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APRIL 5/12, 2021

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**WHY CUOMO
MUST RESIGN**
ZEPHYR TEACHOUT

**JUDAS AND
THE BLACK
MESSIAH**
STEPHEN KEARSE

Black Immigrants Matter

Tracking the detention and
deportation machine's disparate
impact on Black migrants.

JACK HERRERA

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EDITORIAL / BRYCE COVERT FOR THE NATION

A New Beginning



RESIDENT JOE BIDEN HAS SIGNED HIS FIRST BIG LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE, AND TO quote him in the past, it's a "big fucking deal." Not only does it send desperately needed aid to those suffering the most from the pandemic, but it also marks a sharp departure from how the Democratic Party—and the nation—has approached persistent poverty in the wealthiest country on the globe.

The tax-related provisions alone are hugely progressive. After the dispersal of the \$1,400 stimulus checks, the enhanced monthly child tax credit payments, and the increases to the earned-income tax credit and the child and dependent care tax credit, the poorest fifth of Americans will experience a more than 20 percent increase in their incomes. The richest fifth, on the other hand, will receive less than a 1 percent boost, while the top 1 percent will get nothing at all.

And those are not the only provisions in the package. Congress has also increased unemployment benefits by \$300 a month through September, while offering \$30 billion in rental assistance and \$5 billion for schoolchildren to get emergency food benefits. It has offered free health insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act to people on unemployment and expanded subsidies for everyone so that no one has to pay more than 8.5 percent of their income on insurance premiums. Many of those benefits will flow to people who are unemployed or working for low pay.

All told, these measures are projected to reduce poverty by more than a third, bringing the number of people living below the federal poverty line from 44 million to 28 million.

Yes, these are emergency provisions in response to a crisis we haven't experienced in a century, and many of them are set to expire. But it still shows how much our approach to helping the poor has changed, especially among Democrats. It was only 25 years ago that President Bill Clinton triumphantly declared that he was ending welfare as we knew it. Rather than offering the poor money to help them climb out of a financial hole, the bill he signed required them to start climbing out of it on their own, by logging hours at work, before the government tossed them a ladder. It was emblematic of the party's overall stance on poverty. Some of the very tax credits being offered to all poor American families in the Democrats' relief plan, such as the child tax credit, have until now been withheld from families with little to no income, under the assumption that if they're not working and earning money, they don't deserve our help.

Biden voted for welfare reform in 1996 as a senator from Delaware. And yet in 2020 he made a child tax credit expansion to all low- and moderate-income parents part of his presidential campaign platform for responding to the pandemic.

Democrats have shifted so dramatically that they are already

promising to make the child allowance a permanent feature of the American social safety net. Under Biden's relief plan, families making \$150,000 or less will get monthly payments of \$300 for every child age 5 and under and \$250 for older kids—even families with little to no income. This has the potential to cut the number of children living in deep poverty in half.

The allowance sunsets within a year, but the gamble is that once Americans get a taste of what most other developed countries long ago instituted—regular cash payments to ease the financial stress of parenting with too little income—it'll be all but impossible to stand in the way of making it permanent, even for conservatives and moderates.

Who will want to vote in favor of dramatically reducing most families' incomes? Democrats have already said they'll start fighting to ensure it lives on indefinitely as soon as the ink on the relief bill dries.

If they succeed, it will mark a complete reversal of how this country has ap-

proached alleviating poverty. Even as wages have stagnated and basic costs like health care and housing have skyrocketed, we've pretended that poverty is a personal failing. This allowed us to turn a blind eye to the highest level of relative poverty in the developed world while offering the least in taxes and benefits to reduce it. Now the Democrats are unabashedly championing a new approach: giving poor people money so they can afford the things their children need to thrive, so they can escape the Catch-22 of being so financially burdened it's impossible to climb out of the hole—so, in short, they're no longer poor. **N**

The American Rescue Plan marks a sharp departure in how the world's wealthiest nation has approached persistent poverty.

EDITORIAL / ZEPHYR TEACHOUT FOR THE NATION

Why Andrew Cuomo Must Resign

GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO HAS ABUSED HIS POWER and must resign. He has lied to the people of New York and to the lawmakers who depend on his reports to make policy. Then, when he was caught, he lied about when, how, and why he lied. Cuomo and his staff have used state resources to threaten and retaliate against political enemies—as well as the women who have accused him of sexual harassment.

He is petty, controlling, and grandiose. Even worse, he equates bullying with competence.

To be effective, a governor must have the trust of the lawmakers he works with. Cuomo has lost that trust. More than 120 New York lawmakers have demanded his resignation, along with most of the state's congressional delegation, including the head of the House Judiciary Committee, Jerry Nadler. The head of the state senate's Finance Committee has said she will not speak to Cuomo or his top aides because they are untrustworthy. At a critical time for the state, he keeps bleeding key public health staffers who can't bear his disrespect for science.

Right now he is trying to use the fact that he is being investigated by several different entities—including the New York attorney general, the FBI, and the Department of Justice—to stall for time. If there were questions of fact that could somehow render Cuomo trustworthy and nonabusive, his argument might make sense. But what we already know is more than enough to disqualify him from office.

In March 2020, weeks after the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, Cuomo issued a health directive requiring nursing homes to take Covid-19 patients. This ended up being a death sentence for many people. At the same time, he pushed an industry-sponsored bill through the legislature shielding nursing home executives and hospital lobbyists—many of them donors to his campaign—from legal liability for dangerous decisions.

In June, the state Health Department reported 9,250 nursing home deaths to the governor's office. Cuomo's staff panicked—not because so many people were dying, but because the total was the highest in the country and would make him look bad just as he was riding high in the polls and on the verge of closing a major book deal touting his success handling Covid.

Instead of releasing the Health Department numbers, his office rewrote the report, claiming that fewer than 6,500 nursing home patients had died. Lawmakers who needed that data to make policy questioned the figures, but the governor insisted on their accuracy.

Only six months later, after New York Attorney General Letitia James released a report showing deaths had been undercounted by as much as 50 percent, did Cuomo correct the numbers.

His first policy choice was disastrous, but it was the cover-up—half a year of continuously lying to the public—that requires Cuomo's resignation.

What's more, his office initially claimed he was hiding the numbers out of fear the White House would weaponize them against him. Reporting by *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* revealed that was a lie, too. Meanwhile, over 15,000 New Yorkers in nursing homes have died of Covid.

Cuomo has a long history of bullying and terrorizing people. But he now faces several credible allegations of sexual assault and harassment of employees.

Many of the interactions are undisputed and backed up by independent reporting. For instance, it is undisputed, even by Cuomo, that he asked a 25-year-old entry-level employee if she was open to sex with older men. That constitutes sexual harassment under New York state law. Reports that Cuomo's office leaked personnel files about another accuser, Lindsey Boylan, have not been disputed by the governor, nor have reports that Cuomo's staff (paid by New York taxpayers) made calls to state employees encouraging them to discredit Boylan.

This kind of vicious retaliation is part of a pattern. When Cuomo told Assemblyman Ron Kim that he would “destroy” him for talking to the press about the nursing home cover-up, that was not an empty threat. When the New York State Public Employees Federation endorsed me in 2014, Cuomo retaliated by reclassifying 2,500 employees of that union as management. The message is clear: If you dare cross me, you will be destroyed.

In a recent press conference, Cuomo implicitly threatened to leak confidential files from the Joint Commission on Public Ethics, a body that is supposed to provide independent oversight but acts instead as an extension of the governor.

This is the same governor who shut down an anti-corruption commission when it got too close to his crew. His signature upstate jobs plan, Buffalo Billion, ended with his right-hand man in prison for bribery.

With so many Cuomo revelations coming out, it can be hard to keep them straight—and he'd like it to stay that way—but there is a single, devastating theme throughout them all: his abuse of the extraordinary power given him by the people of New York.

The investigation by James must go forward, as must the criminal investigations. But there is no investigative result that leaves us with a governor we can trust not to abuse power and lie.

For the sake of the state, Andrew Cuomo must resign and let Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul replace him. **N**

Cuomo is petty, controlling, and grandiose. Even worse, he's incompetent.

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—Julián Castro



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—Ai-jen Poo, author of *The Age of Dignity*



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APPRECIATION

Adéu, Comrade

FOR THOSE OF US WHO’VE BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO WORK with him, Roane Carey, who is leaving *The Nation* after 32 years, is not simply an editor of rare sensitivity and intelligence. He is also a person of extraordinary integrity, kindness, and humility. To write for Roane is to feel protected—not just from your enemies but from your own errors, which he corrects in the gentlest fashion, since he never takes pleasure in correcting you (another rare quality). To write with Roane, as I did on a few occasions when I was the magazine’s literary editor, is to experience the true meaning of solidarity, where the assertion of ego is a distraction from the cause on which you’ve embarked together: speaking truth to power. Has another editor in American journalism demonstrated his level of commitment to racial justice, or to Palestinian freedom, or to exposing the injustices of US foreign policy? If so, I’m not aware of one.

In the offices of *The Nation*, that claim would seem uncontroversial. No one who has spent time at the magazine is unaware of Roane’s moral passion,



his informed and humane radicalism, his dedication to stories that most of the media has overlooked, either through indifference or—as in the case of Palestine, on which he also edited two important anthologies, *The Other Israel* and *The New Intifada*—with deliberate disregard. But outside *The Nation*, Roane—a modest, soft-spoken South-

erner who studied history at Swarthmore College—is less well-known, for the simple reason that he has never drawn attention to himself.

I don’t mean to make him sound like a saint. A dear and close friend, Roane is as complex as they come, with a salty sense of humor and a love of life and its pleasures that is anything but monastic. I think of him, rather, as a brilliant ensemble musician—a bassist in a jazz rhythm section, say, or a violist in a string quartet. All too easily overlooked by the audience, he is indispensable to the music’s power, its binding force, such that when he leaves the group, it will never sound quite the same again. After more than three decades of devoted work behind the scenes at *The Nation*, Roane has left not only the magazine but the country, for a new life in Barcelona. We will miss the music he helped make at *The Nation*, but we’re also excited to hear him solo, as an American expatriate in Spain.

Adam Shatz

Mensch of the mag: The incomparable Roane Carey, at work in his *Nation* office.

Adam Shatz is a contributing editor at the London Review of Books and a former literary editor of The Nation.

