvation, and uneven combat—genocide of the "red savages who could not be tamed by captivity."

Now these same ideas are recirculating as Trump's America and much of the world turns viciously to the extreme right.

of the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca and for "the total destruction and devastation of [the Indian] settlements and capture [of] as many prisoners as possible."

Hitler's specific genocidal techniques were obviously more overt, dramatic, and sadistic, and were eventually publicized more: gas chambers, starvation concentration work camps and what went on prior to that—different techniques, but similar results, very similar intentions.

Here in our American "democracy," uncountable millions have been killed by slavery and the slave trade. Oh, you might say, they didn't work them to death in concentration camps, didn't kill them by the thousands in gas chambers. Black slaves were just hung from trees by the thousands while crowds of good American families

held picnics as they watched them strangle. Or they were worked to early deaths in the fields. How many millions died because of slavery, we'll never know.

Native Americans, black people, and now migrants at our border have had their children and culture violently taken from them. It was and is genocidal. We have legalized slavery and torture in the prison-industrial complex while people of color are still being murdered in the streets and in their homes by police with little or no accountability. The largest proportions of Corona 19 virus deaths is among black, latino and Indian populations and that is no accident.

Totalitarian, fascist violence is still being perpetrated right here in this country on migrants and people of color—people Donald Trump doesn't consider American. Around the world, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and in Africa, we continue to bomb them, destroy infrastructures so they can't live, and torture prisoners. At our own border children are taken from their parents and put in cages, but those responsible are not to be called or equated with Nazis. Do you have a nicer word for that?

They may not wear the swastika armband (actually some do) but Trump, Pompeo, and their ilk are, for all intents and purposes, today's Nazis. And that is not to minimize the evil that was the Third Reich. It is so that we understand that this country is equally bad in its vicious effects around the world, and if we consider today's advanced weapons technology and nuclear armaments, certainly far more dangerous.

Historical accounts, some written by Germans who lived through those times, as well as numerous documentaries, tell about the rise and fall of Hitler and his immense popularity among the German public that lasted until the Nazis began to experience severe losses in WWII. In one video, which ends with the 1936 Olympic bells ringing gloriously in Berlin, the narrator asks, "But what future did the tolling bell herald for the German people and for all Europe?"

Trump mouths absurd nonsense about making America great again, but Hitler actually did make Germany great again (for a while). He gave the people their pride back, he gave them jobs, re-built and paid the military well, built roads, loved dogs, and built factories—and eventually brought unthinkable devastation and destruction to Germany. Trump is following that playbook but skipped, except in his own mind, making the country great again. America is in serious decline.

In 1944, as World War II was coming to an end, Henry Wallace wrote about American fascism. He said, "The dangerous American fascist is the man who wants to do in the United States in an American way what Hitler did in Germany in a Prussian way." Wallace continued, "They claim to be super-patriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution."

If we look deeper and past our own prejudices, we will see the same monsters, only wearing different clothing.

The word Nazi has come to designate something most terrible, something inhumane beyond anything else. Sometimes that word is more direct, rather

*continued on next page ...*



# The Unspoken Spread of Fascism

By Fred Nagel

It is difficult for most Americans to judge just how dangerous Donald Trump might be. It is not that the clues are missing; there is a daily list of lies, racist comments, misogynist ramblings, and outrageous self-dealing. But most citizens just don't have the right vocabulary to put his actions into some sort of context, even in these pandemic times.

The left has been more confident about where Trump fits in the general run of very bad presidents. He is simply a fascist, whose behavior is very similar to other calamitous dictators we have seen in the 20th century. This conclusion becomes increasingly believable when Trump talks about a confrontation that could happen if he doesn't get his way. "I can tell you I have the support of the police, the support of the military, the support of the Bikers for Trump—I have the tough people, but they don't play it tough—until they go to a certain point, and then it would be very bad, very bad."

Trump is not talking about the workings of a democracy, or the endlessly touted separation of powers between the Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary. Bikers for Trump is simply a Brownshirt organization, waiting for their leader's call to violence.

Yet the term fascist rarely gets used in polite company. *The New York Times* is especially careful not to offend mainstream sensibilities. When the word fascist is used in print, it always refers to supposed foreign enemies of the state. The term is never used to refer to Americans in high office, no matter how egregious or brutal their crimes have been.