Back Talk Alexis Grenell



Governor Cuomo's Feelings Aren't the Issue

The issue is accountability.

NEW YORK GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO DOESN'T LIKE to talk about feelings, but these days he can't seem to shut up about them. "I now understand that I acted in a way that made people feel uncomfortable. It was unintentional, and I truly and deeply apologize for it," he said at a press conference in early March, addressing the exploding sexual harassment allegations against him. "I feel awful about it and, frankly, I'm embarrassed by it, and that's not easy to say but that's the truth.... I never knew at the time that I was making anyone feel uncomfortable.... I certainly never, ever meant to offend anyone or hurt anyone or cause anyone any pain."

To hear him tell it, you'd think the legal definition of sexual harassment was based on how the perpetrator—or the victim—feels. But here's Cuomo's own model definition, which applies to all businesses in New York: "A sexually harassing hostile work environment consists of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex." The word "feel" appears just once in the seven-page document, which otherwise focuses on conduct, including "subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities." An internal investigation is supposed to follow an allegation, on top of whatever civil actions the accused individual and employer may face.

For those not keeping score, the governor has been accused of a range of harassment by seven women and counting, including forcible touching. Yet in his various nonapologies, Cuomo has ignored the law, offering up a dinosaur defense of his own purported ignorance while also implying that it's his victims who are being overly sensitive. "At work sometimes I think I am being playful," he said, "and make jokes that I think are funny.... I now understand that my interactions may have been insensitive or too personal and that some of my comments, given my position, made others feel in ways I never intended. I acknowledge some of the things I have said have been misinterpreted as an unwanted flirtation."

As Charlotte Bennett, one of Cuomo's accusers, put it in a *CBS Evening News* interview, "It's not an

issue of my feelings. It's an issue of his actions."

That's exactly right, but it's worth noting whose feelings matter in this equation and why. Cuomo dismissed the claims of Lindsey Boylan, the first woman to come forward, as false but disputed the facts of Bennett's account. A third woman, Anna Ruch, has impossible-to-deny photographic evidence of an incident that Cuomo has tried to explain away as merely a customary greeting. He hasn't bothered to respond individually to the others.

It's clear that the governor views Bennett as the most serious threat. So what's the difference between Bennett and the other women?

While the perfect victim doesn't exist, an image of who we think she is most certainly does, and Bennett fits the bill: young, feminine, and vulnerable. The prototype, unpacked in a January study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, corresponds directly to traditional ideas about women as gentle, caring, and nurturing of others. And it influences how the courts evaluate harm, which depends heavily on the perception that the defendant's behavior was unwanted. Few can imagine the 25-year-old Bennett enjoying a probing conversation with her 62-year-old boss about her history as a survivor of sexual violence, being asked if she's open to sleeping with older men and then told that he's OK with dating kids fresh out of college. Bennett herself presents a compelling image in the interview—wrapped in the protection of bulky sweaters—as she describes the governor's gross abuse of power with bracing clarity. Crucially, she has nothing obvious to gain by becoming a focal point. That's what makes her so potentially devastating. Also, it doesn't help that the question "How do you feel about the governor soliciting sex from a girl young enough to be his daughter?" probably won't poll well with the boomer women who make up Cuomo's base.

Boylan, on the other hand, is the perfect foil. Although she was only in her early 30s when she says she was harassed by Cuomo, she's disqualified from the same level of sympathy because she's running for office. And as the former chief of staff for the Empire State Development Corporation, she had more seniority than an entry-level employee and is therefore viewed as more capable

of managing a man's advances. Moreover, she's attractive and ambitious, which may lead some people to erroneously suppose that she can't be harmed. That assumption can even be internalized by victims themselves—as Boylan

"It's not an issue of my feelings. It's an issue of his actions."

—Charlotte Bennett

acknowledged in a recent interview, describing how a young survivor reached out to her after she went public about the harassment in December. “I had more sympathy for myself after I heard this young woman’s story,” Boylan said.

Ruch falls somewhere in the middle. She’s young, but most important, there’s a photo of Cuomo seizing her horror-stricken face as a prelude to an unwanted kiss. They’re strangers at a wedding, and here’s the most powerful man in the state locked onto her like a tractor beam. Ruch said that minutes earlier she’d removed Cuomo’s hand from her lower back, after which he called her “aggressive.” Without

that photo, Ruch’s story is more easily muddled.

But it’s the “imperfect” victims who make it possible for the “perfect” ones to come forward. As Boylan acknowledges, the reason she can speak out safely is because she has the privilege

It’s the “imperfect” victims who make it possible for the “perfect” ones to come forward.

of being older and more established in her career. It’s precisely the factors that make her “imperfect” that enable her to act as an on-ramp for others. She’s the match that lights the fuse for Bennett, Ruch, and anyone else who wishes to come forward. As this issue was going to press, another woman, Ana Liss, had already spoken out, describing how Cuomo kissed her hand at work, called her “sweetheart,” and commented on her appearance. Predictably, Cuomo’s spokesman claimed that the governor treats everyone like a cocktail waitress, but notably Liss’s current (and very male) employer, Monroe County Executive Adam Bello, has taken her side.

Despite the familiar talking point that every woman has a right to come forward and be heard—now popular among people eager to avoid taking a position—the women who’ve spoken out aren’t actually trying to lead a national conversation about their feelings. What they do want is the one thing Cuomo is desperate to avoid: accountability. **N**

Morbid Symptoms Jeet Heer



Neera, My Tweets, to Thee

Biden’s defeated nominee showcases the addictive dangers of social media.

NEERA TANDEN, THE FIRST AMERICAN FORCED TO WITHDRAW from a cabinet-level nomination because of bad tweeting, has a winning scrappiness. The child of immigrants from India, Tanden experienced the vast social chasm of American life after her parents’ divorce when she was 5. She ended up splitting her childhood between her struggling mother, who on occasion relied on food stamps, and her well-to-do father, who lived in the suburbs.

From her mother, Tanden inherited a fighting spirit. She also possesses an ability, surely honed in her father’s house, to nimbly navigate the world of the affluent. That has served her well in her capacity as president and CEO of the Center for American Progress, where a large chunk of her job consists of drumming up money from corporations, business tycoons, and foreign autocrats.

Tanden’s mother, Maya, admitted to *The New York Times* that her daughter “can be very aggressive.” But it’s perhaps more accurate to say Tanden can be both aggressive and ingratiating, depending on the situation. She can be two-fisted when going after her political foes—especially on Twitter. As an unreconstructed Clintonian neoliberal, Tanden’s foes include Bernie Sanders-style social democrats as well as Trumpist Republicans. But there’s ample evidence that when she needs to turn on the charm to shake loose some donor money or win over a political ally, she can.

Tanden’s undoing as Joe Biden’s nominee to head the Office of Management and Budget came from the simple fact that the two sides of her persona are mismatched. The punchy tweeter is hard to reconcile with the tactful insider. It’s a striking fact that the decisive turn against her came not from the Democratic left (Sanders, who grilled Tanden about both her tweets and the corporate donations during her confirmation hearings, seemed willing to support her) but from the moderate Democratic Senator Joe Manchin and Republicans like Mitt Romney and Susan Collins, who are known for welcoming Biden’s rhetoric of national unity.

These pillars of the status quo used Biden’s unity language against his own nominee. A spokesperson for Romney said that the Utah senator “believes it’s hard to return to comity and respect with a nominee who has issued a thousand mean tweets.”

As a ritual scapegoat offered up to expiate the sins of partisanship, Tanden was in a real sense a victim of her own politics. Over the past four years, while abrasively critical of Trumpist Republicans, she also evoked the language of comity and civility. She’s very much been the voice—and face—of the ancien régime “resistance” that dreamed of returning the country to a state of bipartisan cooperation between never-Trump Republicans and moderate

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Democrats. The Center for American Progress often touts its ability to work with the right-wing American Enterprise Institute.

Tanden is a compulsive, incessant, unstoppable tweeter. Over the past decade, she's posted more than 88,000 times on Twitter, which even at the old limit of 140 characters is enough to fill several Tolstoyan tomes. A *Times* profile recounted an evening in March 2019 when "Ms. Tanden feuded on Twitter with liberals over whether [Hillary] Clinton condemned far-right hate-mongers strongly enough more than two years ago. The online bickering raged for an hour...when the woman originally targeted by Ms. Tanden's tweets delivered a wake-up call: 'neera, you're responding to a graduate student on Twitter at 1:40 am.'"

Even as it alienates establishment stalwarts like Manchin, Romney, and Collins, Tanden's ferocious tweeting earned her the respect of some of her political foes on the left, whose grudging admiration for a talented enemy recalls that of Ulysses S. Grant for Robert E. Lee. Before she officially withdrew her nomination, *Jacobin* editor Bhaskar Sunkara

Tweeting, as Tanden did, that "vampires have more heart than Ted Cruz" is both funny and accurate. It shouldn't cost anyone a job.

tweeted, "A small part of every true veteran of the posting wars wanted to see Neera make it."

Like many online left-leaning journalists, I've had my share of Twitter tussles with Tanden. While I vehemently disagree with her on much, I don't think any of her posts were disqualifying—certainly not when compared with the truly vile tweets by Donald Trump, which Republican lawmakers so assiduously ignored throughout his administration. Tweeting, as Tanden did, that "vampires have more heart than Ted Cruz" is both funny and accurate. It shouldn't cost anyone a job.

More problematic is the small brigade of online minions and digital attack dogs that Tanden has cultivated and encouraged, sharp-fanged creatures I like to call the Tanden Trolls. They often do overstep the bounds of decency. One Tanden Troll, described by her as "my friend," called Sanders a "fucking fake Jew." And after Tanden's nomination was withdrawn, another troubled individual posted tweets insulting and threatening the children of *New York Times* writer Elizabeth Bruenig and her husband Matt, a think tank

head, both of whom have tangled with Tanden in the past. While Tanden isn't responsible for those threats, it's undeniable that the drama she generates excites and unsettles lost souls.

Tanden's Twitter habit is more than a hobby or a form of political branding gone awry. It's a true addiction. Several in her circle have tried to stage an intervention. A Tanden friend told me that when he urged her to give up tweeting, she responded that this would only hand her foes a victory.

In his excellent polemic *The Twittering Machine*, the British journalist Richard Seymour lays out exactly how social media can take over a person's life. "The Twittering Machine invites users to constitute new, inventive identities for themselves, but it does so on a competitive, entrepreneurial basis," he writes. "It can be empowering for those who have been traditionally marginalized and oppressed, but it also makes the production and maintenance of these identities imperative, exhausting and time-consuming."

Twitter allows us to play a role on a stage watched by millions, to become a hero in the drama of global debate. But there's no worse fate for an actor than to confuse a performance for reality—and to let the role they play consume their real life. **N**

OPPART / MARIETTA BERNSTORFF



EL SALVADOR /

ROBIN BROAD AND JOHN CAVANAGH

Learning How to Win

What Salvadoran activists can teach us about building coalitions.

IN MARCH 2017, PEOPLE FROM POORER COMMUNITIES across El Salvador stood up to corporate power and convinced their legislature to make their country the first in the world to ban mining to save its precious rivers. Their battle cries: “Water, not gold” and “Water for life.” In the process of their 13-year fight, these water defenders organized a national coalition that came to be known as La Mesa.

During those years, Marcelo Rivera and three other defenders were brutally assassinated. But Marcelo’s brother Miguel, their friend Vidalina Morales, and the members of La Mesa never gave up. They also linked up with international allies to defeat a lawsuit by OceanaGold, a multinational firm that argued the Salvadoran government did not have the right to prohibit mining.

How Salvadorans achieved these two major wins has a great deal to teach people around the world struggling to save their communities from corporate predators. Undoubtedly, the most vital component was the determination and organizing acumen of the Riveras, Morales, and their allies in the community groups that anchored La Mesa.

Yet other community-based movements have lost similar battles all over the world, so what else was critical to their achievement? One factor was La Mesa’s education campaigns, which creatively spread the word on the science of mining and water through radio and TV programs, community forums, church sermons, university-based events, fact sheets, and flyers at mass marches. The success of these efforts was demonstrated in polls conducted by the University of Central America in 2007 and 2015, which revealed overwhelming disapproval for mining.

Another factor was La Mesa’s framing of the issue. The water defenders did not see their fight as simply one against mining; instead, they were “pro-water, pro-life.” This suggests that similar campaigns should champion a positive goal, expressing what the movements are *for*—particularly if it’s something as vital and popular as ensuring clean and affordable water for all. The terms “water defenders” and “water protectors” resonate broadly and effectively around the world.

Among the most intriguing lessons comes from La Mesa’s pursuit of seemingly unlikely allies. The water defenders recognized this to be less a contest of right versus left than right versus wrong—an idea that’s also central to the Reverend William J. Barber II and the Poor People’s Campaign in this country. Yes, the left-wing FMLN party—especially its female leaders—proved instrumental. But notable heroes also emerged

in the right-wing ARENA party. This is especially significant if you remember that from 1980 to 1992, roughly 75,000 people were killed in El Salvador’s civil war. It thus took a great deal of courage for the water defenders to reach out to ARENA, as well as to the ultraconservative archbishop of San Salvador, the nation’s capital, and to a leading government attorney who had served in the military during the war. The water defenders also demonstrated remarkable perseverance when some likely allies in the FMLN were tempted by the inducements of Big Gold.

What the two of us have learned from the water defenders has transformed the way we think about unlikely allies in our US work, expanding our sense of who might join us in a fight. A corollary of this lesson: Some in the private sector can emerge as comrades in a struggle that many perceive as anti-corporate. Granted, the water defenders in El Salvador had an advantage over their counterparts in Guatemala, Peru, and the Philippines, where mining projects created webs of local corporate leaders who were intertwined with and enriched by the extractive industry. But after the Salvadoran civil war, there were few influential families linked to the sector. Since domestic elites in tourism and agriculture depended heavily on water, many supported the defenders or at least refrained from actively assisting Big Gold.

La Mesa’s international alliances played a role as well. To the extent this network, which came to be known as International Allies,

was successful, it was because its members understood that OceanaGold’s lawsuit against El Salvador was their fight too, not just something done in solidarity with Salvadoran groups. The global coalition respected La Mesa’s lead on the domestic mining ban and used its own creative media work to turn the struggle into a global story.

According to one of La Mesa’s unlikely allies—José Luis Escobar, the archbishop of San Salvador—there was one final X factor in their victories: a miracle from God. Whether you agree with this or not, any such miracle would not have occurred without the blood, sweat, tears, and doggedness of so many who had so much to lose. **N**

Robin Broad, a professor at American University, and John Cavanagh, the director of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, are the coauthors of The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country From Corporate Greed, from which this essay is adapted.



➤ **No water, no future:** People protest the privatization of water in El Salvador.

The SCORE

A Numbers Game

BRYCE COVERT +
MIKE KONCZAL

A remarkable thing has happened: The Democrats have reacted to our economic problems on a scale that actually matches them. Liberal economic commentators pointed to \$3 trillion as the minimum amount necessary to ensure a swift recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting recession. And now President Joe Biden's administration has passed a \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan, on the back of a \$900 billion package approved in December. Senator Bernie Sanders wasn't exaggerating when he called the American Rescue Plan "the most significant piece of legislation to benefit working families in the modern history of this country." It's extraordinary how different the political reality is from 12 years ago, when Barack Obama struggled to get an \$800 billion stimulus through Congress. Even at the time, most economists knew that his recovery bill was insufficient.

Today, unlike in 2009, the Federal Reserve Board is in vocal support of the need for new spending and has pledged not to undercut the recovery by prematurely raising interest rates. Conservatives, for whatever reason, aren't focusing on these stimulus packages. Perhaps the nature of the pandemic shows us how we all need government support—as opposed to the 2008 financial crisis, when many policy-makers thought that federal spending was just about bailing out the banks.

Yet for all the things that are different, a few remain the same. There's a continuing threat that Republicans and conservative Democrats will try to steer the economy away from full employment, which could sabotage the recovery just as it's taking off. For this reason, it's essential for the White House to think in terms of a very specific number: 9.5 million new jobs. That's the number needed to return to where we were on the eve of the pandemic. The goal should be full employment, but getting back to the labor market that existed in late 2019 is a crucial first step. Anything less will be a missed opportunity.

There are many reasons to aim for full employment, but the economic benefits of a tight labor market alone justify the target. Prior to Covid-19, unemployment had been below 4 percent for nearly two years and hovered around 3.5 percent for last six months of 2019. Through-

out the Great Recession, economic policy-makers in both parties assumed that getting unemployment so low for such an extended period would be impossible without causing inflation and other problems. This led to a misguided focus on how workers weren't ready for the available jobs—too busy playing video games to be employable, as conservative economists would later complain. Yet by the end of 2019, there was clear evidence of sustained wage growth across the lower end of the income distribution and of rising employment among people who had been incarcerated or otherwise isolated from the labor market. Tight labor markets give workers power and help to make sure that they are better compensated.

But even before the coronavirus outbreak, the recovery wasn't complete. The Black unemployment rate, for instance, remained elevated at 6 percent. And this highlights a second reason to stay focused on the 9.5 million jobs number: There will be many attempts to shut down getting to full employment before we are there. This fall, we'll probably see a few impressive monthly reports for job numbers, which will prompt a strong urge among some policy-makers to declare "Mission accomplished." There are even those who believe the economy was too hot in 2019, and they'll want to slow down the long-term trajectory. At that point, the administration could turn too quickly to other priorities, abandoning the emphasis on maintaining the recovery.

The last reason to shoot for 9.5 million new jobs is political. Getting to full employment—or at least close to it—shows the essential role that government plays in providing for economic well-being. The economy doesn't naturally heal itself. The government must take action to bring down unemployment. We saw this over the past decade. Even though Donald Trump was broadly unpopular, he polled more favorably at handling the economy than the Democrats. Despite his economic policy failures, which made conditions worse for workers and better for corporations, the experience of continuing low unemployment made a big difference for voters. And it is precisely these voters whom the Democrats will need to build an enduring base in the coming decade.

Mike Konczal

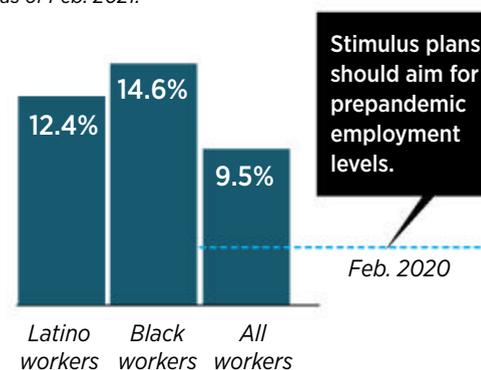
Let's Get All the Jobs Back

Recovering the labor market that existed in late 2019 is a first step toward economic recovery.

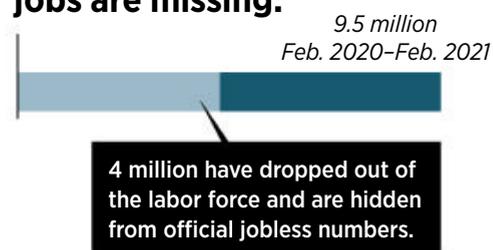
Don't be fooled by reports of a 6.2% jobless rate.

That doesn't include the underemployed or those who have given up looking.

The true rates as of Feb. 2021:



After one year, 9.5 million jobs are missing.



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Council of Economic Advisers



SNAPSHOT / Yuichi Yamazaki

Mourning in Japan

Buddhist monks pray for the victims of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown at a beach in Iwaki, Japan, on March 11. The triple disaster killed almost 16,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless. The 9.0-magnitude earthquake was one of the most powerful ever recorded, triggering tsunami waves over 120 feet high that reached more than six miles inland and destroyed entire towns.

By the Numbers



85

Number of countries where the US government has carried out counterterrorism operations since 2018

800

Estimated number of US military bases around the world

7

Number of countries where the US has conducted an air or drone strike since 2018

\$1.7T

Projected cost of the F-35 fighter jet program during its 69-year lifetime

\$6.4T

Total cost of the US War on Terrorism

37M

Minimum number of people who have been internally displaced or become refugees as a result of the War on Terrorism

800k

Number of people who have been killed as a direct result of violence in the War on Terrorism

—Jared Olson



CALVIN TRILLIN
DeadlinePoet

Stephen Miller Watching the TV News

Will he notice while watching the nurses and docs

Who still fight the pandemic—our heroes, no doubt—

Just how many of them have the colors of skin

Of the people that he was so keen to keep out?