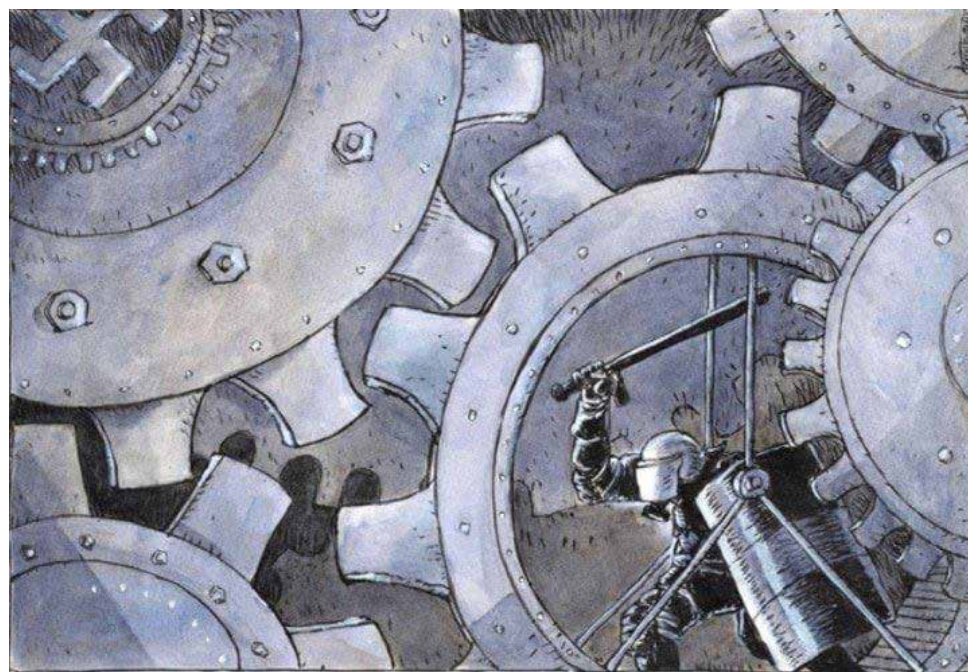
Getting past this simplistic use of the term for enemy leaders, there are some aspects of fascism that fit Trump quite exactly. Comparing Trump's behavior to the list of fascist characteristics created by the Italian scholar, Umberto Eco, in his essay "Eternal Fascism" is especially revealing.

Trump believes in sudden decisions rather than reflection, or as Eco describes it, "the cult of action for action's sake." Eco's fascists often equate disagreement with their policies with treason, and so too does Trump. Fascist leaders cultivate the "fear of difference," which encourages racist aggression toward minorities and foreigners. In Trump's world Mexicans are rapists and Muslims are terrorists. Eco refers to another characteristic as an "obsession with plot," and Trump's conspiracies come straight from rightwing websites without the least pretense of fact checking.

Trump's own life is a perpetual battle, something he probably learned from his father's lawyer, one of the chief strategists of the McCarthy Era, Roy Cohn. Eco describes this as a "life of permanent warfare." Another of Eco's characteristics of a fascist is a contempt for the weak, or as Trump would put it referring to John McCain, "I like sol-

diers who don't get captured."

Trump's bragging about his power to assault women, or "grab them by the pussy" fits well into Eco's description of "machismo," the application of perpetual war to the sphere of sexuality. This tendency is well documented in the way Trump has treated the rights of women and the LGBTQ community.



Eco describes fascist leaders as using "selective populism" to manipulate economic discontent into political power, becoming in effect the interpreter of the popular will. Trump's efforts to kill environmental regulations, close the Mexican border, and end abortion rights are his analysis of what the population wants. In this way, economic anger is redirected toward goals that don't present a challenge to the rule of the rich elite.

Finally, Eco refers to "newspeak," the language of Oceania, George Orwell's fictional totalitarian state. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the ruling class controls thought by limiting language. Vocabulary is diminished, ideas are grossly simplified, and any discussion of morality reduced to black and white. Or to put it in "Trump Speak," all people and events are either "tremendous" or "very bad."

Jacobo Timerman in *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* adds nuance to this concept of diminished language and simplified ideas. The fascist authorities in Argentina during Timerman's incarceration feared and hated complexity. Editors like himself were suspect, but so too were psychoanalysts and academics. Multifaceted concepts and theories were considered subversive in themselves and writing about them often resulted in prison and torture. Similarly, "Making America Great Again" never involves more thought than watching Fox News or chanting racist slogans. News is either real or fake. Prospective immigrants are from either great or "shithole" countries.