Black Immigrants Matter

In immigration, as in policing, every arm of the US incarceration and deportation machine brings down a hefty amount of its weight onto the backs of Black people.

BY JACK HERRERA

THE DAY AFTER A MINNEAPOLIS POLICE OFFICER KILLED GEORGE FLOYD, Guerline Jozef's mind was in the skies above the Gulf of Mexico. That morning, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents had forced 30 Haitians—almost all of them Black—to board a deportation flight from Alexandria, La.

Jozef knew many of the people on the plane. In the weeks and months before that day, May 26, she spoke with many of the detained Haitians on the phone, introducing herself as an immigrant advocate. For many of them, locked in detention centers across the United States, Jozef's call was the first time they had heard their native Creole in weeks. Jozef's voice offered more than just a comfort for the Haitians in detention—it offered a way for them to find a lawyer, to raise the tens of thousands of dollars they needed to make bond, to understand how they could apply for asylum, and to access critical medical care, including Covid-19 tests.

Black migrants face rates of arrest, detention, and deportation disproportionate to their numbers in this country.

Since cofounding the Haitian Bridge Alliance in 2016, Jozef has received numerous calls, often dozens a day, from Black immigrants in ICE detention. At first, she received calls only from Haitians—men, women, and even children who were waiting for their asylum claims to be processed. Most immigrant advocacy organizations only have the staffing to accommodate Spanish speakers from Latin America, so Jozef, a Haitian immigrant herself, saw a clear need for detained Haitians to speak with advocates who understood them—not just their language

but also, to put it plainly, where they were coming from. They needed a *kon-patriyòt*. However, as Jozef's advocacy expanded, she realized that Black immigrants, wherever they came from, faced particularly dire difficulties in navigating the US immigration system. Soon, Jozef was talking with Eritreans, Ethiopians, Mauritians, Cameroonians, Congolese, Afro-Hondurans, Jamaicans, Afro-Mexicans, Ghanaians, and other Black people from around the world who had sought asylum in the United States, or who had been living in the country without papers, or who had committed some crime that prioritized them for deportation.

From her home in Southern California, Jozef mobilized a national response to stop the May 26 flight and others like it. Her public awareness campaign, waged with a group of other activists, gained some significant traction: Writing from Boston, a city with a large Haitian population, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey and

Jack Herrera is an independent reporter covering immigration, refugee issues, and human rights.

ILLUSTRATION BY ADRIÀ FRUITÓS





Representative Ayanna Pressley published letters to the Department of Homeland Security throughout the pandemic demanding it halt the deportations to Haiti. Legal representatives told Jozef that multiple people set to board the flight had recently tested positive for Covid-19. Some of them had only been given Tylenol. At the airport, half of the detainees took a notoriously unreliable rapid test, and those who tested negative for the coronavirus boarded the plane. Then the flight took off. As the first wave of protests over Floyd's murder were beginning to break out in Minneapolis, the plane carrying 30 Haitians left Alexandria, flew south over the Mississippi Delta, curved a path along the edge of the Gulf of Mexico, and touched down in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti.

Nonstop deportations: Roland Jean kneels on the tarmac after arriving at the Toussaint Louverture airport in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, June 23, 2020.

Jozef felt exhausted and defeated, and she thought about how the difficulties she faced in advocating for Black immigrants were connected to the violence and aggression that Black Americans face at the hands of the criminal justice system. When, a week after the flight, she finally watched the video of Floyd being killed—the video that shows Officer Derek Chauvin keeping his knee on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds as Floyd cries out that he can't breathe—she felt physically ill. For two weeks after seeing the video, she felt nauseated and deeply tired. She had trouble concentrating, trouble sleeping. “I asked myself: How could someone do this?” Jozef told me this past summer. “How could you do this to a human being?”

Black immigrants made up just 5.4 percent of the undocumented population but 10.6 percent of all deportation proceedings from 2003 to 2015.

That was the same question she asked me when we spoke in July, a day when yet another ICE flight carrying dozens of asylum seekers—some of them infants on their mothers' laps—took off for Haiti. The answer is one Jozef says she

has learned, painfully and persistently, over her 30 years in the United States. Though the majority of people who have been deported from this country have been Latinx migrants from Mexico and Central America, Black migrants face rates of arrest, detention, and deportation disproportionate to their numbers in this country. The lesson Jozef learned: Every arm of our country's incarceration and deportation machine brings down a hefty amount of its weight onto the backs of Black people.

Now, Black immigrants and their advocates are fighting to change that. In the midst of the uprisings after Floyd's murder and the growth of Black Lives Matter into perhaps the largest protest movement in US history, activists hope that the time is right for the broader public to finally recognize the impact the country's immigration system has on Black migrants. Organizations like the UndocuBlack Network and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), alongside smaller groups like Jozef's, are working to amplify their long-term central organizing thesis: that in immigration, as in policing, Black lives matter.

FOR DECADES, BLACK IMMIGRANTS have faced excessively high rates of detention and deportation. According to a report from BAJI, while Black immigrants make up less than 5.4 percent of the undocumented population in the United States, they made up 10.6 percent of all deportation proceedings from 2003

to 2015—almost double their share of the undocumented population.

Under the Obama administration, billions of dollars flowed to immigration enforcement, and more people were removed, and at a faster rate, than under any other president in history. (Even Donald Trump failed to break Barack Obama's records.) In speeches, Obama often noted that he'd instructed ICE to pursue only undocumented people with criminal records—a perverse way of indicating his compassion on the issue. However, according to Human Rights Watch, that policy likely caused the number of Black people caught in ICE's dragnet to increase: Decades of overcriminalization of Black communities had resulted in higher rates of conviction for Black people, which, when paired with Obama's emphasis on people with criminal records, led in turn to higher rates of deportation for Black migrants. By 2015, more than one out of every five people facing deportation due to a criminal conviction was Black, despite making up just 7.2 percent of the total noncitizen population, documented or not.

The threats to Black immigrants only increased under Trump. In 2017, Trump ended temporary protected status—a designation that shields immigrants from deportation if their home country is undergoing a crisis—for Haitian immigrants. The move put 60,000 Haitians living in the United States in danger of deportation. That same year, a deportation flight to Somalia caused a scandal after immigrants on the flight told reporters about their horrific treatment: Passengers remained shackled on the plane for over 40 hours as the flight faced logistical issues and was forced to return to the United States. In interviews with *The Intercept*, advocates also said that passengers were forced to urinate in bottles or on themselves and faced beatings and threats by ICE officers.

Trump's policies on the border also endangered Black immigrants. Many Black refugees fleeing countries outside of the Americas fly first to Latin America before making the deadly trek north to the US border. But once they reached the border, hundreds of Black asylum seekers—from Haiti, Ghana, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other countries—were turned away by Border Patrol agents and forced to remain in refugee camps in Mexico, as part of Trump's Migrant Protection Protocols. In February 2020, Trump closed the door completely to many of these migrants when he expanded his racially driven travel ban to include

people from Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, and Tanzania.

The situation has reached a crisis during the pandemic. Since Covid-19 hit the United States, the share of Black immigrants in detention has gone up, especially in family detention centers. According to data collected by RAICES, a refugee and immigrant rights organization, more than 44 percent of all families locked in ICE detention this past summer were Haitian. RAICES also found that on any given day in the past year, Haitians were the single largest nationality group in family detention. Many of these families, fleeing widespread political violence in Haiti, have since been deported.

WHEN IT COMES to seeking asylum, advocates say that Black migrants also face an uphill battle in having their cases fairly heard.

In the United States, asylum seekers

do not have a right to lawyers or a trial by jury; this gives immense power to the subjective opinions of the individual judges who decide their cases. If a judge decides that an asylum seeker seems dishonest, that refugee could get deported back to a country where they face persecution or death. The fickleness of this process seems to have led to demonstrably worse outcomes for Black immigrants at deportation hearings: In the last two decades, people from Haiti, Jamaica, and Somalia have had some of the highest rates of asylum denial of any nationality. Each of these countries has experienced violent political unrest for much of the 21st century, but because they also have dire poverty rates, judges often determine that asylum seekers from these nations are economic migrants rather than refugees. From 2012 to 2017, 87 percent of Haitian asylum seekers were denied asylum—the highest denial rate of any nationality besides Mexicans, whose applications are denied at a rate of 88 percent. In the early 2000s, Jamaicans topped the list of asylum denials, with a 92 percent denial rate. According to the American

Bar Association, Somali immigrants had the highest arrest rate of all nationalities under Trump and the highest removal rate in 2017. (ICE deported 521 Somalis that year, up from 65 three years prior.) Judges also have unilateral power to determine bail for asylum seekers locked in detention, based on how much of a flight risk or public danger they think the applicant might be. Many attorneys say that, in their own experience, bonds tend to be set much higher for Black immigrants—tens of thousands of dollars higher. And there's data to back that up. According to RAICES, between 2018 and 2020, the average bond that immigrant rights organizations paid for their clients was \$10,500, but for Haitians, it was \$16,700.

“Bail is very often set significantly higher for my Black clients than my other clients,” says Lisa Knox, a senior attorney with the immigration legal aid organization Centro Legal de la Raza. “I can see how judges treat my Black clients with more suspicion; judges are more likely to assume they're lying.” Knox, who is Black, adds, “I can tell they just see some ‘criminal’ in front of them.”

The bond rates for Caribbean and African migrants—often above \$50,000, according to the bond requests I reviewed—are astronomically higher than many immigrants could possibly afford. It can lead to years-long detentions. Indeed,

“I can see how judges treat my Black clients with more suspicion... I can tell they just see some ‘criminal.’”

—Lisa Knox,
senior attorney, Centro Legal de la Raza



“It doesn’t matter if you’re a football player or a congressman.... Rolling while Black, automatically you’re a target.”

—Donovan Grant



Fighting for hope: Guerline Jozef, the co-founder of the Haitian Bridge Alliance, has become a powerful advocate for Black immigrants.

immigrants, Jozef raised the money to free Marie’s daughter. On Mother’s Day, Jozef called Marie to let her know that her daughter was going to come home. “She made things change for me and gave me hope again,” Marie said.