One characteristic of fascism, missing from more recent descriptions, can

be traced all the way back to Mussolini's minister of education, Giovanni Gentile, who wrote about what he called "corporatism." The word itself has a long history in political theory, but to Gentile it meant an enforced harmony between social classes: workers, employers, and the state. Harmony, of course, with one person at the top making most of the decisions. It was an attractive concept for the ruling class, since corporatism would eliminate labor demands and leftist ideologies. "And above all," wrote Mussolini in 1932, "Fascism denies that class-war can be the preponderant force in the transformation of society."

On the surface, Mussolini's rise to power

cade in several ways. Industrialized countries saw the rich elite prosper greatly during both periods, giving them much more money to influence their political systems. At the same time, economic discontent became more overt as the majority of workers became unable to support their families. Rage at the system became a distinct threat to the very wealthy.

Have the CEOs and the very rich in our time reacted in the same way as they did in the 1920s? Are they in fact funding authoritarian leaders who will protect corporate profits, using racism and nationalism to turn anger at the system into anger at immigrants, minorities, and anyone who disagrees with them?

By avoiding the use of the word fascism, mainstream media analysis fails our democracy in two ways. First, we as citizens can't look at Trump and judge him by historical standards. His actions may be outrageous and deplorable, but we remain oblivious to the pattern of a fascist leader that he exhibits.

The second way that the media fails is to limit how fascism is described. It is always a person rather than a national movement; a Netanyahu rather than the Israeli people, or a Hitler rather than all Germans. Fascism may be encouraged by someone with the right combination of charisma and viciousness, but in the end it becomes a social illness that moves whole populations toward war and genocide. Perhaps fascism is the madness that comes from true corporatism, or from its most recent manifestation, neoliberalism. It is the deadly mix of greed at the top, misdirected rage at the bottom, and a fascist leader who can turn it all into an engine of mindless destruction.

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## Hitler's Playbook

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than something softer, like neocon, neoliberal or neofascist—not because we are literally exactly the same as Hitler's Nazis, there are differences, but to directly describe Trump and the American reality. We need to be aware of the causes, the historical parallels and the extent of the massive damage and exploitation of the earth and humanity already done by America. Since there does seem to be a clear historical pattern, we can have an idea of what lies ahead.

We are witnessing the very real potential, not just for destruction of the Jews and world domination, but for something infinitely worse—the extermination of life on this planet. Real totalitarian fascism, personified by Donald Trump and not much less by his democratic opponent, is already here.

*Tarak Kauff was a U.S. Army paratrooper from 1959 to 1962. He is the editor-in-chief of Peace & Planet News.*





By Denny Riley

In April a college football coach reposted a photo of an old lady knitting a noose. Because of this he has been ordered to attend sensitivity training. I saw the offending photo. It was the last frame in a series of jokes about shelter-in-place, implying that whoever the old lady is holed up with has driven her to the brink. It's cute, yet you want to let her know she's fortunate to have a shelter-in-place partner.

That's not the point here, though. The point is the football coach appeared unaware the noose is a symbol of racial hatred, something a frat boy might ignorantly think is humorous, but any adult should understand bears no humor, as neither do smallpox-infected blankets or gas chambers. Nothing to joke about, no matter what the tag line is, particularly if you are of Northern European extraction. I mean white.

White people should stay away from any joke that does not benevolently include everyone. I'm one of those white people but somewhere along the way I was lucky enough to take a turn that let me see the absurdity in a bumper sticker that barks "White lives matter too!" I don't claim to know what it's like to be anything other than a white guy with all the accompanying benefits, but I've heard stories of what my grandparents endured during their rise to assimilation. Many of us white people know similar family stories and we're apt to tell them when it's suggested we have it too good.

I'm Irish so my stories are about the Irish, who were not warmly welcomed on these shores even though they were one of the few emigrant groups to arrive speaking English. We spoke English, though, because our homeland had been overrun by the English who dominated and suppressed Gaelic, our native tongue. That's similar to a part of the Native American

story and similar to a part of the African-American story in that a heritage is stolen. Yet different, because if you don't know my name, you're not going to know I'm Irish.

By my generation we are simply American, so I garner all privileges that accompany being a white American male. Those privileges are so seductive that while I enjoy them, I could easily forget my colored brothers and sisters. I can begin to think I earned them, but as I said, I'm lucky enough to see absurdities.