Jozef, who worked in the entertainment industry before turning to immigrant rights, says she felt moved to do this work—to raise money and aid Black immigrants—because of a simple fact: Few other people were going to do it. As Black immigrant advocates explained to me, even in the immigration justice world, implicit bias makes it difficult for Black migrants to get the aid, lawyers, and support they need. “There are ways in which the nonprofit industrial complex can replicate a lot of the harm that exists outside of these social justice spaces,” says Tsion Gurmu, BAJI’s legal director.

As Nicole Morgan, an attorney at RAICES, points out, many well-meaning white attorneys don’t recognize their prejudice as bigotry. “I’ve heard attorneys say, ‘Oh, I don’t take clients from Benin, because those people are difficult to work with.’” Other Black lawyers say they’ve heard white colleagues use that same word—“difficult”—to describe other predominantly Black nationalities. In other situations, Morgan says, asylum attorneys tend to understand that their clients are dealing with serious trauma and that it can manifest as anger or frustration, but this patience tends to wear away when it comes to Black clients. Thus, white attorneys are more likely to use “difficult” to describe African and Caribbean clients.

the person who spent the longest period of time in immigration detention—10 years—was a Rwandan national. The second longest detention was endured by a Kenyan, who spent about nine years in immigration lockup. (For comparison, the average stay is 55 days.)

While in detention, the conditions that Black people face can also be particularly harsh. According to a study published last year, people from Africa and the Caribbean represented 24 percent of the people

placed in solitary confinement in ICE custody from 2012 to 2017, even though they made up only 4 percent of ICE detainees. In 2018, the immigrant advocacy organization Freedom for Immigrants released a report documenting hundreds of allegations of racism and xenophobia in immigrant detention centers. One detained immigrant in Texas said a warden told her, “Shut your black ass up. You don’t deserve nothing. You belong at the back of that cage.” In Massachusetts, another detained Black immigrant recounted an officer telling them, “No one will believe baboon complaints.”

The unpayable bonds often result in family separations. In 2019, Marie, an asylum seeker from Haiti who was unable to pay bail, watched as her 18-year-old daughter was forcibly removed from the rest of her family because, she was told, she was too old to remain in the same detention center as them. When Marie was eventually released, her daughter remained in detention, with a bond set at \$10,000. “I had no money,” Marie said at a press event RAICES hosted in 2020 to raise awareness about the experiences of Black immigrants.

Marie felt hopeless. “But then God really changed my life,” she said. “He put me in touch with Guerline Jozef.” As she has done for countless detained Black

“That’s just the narrative they tell themselves and that they carry throughout their career,” Morgan says.

THE FIGHT FOR BLACK IMMIGRANT lives isn’t restricted to the country’s asylum system. Bigotry and bias permeate the regular immigration system as well.

Donovan Grant, who emigrated from Jamaica as a child, says that “as a Black man growing up in the States,” he learned quickly how racism works in this country. Grant says he remembers one experience in particular. He was 19. He had saved up and bought a new car, a gold coupe. “I can remember it like it was yesterday,” he says. He was dropping a friend off at home in Compton, Calif., when the cops appeared. “I wasn’t even moving, but he forced me to get out of the car. They began searching the car,” Grant recalls. “You get profiled. Just being a Black man in a nice car—it doesn’t matter if you’re a football player or a congressman or driving a Rolls Royce. Rolling while Black, automatically you’re a target.”

That persistent targeting meant that Grant, like many other Black people in the United States, has significantly more experience with law enforcement than other people. “I have a different kind of scrutiny when it comes to my skin color,” he says. It also meant that something that wouldn’t have

led to a criminal record in a rich white suburb (how many frat boys get busted for marijuana possession?) left Grant with a criminal conspiracy conviction. And having a criminal record, when you’re an immigrant, can destroy your life.

The day George Floyd died, Grant was in the Mesa Verde ICE detention center in Southern California. In 2019, he had finished a three-year prison sentence for the conspiracy conviction. But as soon as he

was released, ICE rearrested him; his criminal conviction had endangered his immigration status, thanks to a Clinton-era act that greatly expanded the types of criminal conviction that can be grounds for removal. He again found himself behind bars, in what some advocates call the “double punishment” experienced by immigrants.

When immigrants with green cards and legal status take plea deals in criminal cases, they often don’t realize that even a minor conviction or short jail sentence can lead to their eventual



deportation. For Grant, it was devastating to leave jail only to get locked up again. This prison-to-deportation pipeline is so severe for Black people in this country that it has sucked up not just immigrants but native-born Americans as well. In 2018, Peter Sean Brown ended up in a Florida sheriff's office for violating the terms of his probation (he had tested positive for smoking pot). The sheriff's office told him he wasn't getting out after his detention—they were going to hold him so that ICE could pick him up and deport him to Jamaica.

Brown panicked and immediately protested, saying that he had been to Jamaica just once in his life, for less than a day on a cruise, and knew no one in that country. He'd been born and raised in Philadelphia. The deputies just laughed at him. One of them sang the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* theme song: "In West Philadelphia, born and raised...."

"It was so sad and sickening to me, because there is nothing about me that even hints that I might be from somewhere other than the United States," Brown says. "Besides the fact that I'm Black. Nothing besides the color of my skin connects me to Jamaica."

It came down to a case of mistaken identity: Brown allegedly shared biometric information with a Jamaican immigrant ICE had on its radar. But there was nothing he could do to convince the deputies he was telling the truth, even after he managed to have a friend bring them his birth certificate. Eventually, he was placed in an ICE transport bus. As Brown left the jail, one of the deputies did a bad Bobby McFerrin impression, saying, in a Jamaican accent, "Don't worry, man."

Fortunately, Brown spent only a day in ICE detention before the agency realized its mistake. Davino Watson was not so lucky. Another Black, male, native-born US citizen, Watson spent three years in ICE detention fighting the agency's own clerical mistake. When I spoke with Watson in 2018 about his experience, the impact was clear: "It broke my life into pieces," he told me.

ON JULY 4, 2018, PATRICIA OKOUMOU climbed the Statue of Liberty about 100 feet from its pedestal in what became one of the most iconic moments of protest in the Trump era. She stood for hours on this country's symbol of tolerance and welcome, demanding an end to family separation and child detention.

In the weeks afterward, many people referred to Okoumou as an ally to immigrants—a label



that perturbed her. Okoumou is also an immigrant; she's a naturalized US citizen, born in the Republic of Congo.

Okoumou says she felt she had to do whatever she could to raise awareness about the Black children she felt had been rendered invisible in the media's coverage of the crisis. "Systemic racism is embedded in our culture so badly, going back to slavery and the way Black children are treated," she says. "It's almost as if we become numb to this reality."

Even though Okoumou's protest dominated the front pages, and the image of her on the statue is still widely shared, she feels as if she herself—her life, her continued activism, her one-room apartment—has been made invisible. She feels ignored and erased, even as her image is everywhere. "I feel like my story gets used," she says.

For Jozef, this all makes sense. She understands the forces at play that make Black immigrants, wherever they are, invisible. "Who is climbing the Statue of Liberty to say immigrant children need to be freed? It was a Black woman," she says. "It is Black immigrants putting their lives on the line, and still we are erased."

For Jozef, the deep roots of bigotry and bias against Black people in the immigration system can explain so much of the suffering we see today inflicted on immigrants of any race.

During her teenage years in the New York City borough of Queens, Jozef learned from her family and the community around her about the tens of thousands of Haitian refugees held by the United States in a massive refugee camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In the early 1990s, thousands of Haitians fled a brutal military coup and subsequent dictatorship, and many went north in flimsy boats. In response, the United States sent the Coast Guard to form a cordon around the island and pick up any Haitians before they could land in the US. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush established the Guantánamo refugee camp for the same reason his son would later make "Gitmo" the center of his torture

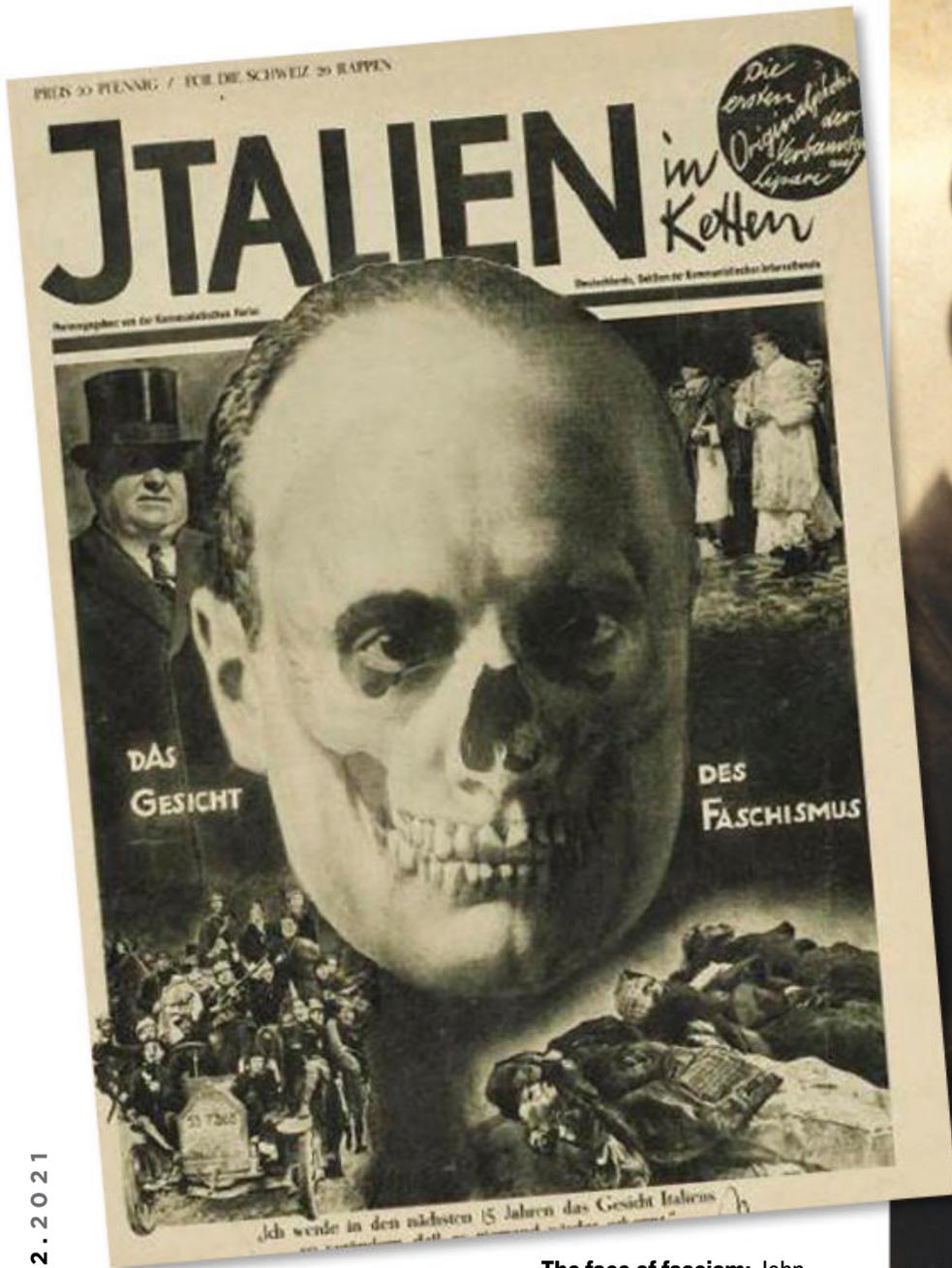
"It's almost as if we become numb to this reality."

—Patricia Okoumou

Do not turn away: Patricia Okoumou climbed the Statue of Liberty in 2018 to protest the plight of children stuck in detention.

(continued on page 30)

The Night They Came to



The face of fascism: John Heartfield's 1928 portrait of Benito Mussolini.



Razor-sharp: Heartfield depicts himself cutting into the neck of Berlin Police Commissioner Karl Zörgiebel.

THE NATION 4.5-12.2021

AS WORLD WAR I decimated a generation, a young Berlin artist born Helmut Herzfeld changed his name to John Heartfield to protest out-of-control German nationalism. In 1916, he was a founding member of Berlin Club Dada—a group of artistic rebels whose influence in all areas of culture continues to this day. Heartfield revolutionized the look of German book jackets and set design. He was a lifelong pacifist whose political beliefs were a constant in his art; his stunning collages, known as “photomontages,” exposed the growing threat of fascism



The beast within: Heartfield's devastating portrait of Hitler made him one of the Gestapo's most-wanted men.



Serial killer: This portrait of Hermann Göring standing before a burning Reichstag is titled *The Executioner of the Third Reich*.

IMAGES COURTESY OF JOHN J. HEARTFIELD

On the night of Good Friday, April 14th, 1933, Hitler's SS headed straight for John Heartfield's studio.



Nazis now had the power to kill him for being an artist in Berlin.



Suddenly, the storm troopers kicked in his heavy wooden door.



My grandfather had one chance to survive. He crashed through his window and fell to the alley below.



Murder My Grandfather

BY JOHN J. HEARTFIELD

ILLUSTRATION BY LANCE HANSEN

He landed badly and could not run.



Desperate, he crawled to the far corner of the courtyard...



and squeezed his small body into an old metal bin.



The Nazis searched for him, threatening anyone who dared to help my grandfather.



The SS strutted around in their immaculate uniforms. They could not imagine a man would hide in a can for hours covered by stinking trash.



They finally left convinced Heartfield would never again insult the mighty Third Reich.



But if those Nazi thugs had a clue what they had failed to accomplish that night, they would have tipped over every trash can in Berlin.



He was a German, but Germany had become enemy territory.



He walked across the mountains to Prague. A pacifist, he had never fired a gun or thrown a bomb. His only crime, one that carried with it the death penalty, was his use of scissors, paste, and his wit to expose the lies, injustice, and brutality of fascism.



in Europe. Using just scissors and paste, Heartfield employed an extensive visual memory and a searing wit to expose the horrors hidden under fascism's shiny surface. One month after becoming the undisputed leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler ordered Heartfield's arrest. The artist narrowly avoided an SS squad, escaping to Czechoslovakia, where he continued to attack the Third Reich with his "art as a weapon." When the German Army entered Czechoslovakia in 1938, Heartfield was high on the Gestapo's most-wanted list. Once again, he narrowly escaped—this time to London, where for 12 years he enjoyed a measure of peace. However, the Czech Refugee Fund denied his written request to remain in England for "his health and his work." In 1950 his brother Wieland brought him to East Germany, where Heartfield's years in England again placed him under suspicion. However Heartfield had powerful allies there, including his lifelong friend and theater collaborator

Bertolt Brecht. After Heartfield's death in 1968, the East German government gathered his original montages, models, and sketches into an archive of his pioneering stage design work, which remained closed for many years—making it almost impossible for academics or the public to view his original work. In 2008, I decided to reintroduce the world to the life and work of my grandfather, a man Brecht called "one of the most important European artists."

I first met artist Lance Hansen after *The Nation* published Lance's graphic biography of George Grosz, who had been Heartfield's close friend and collaborator. Lance originally asked me to work with him on a comic strip about my grandfather. But I thought Lance's initial drawings captured my grandfather's character so well that I suggested we collaborate on a graphic novel telling John Heartfield's extraordinary life story. Please visit JohnHeartfieldExhibition.com to learn more. **N**

John J. Heartfield gives live interactive presentations around the world that focus on his grandfather's life and work and modern political art.

Lance Hansen is a writer and cartoonist living in Philadelphia.

BY JOAN WALSH

IN 2018, DONALD TRUMP CONSIDERED REAPPOINTING JANET YELLEN, NOW THE nation's treasury secretary, as Federal Reserve chair. But according to *The Wall Street Journal*, he worried that the 5-foot-3 economist "might be too short to convey stature" at the Fed, though she'd been running it ably for four years.

Speaking of stature, Trump is the first twice-impeached former president, and Yellen is the first female treasury secretary.

Throughout her life, Yellen has been known as a collector—of rocks, stamps, and also firsts. She is the first person to hold the nation's top three economic jobs (in addition to being treasury secretary and running the Fed, she chaired President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers). In 1971, she was the only woman to graduate with a doctorate in economics from Yale University. A leader over the last quarter-century in economic policy-making, Yellen will need all that experience in a role that makes her the captain of efforts to right the Covid-19-battered economy while also addressing the underlying inequities the pandemic exposed.

Yellen did not speak to me for this profile. But we persevered, because she represents a new day at the Treasury—not just because of her gender, but also because of her career-long focus on how markets fail, especially the way they fail the unemployed and people on the lower rungs of the economic ladder. She will be central to keeping Biden's promises about "building back better," in his words, and pushing the country toward the kind of innovations "better" will require.

Yellen is also something of a throwback to an earlier age of bipartisan comity.

At her Senate Finance Committee confirmation hearing in mid-January, she got repeated praise from Republicans. The Senate confirmed her appointment 84-15. Yet progressive economic and racial justice advocates also praise Yellen, in superlatives. I had the odd experience of having several people ask to talk to me off the record because they will have to work with the new Treasury head—not to criticize her but to praise her, without

appearing to curry favor. "She is the most progressive treasury secretary in history," says someone who expects to work closely with her.

"Janet sees the world in terms of people living paycheck to paycheck, and how economic policy influences their lives and their ability to build a secure future," says Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, who some on the left preferred to see in Yellen's job.

"Biden could not have made a better pick, given that we are operating within the realm of mainstream

D.C. politics," agrees Robert Pollin, a founding codirector of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Yellen, a career-long Keynesian economist, is "firmly left of center," Pollin adds. "She actually cares about the well-being of working people and the poor."

Her pop culture star is rising. Early in her term as Fed chair, the progressive activist group Fed Up, which agitates for the central bank to focus on problems of unemployment and racial and economic inequality, hailed Yellen's tenure by depicting her in iconic Rosie the Riveter garb, symbolizing her focus on

workers over Wall Street. Admirers say that, in her instantly recognizable sensible white bob and jewel-toned jackets, she could inspire the kind of feminist fandom that the late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg did in her later years. When Biden nominated Yellen, he suggested that she deserved a tribute on the order of the musical *Hamilton*—and the *Hamilton* Twitter account morphed a portrait of Alexander Hamilton into Yellen. Then came "Who's Yellen Now?" by Dessa, a member of the hip-hop collective Doomtree. Here's the bridge, to the tune of Mary J. Blige's "Family Affair":

Don't want no tax evasion
Forgers faking
In her Treasury
Trying for higher wages
For the nation
Less disparity.

BUT YELLEN WILL NEED MORE than a stellar résumé, pop culture adulation, and even bipartisan admiration to do her job well. The treasury secretary's role is crucial, if poorly understood. She (or he) is the top salesperson for the president's overall approach to the economy. Under Republicans, over the last half century at least, that has meant liberating the so-called free market by pushing tax cuts and corporate deregulation. Under Democrats—but especially, it seems, under Biden, at least so far—it has meant a robust defense of government spending (or investment, as Yellen likes to call it) to heal an economy cratered by Covid and tilted even more toward the white and wealthy by Trump's financial deregulation spree.

Trump's treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, either ignored or helped dismantle many of the 2010 Dodd-Frank guardrails Congress enacted after the 2008 financial crash, most notably by lowering the capital requirements on banks intended to prevent taxpayers from having to bail them out again, deregulating nonbank lending institutions (such as the insurance giants AIG

"She has long demonstrated a willingness to listen to the voices of people left behind, which is the first step towards fixing the problems."

—Ady Barkan,
formerly of Fed Up

JANET YELLEN

Faces the Moment

After the ravages of the pandemic, the American economy needs more than stabilizing—it needs to be rebuilt from the ground up. Is Yellen up to the task?





and Prudential), and gutting other consumer, investor, and taxpayer protections. When Yellen assumed her role in January, she immediately confronted the scandal over the wild inflation of the stock of GameStop, a declining retail chain, by Reddit users and uber-wealthy investment sharks, often via the controversial Robinhood trading app. But the problem went way beyond GameStop or Robinhood. The role of established casino-capitalist institutions like hedge funds highlighted the accelerating “gamification of Wall Street,” says Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown.

“This is not a game for people who have money in pension funds, for people trying to save for their kids’ college, for people trying to get a mortgage,” says Brown, the chair of the Senate banking committee and a longtime Yellen admirer. He thinks she and other Biden appointees will be able to rein in the financial industry.