Three times I was in on one of the most obvious absurdities (obvious if you're not white.) Three times I was hired for jobs where afterward I discovered only a white guy would have been hired. It probably happened to me more times than three but of three I am sure. The lesson I should have learned was if I think I've earned my

ing American.

For reposting the photo of the old lady knitting a noose, the football coach is being obliged to visit a civil rights museum. Mild punishment, even milder if you consider he likely won't go there alone to ponder the truth, to stop and take in a photo, read the accompanying text then read it again. No, he'll be followed by his retinue of assistants and a gaggle of reporters. He'll come out the exit door and say he learned a great deal about himself from the experience. He's a new man. Thank you.

On Wednesdays I'm the docent in the Veterans Gallery in San Francisco. The docent's job is to answer questions about the exhibit and to lead visitors through it. The best way for me to be that person is to arrive early and study the exhibit alone. Do that a few times undistracted and you

*They played in the ghettos and they played in the death camps. When a trainload of new prisoners arrived, they were greeted by a symphonic sound. For the prisoners in the orchestra, they played their instruments to stay alive.*

job but see only other white people in my paygrade, I shouldn't flatter myself that I've been rewarded for hard work.

A good friend, Azel Jones, had everything on me—acumen, charisma, looks—yet he and his whole family were treated as though they bore a disgusting defect, even if what they did was as simple as go into a corner grocery late at night. And why? Well because they were descendants of people who were stolen from their homeland and brought here to be sold into slavery, a predicament for which their dark skin has never allowed them to be forgiven and assimilate into simply be-

will know more about the exhibit than four-fifths of the people who come in.

The Veterans Gallery exhibits are usually up for a month and a half. Some don't draw much of a crowd and that's one reason I've been able to commit to every Wednesday. When it's quiet, the gallery is my personal reading and writing room, with an exhibit to wander through over and over, so when visitors do come in I've found a few facts that I think should be brought to everyone's attention.

The exhibit on the United States' involvement in WWI, which ran at the time of the 100th anniversary of the Armistice,

covered the Sedition Act. I pointed out to visitors that even though 50 congressmembers voted against entering the war, President Wilson and the bankers wanted a united front, so criticism of the war effort in a bar or bank line could land a person in jail. Eugene Debs, the noted Socialist and perennial presidential candidate, was swept up by the Act for speaking out against the draft. He was given 10 years in jail. He served two and a half.

The Bertram Clarke exhibit on the History of African Americans in our military gave light to the fact that Pershing, after telling the French that American soldiers would only answer to American officers, gave a division of African-American soldiers to the French. These men fought so heroically that the entire 369th Infantry Regiment was awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Young black men who'd been anxious to get into uniform and into the fight because they believed it was their path to acceptance when they returned home did not find that welcome. Instead at least 10 of these war heroes were lynched, some while still in uniform.

In February and March of this year we hosted *Violins of Hope*. On the face of it, *Violins of Hope* seemed the duller, simplest exhibit I'd seen in the gallery. Twenty old violins in lighted display cases with their provenance printed on pasteboards, a dozen accompanying photos, and a 20-minute video loop. Dull as it appeared on the surface, it was not. As passive, yet engaging as the violins and their histories were, the stage they had played their stories on was the destruction of Eastern European Jewish life and the Nazi death camps.

I walked through the *Violins of Hope* exhibit over and over. I read the placards. I must have watched the video loop a hundred times. Many of the photos were of the violins' original owners holding their violin. Eastern European Jewish men. If you were to organize the exhibit in your head chronologically those photos would be where it began, with each violin the property of someone who in that better time before the war played it professionally or for pleasure. A few of the ruddier violins had been played in klezmer bands. Others had been in families for generations. Some had the Star of David inlaid on their backs. Some photos were of prosperous men in nice homes. Some were of boys playing on the street. The story of how a violin made it from then and there to here and now was on the small font pasteboards and also on a video loop. One violin avoided going to a death camp when a freight train crammed with humans passed a work crew at a crossing. From a boxcar a young man called out to the workers then tossed a violin through an opening. A workman caught it and kept it until years later he heard about a luthier in Tel Aviv who was collecting violins from the Holocaust.

Amnon Weinstein is the Tel Aviv luthier who for years gathered the violins and restored them with no purpose other than a belief they were sacred. Each violin's story leads through the nightmare of the Nazi's attempt to rid Europe of Jews. When the

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