Trifecta: Yellen is the first person to have served, over the course of her career, as head of the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, and the Council of Economic Advisers.

Yellen can also reshape the Internal Revenue Service, which the Treasury runs, to do the same, Brown believes. Depleted over several administrations and thoroughly debased by Trump appointees, the IRS is now an accelerant of income inequality and racial disparities more than an engine of equity, far more likely to audit low-income Americans—especially those of color—than the rich, while creating a booming tax avoidance industry for individuals and corporations.

“We’ve heard a lot of talk about ‘I just want things to go back to normal, before Covid,’” notes Representative Katie Porter.

But “normal” wasn’t good for everyone, maybe even most Americans, the whiteboard-wielding California progressive observes. “We have to acknowledge there were problems in our economy before Covid—the gender pay gap, the racial wealth gap,” among others. “We have to ask: What fundamentals of our economy do we need to reorder as we rebuild?” As Yellen presides over Covid relief, financial reregulation, and IRS reform, Porter sees her as “the perfect person to raise those issues.”

In her first two months in office, Yellen has largely met her progressive admirers’ expectations. She fought aggressively for Biden’s \$1.9 trillion Covid-relief package, which passed Congress with zero GOP support. It marked a dramatic expansion of the social infrastructure that Yellen and the new president—perhaps nudged by the Democratic Party’s rising left—have pledged to enact.

“A key job for a Treasury Secretary is to make sure the country is on a sound fiscal course,” Yellen told *The New York Times*’ Deal-Book conference in late February. “If you don’t spend what is necessary to get the economy back on track, that has a fiscal cost as well.” She actually has a better version of that pitch: “I think the price of doing too little is much higher than the price of doing something big,” she told CNBC the same month. But she’s not really given to sloganeering. She tends to speak in paragraphs, not sound bites.

Yellen has committed to appointing a top Treasury official to oversee climate change efforts, which might include everything from imposing a tax on carbon pollution and regulating investors’ climate risk to directing Treasury bonds, tax incentives, and other funding to green energy priorities.

And in an early demonstration of her commitment to racial equity, in March Yellen directed \$9 billion in Treasury-controlled funds to lending institutions in low-income communities, especially those of color. One of Yellen’s very first meetings after she was nominated included civil rights advocates, observes attendee Dorian Warren, president of Community



“Biden could not have made a better pick, given that we are operating within the realm of mainstream D.C. politics.”

—Robert Pollin,
economist at UMass Amherst

Change, a progressive organizing group for low-income people. “It was really good—she listened and took copious notes,” he recalls. Ultimately, though, Warren cautions, progress will require “continuing outside pressure and movement work.”

THE PRIDE OF MIDDLE-CLASS, MID-20th-century Brooklyn, Yellen paid tribute to her roots at her confirmation hearing. The economist praised her father, a doctor who had an office in the family’s Bay Ridge home, where patients from the nearby factories and docks came to wait for appointments on their stoop. “Those remain some of the clearest moments in my childhood,” she told the committee.

“He was the kind of doctor who treated the whole patient. He knew about their lives, about when they had been fired or couldn’t pay,” Yellen said. “Economics is sometimes considered a dry subject, but I’ve always tried to approach my science the same way my father approached his: as a means to help people.”

A friend and classmate at Fort Hamilton High School in the 1950s wrote a piece about her headlined “Janet Yellen: Brainy, Brave and Brooklyn Strong.” Writing in *The Fiscal Times* when Yellen was appointed Fed chair, Jacqueline Leo reminisced about the high expectations at their public school, where many teachers were World War II refugees, and about a culture remarkably free of sexist stereotyping. “The editors of all three high school publications—the newspaper, the literary magazine and the yearbook—were all girls.” So was the valedictorian: Janet Yellen, who also edited the school newspaper, *The Pilot*, in her senior year. (She interviewed herself for it and gave herself a tough time.)

“We were expected to take charge, just as our mothers and grandmothers did when men went off to war,” Leo wrote. Yellen’s mother had been a public school teacher during the war years; in the post-World War II recovery period, she stayed home to raise her children.

If her upbringing in post-Great Depression Brooklyn was formative, so was Yellen’s decision to seek a doctorate in economics from Yale, which she received in 1971. Her key advisers were the late James Tobin and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, two legendary left-liberal economists. A half century later, Stiglitz, now at Columbia, recalls Yellen as “engaged, amiable, organized, and self-composed.” That last quality was particularly important, he says,

because Yale College didn’t admit female undergraduates until 1969, and there were few women in its graduate schools when Yellen arrived in 1967.

Academics aside, Yellen’s Yale experience was formative in two ways. As she had in Brooklyn, she absorbed the post-Depression, post-World War II values of the economics department of the time. “Many people there, including Jim Tobin, had been very affected by the Great Depression,” Stiglitz recalls. “They were much more concerned about equality” than economics departments tend to be now.

And they were having those discussions situated adjacent to the struggling, majority-Black neighborhoods of New Haven, just as the so-called War on Poverty’s programs were winding down, leaving poverty victorious despite the millions spent to combat it. “Yale was located right at the boundary where the wealth gap was very clear,” Stiglitz notes. “And we were sensitive to all of those issues.”

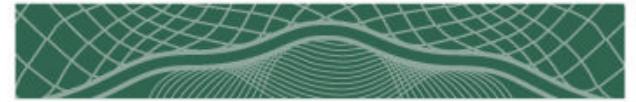
Yellen confirmed that the first time I met her, at the 2006 National Community Reinvestment Conference, which she convened as president of the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank. “I was drawn to economics, not, as you might think, as a result of an early fascination with interest rates,” she said wryly in her opening welcome, “but because I wanted to understand the underlying causes of the Great Depression.” In the same speech, she discussed what she’d learned on the ground in New Haven about the Great Society initiatives that left the city blighted by urban renewal projects in the 1960s, with its African American population more isolated and practically as poor as before.

I’d been invited to that convention to share lessons from the community development initiatives I’d written about over the previous decade. Yellen had already studied them. The conclusions she’d drawn from her time in late-1960s New Haven meshed with what many anti-poverty activists found in their research almost four decades later: that revival efforts had to go beyond “bricks and mortar”

to weave together the health care, education, employment support, and access to credit that low-income communities need. Another neglected element, she added: “Resident participation is vital to the success of any redevelopment effort.” The community revitalizers in her audience rarely heard such words from central bankers. The same could be said of the bankers who were there.

Yellen became one of the most powerful advocates of the Community Reinvestment Act, passed in 1977 to direct more credit into poor and minority communities neglected or redlined by mainstream banking. As Stiglitz recalls, “She and I supported the CRA when we were in the Clinton administration, but the rest of the financial community was very hesitant about it.” Yellen stood up to the analysts and pundits, especially on the right, who blamed CRA-supported loans to low-income home buyers for the banking and mortgage crash in 2008.

“Most of the loans made by depository institutions examined under the CRA have not been higher-priced loans, and studies have shown that the CRA has increased the volume of responsible lending to low- and moderate-income



“We’ve heard a lot of talk about ‘I just want things to go back to normal.’ We have to ask: What fundamentals do we need to reorder as we rebuild?”

—Representative Katie Porter

Pop culture cachet: A still from the video for Dessa’s “Who’s Yellen Now?,” released the same day that Yellen was confirmed as treasury secretary.



“Her whole life has been about understanding this moment, where government can play a big, important role.”

—Joseph Stiglitz,
economist at Columbia University

have been President Barack Obama’s top choice. One of the advocates’ best arguments for Yellen was empirical, not ideological: She had been remarkably prescient about future economic troubles as both San Francisco Fed president and Fed vice chair. In 2006, she warned about the housing bubble; by 2007, she predicted that troubled housing and mortgage markets would shake the overall economy; and in late 2008, she became the first Fed official to declare that the economy was in recession.

That streak continued. Examining nearly 700 predictions by the 14 top Fed officials between 2009 and 2012, *The Wall Street Journal* ranked Yellen number one in terms of accuracy. Other Fed low-interest-rate doves also deserved high marks, the business broadsheet found; inflation-obsessed hawks were the least accurate.

Meanwhile, Obama’s oddly vocal support for Summers also helped Yellen. Ezra Klein wrote about a “subtle, sexist whispering campaign” against Yellen by Obama allies and financial analysts, who told him on background that the Fed vice chair

lacked “toughness” or “gravitas.” (As I wrote at the time, gravitas “is a well known Beltway code word for ‘penis.’”) One-third of Senate Democrats signed a letter sponsored by Brown backing her nomination. They ranged from progressives like Brown, Warren, and Oregon’s Jeff Merkley to centrists like Maine’s Angus King and California’s Dianne Feinstein.

Whether because of the empirical, ideological, or feminist arguments, Summers took himself out of contention, and Yellen got the job. Immediately, she began advancing policies to lower unemployment and spread resources in low-income communities of color by keeping interest rates low, using Fed funds to promote employment, and nudging private bankers toward public responsibility. “She was the very first Fed chair to really take on inequality,” says Stiglitz. Early in her tenure, Yellen visited a manufacturing program at a South Side Chicago community college; soon after, Brown recalls, she toured an Alcoa aluminum plant in Cleveland. “These aren’t places Fed chairs usually go,” says UMass Amherst’s Pollin, adding that she also came to his own public university “and spent hours talking to our grad students.”

Angela Glover Blackwell, the founder and former CEO of PolicyLink, a group promoting racially equitable growth policies (disclosure: I’m on its board), found herself invited to join Yellen’s 15-member Community Advisory Committee, one of only two such bodies connected to the Fed. After their first meeting, Blackwell says, “I was so impressed with how she immediately took to the data we presented [on] poverty and unemployment.” Yellen asked them, “What are the jobs in the future going to be? How many people of color? And how were they doing?” Blackwell remembers that Yellen wove the data and analysis into future speeches.

households,” Yellen told the 2008 Community Reinvestment Conference. She warned against using foreclosure trends “as justification to abandon the goal of expanding access to credit among low-income households.”

These and other positions won her overwhelming progressive support to succeed Ben Bernanke as Federal Reserve chair in 2014 over former treasury secretary Larry Summers, widely considered to

Activist Ady Barkan, best known for his advocacy in defense of the Affordable Care Act in the Trump years, was back then a leader of Fed Up. “She has long demonstrated a willingness to listen to the voices and experiences of people left behind, which is the first step towards fixing the problems,” Barkan tells me via e-mail. “She understands the racial and economic inequities that are plaguing us. She also seems ready to invest huge sums of Federal dollars into the economy.”

Yellen also made the right enemies. At a 2015 congressional hearing, then-Representative Mick Mulvaney, the South Carolina Tea Partier who would become one of Trump’s many hapless chiefs of staff, blasted the popular Fed chair for her focus on inequality. “You’re sticking your nose in places that you have no business to be,” he fulminated.

GIVEN HER UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE, a track record of correctly reading economic trends, a commitment to racial and economic equity, and admiration from progressives and even some centrist Republicans, does anyone apart from has-been wing nuts like Mulvaney have worries about Yellen’s coming tenure?

Progressives have raised some concerns, including her public support for deficit cutting in 2018 and her acceptance of millions of dollars in speaking fees from corporate giants and Wall Street titans after leaving the Fed the same year. Yellen also disappointed many left-leaning activists when she began to raise interest rates, albeit

slightly, starting in 2016, when unemployment was still comparatively high. “The economy was still kind of soft,” recalls the economist Robert Kuttner, a Yellen admirer, and progressive economists especially saw a need for the Fed to keep its focus on unemployment and its lending rates low. Yellen’s move drove Fed Up leaders to criticize their former Rosie the Riveter. (Stiglitz attended a Fed Up demonstration outside a 2016 Fed symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyo., according to *The Washington Post*.) Kuttner terms her interest-rate hawkishness “an asterisk” in an otherwise progressive career, while adding that her position was widely shared at the time by the central bank’s board of governors.

A bigger asterisk, to some, is her relatively recent embrace of cutting the federal deficit and “reforming” entitlements. At Charles Schwab’s 2018 Impact conference, Yellen called the federal debt “unsustainable,” adding, with



A rising star: In 2013, Barack Obama nominated Yellen to chair the Federal Reserve, making her the first woman in the role.



a memorable flourish, “If I had a magic wand, I would raise taxes and cut retirement spending.” The next year, she suggested Social Security and Medicare might need cuts.

Elizabeth Warren, for one, says that doesn’t worry her. “Janet gets that we’re in a completely different world now,” she tells me. “While we may have differed in years past about the effect of the deficit, today her focus is entirely on an economy that has left millions of families behind and threatens to destroy economic opportunity and widen the racial wealth gap.” Kuttner agrees, noting that Yellen’s 2018 comments “came in the context of Trump’s tax-cutting spree” and that, at the same time, she recommended tax hikes—which will ultimately be necessary to pay for Biden’s priorities, including the American Rescue Plan Act and his massive infrastructure investment.

“Caring a little about the deficit is not necessarily a bad thing, especially when it comes to reining in rich people on taxes,” adds Jeff Hauser of the Revolving Door Project. The Economic Policy Institute’s Josh Bivens adds, “I think her deficit concerns actually help her in building support for the [American Rescue Plan] proposal,” he says. “Nobody thinks she’s always soft on deficits.”

Still, after winning admiration from progressives for avoiding the revolving door between top government jobs and Wall Street for her entire career—Yellen left the Fed for a perch at the Brookings Institution in 2018—she nonetheless disappointed some when her financial disclosure forms, filed after her nomination in late 2020, revealed she’d received over \$7 million from corporate behemoths, among them big banks, investment firms, and hedge funds. Barkan, who says he remains optimistic that Yellen will “be an excellent Treasury Secretary,” was disappointed

by that news. “We need her to be a really tough regulator,” he says in an e-mail. “I hope that in the coming years, she proves that she is on the side of poor and working class Americans, not the financiers.”

Sherrod Brown, when asked if the news of Yellen’s financial disclosure forms worries him, answers immediately: “It really doesn’t. She told me about that when I first talked to her [about her nomination]. I know her integrity and record and character well enough to know she’ll do a good job.”

SO WHAT, EXACTLY, DO YELLEN’S LEFT-LIBERAL ADMIRERS believe, or at least hope, she can accomplish?

The advocates and economists fighting to reverse the huge advantages that the federal government has bestowed on the financial industry over the last 30 years—a bipartisan problem going back to Clinton—say she must revitalize the Financial Security Oversight Council, a Dodd-Frank reform that pulled together agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to protect Americans from known abuses and look out for new threats. Just holding regular meetings would be a start, says one Senate source, who adds that the Trump administration left the FSOC “decrepit and abandoned.” The point isn’t meetings for the sake of meetings; Yellen needs to reinvigorate the entire roster of federal regulators charged with policing the field.

Meanwhile, there’s the fight, even after passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, over continued government spending to achieve greater racial and economic equity. Porter thinks Yellen is the right person to make the case that underspending, which typifies the GOP’s approach, “is fiscally irresponsible. Spending is the fiscally responsible path.” Brown wants to see the act’s expanded child tax credit—which he says would lower child poverty by 40 percent and the poverty rate of children of color by an astonishing 50 percent—made payable monthly, instead of once a year. (An

Lingering damage:

The pandemic has increased demand on food pantries, and “spending is the fiscally responsible path” to recovery, says Representative Katie Porter.



Yellen will be central to the fight over whether and how government spending can achieve greater racial and economic equality.

expanded earned-income tax credit could be delivered that way too.) Yellen probably can't make all of that happen by herself; other congressional or White House regulatory tweaks may be necessary. But her support, especially in her role as IRS boss, will be crucial.

Brown, Warren, and other progressives also hope that, as the government directs more money into American homes via those reforms, Yellen and others in the administration will get behind establishing forms of no-fee banking so that low-income people without bank accounts can use those funds without paying sky-high fees. The

initiative has been characterized as "postal banking," Brown says, but "it can also include community banks, credit unions," and other institutions.

Perhaps most radical, Yellen is committed to tackling climate change as the economic threat that it is. Part of what she's pledged to do involves regulation: Big banks and investment firms fund the carbon-producing industries that cause climate change, and they don't accurately account for the coming risks,

"Janet sees the world in terms of people living paycheck to paycheck."

—Senator Elizabeth Warren

like financing mortgages in areas threatened by floods or wildfires. New financial rules could require lenders and investors to price in those risks, Yellen says. She also favors a tax on carbon emissions—weak tea to a lot of progressives, but a proposal that could make a difference as part of a broader agenda. Pollin, an expert on the Green New Deal, supports some of the same reforms and adds that Yellen could be instrumental in setting up a \$50 billion green-bond-funding program, in which the Treasury issues bonds that are then purchased by the Fed and invested in clean energy development.

Porter, the deputy chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and Representative Pramila Jayapal, the caucus chair, are equally hopeful that Yellen's leadership could prove transformative. She's been close to the economic traumas of the past 70 years, from the lingering aftermath of the Great Depression in Brooklyn through the unfinished business of the Great Society in New Haven to the Democrats' inadequate approach to the 2008 financial crash. All of that, they believe, will help her chart a future that requires a multiracial 21st-century New Deal and an even greater Great Society.

Stiglitz agrees. "Her whole life has been about understanding this moment, where government can play a big, important role," he says.

Porter says Yellen (and Biden) will have to deal with the fact that government moratoriums on rent and mortgage payments don't permanently waive those bills for people who still can't afford to pay them. Like Porter, Jayapal believes Yellen sees those people. Last year, Yellen helped Jayapal develop her Paycheck Guarantee Act, which would provide grants to employers of all sizes to enable them to keep paying and offering benefits to employees during the crisis (though the measure is not part of the Biden administration's rescue plan).

"She was so thoughtful about the proposal, about where we were in the economy, the challenges to minority communities," Jayapal recalls. "She made it stronger."

"That's not to say we'll have no disagreements—I'm sure we will," Jayapal adds. Indeed, not long after we spoke, Yellen expressed reservations about Jayapal's and Warren's proposed "ultra-millionaires' tax," a wealth tax that the new treasury secretary warned "has very difficult implementation problems." Nevertheless, Jayapal says, "I have a tremendous amount of hope."

(continued from page 19)

campaign during the War on Terrorism: The military base existed outside of constitutional jurisdiction. The United States' obligation to legal refugees did not kick in until they set foot on US soil.

The conditions at the refugee center were horrific, with as many as 34,000 people living in flimsy tents surrounded by rows of razor wire. Most were ultimately sent back to Haiti, though some were allowed to pursue asylum claims. But even among those who qualified for asylum, 250 were held in legal limbo in a separate camp because they had tested positive for HIV or were related to someone who had—a discriminatory and medically unsound 1987 law had forbidden those with HIV from entering the country. It wasn't until a federal judge ruled against what he called the "H.I.V. prison camp" that the Clinton administration was forced to shut it down and bring the asylees to the United States.

For Jozef, this moment is critical to understand. This is the beginning of the mass incarceration of immigrants in the United States, she says. Though the government had detained immigrants and even US citizens it had deemed undesirable before—Eastern Europeans at Ellis Island, Chinese and other Asians at Angel Island, Japanese in internment camps during World War II—the tactics tested out on the Haitians at Guantánamo set the modern detention machine in motion. "It began with the mass detention of Black people," Jozef says, adding that a new landmark in this dark history was reached in 2016, when Haitian families began to be separated, laying the groundwork for the family separation crisis under Trump. (Starting as early as 2007, Haitian children were often separated from their fathers but not their mothers, while under Trump children were separated from both.)

Jozef says that when she heard that Trump had been defeated in November, she was exhausted: For the entire previous month, a deportation flight had taken off for Haiti almost every other day. She says that Biden's victory was a light at the end of the tunnel—albeit a very dim one.

"When I saw the news that Biden had won, it was a feeling that the fight would change," she says. "Now we must fight to hold him accountable. It's time to retie our boots and keep pushing forward."

On his first day in office, Biden signed a host of executive orders. One struck down Trump's travel ban on people from several African and Muslim countries; another offered Liberians in the United States protection from deportation. The same week that Biden was sworn in, Guerline learned that the members of a Haitian



family who'd spent the entire pandemic in a detention center had finally been paroled to await the results of their asylum case. And in February, Biden reversed Trump's "Remain in Mexico" asylum policy. But Jozef's sense of hope soon turned to despair: Since taking office, Biden has left some of Trump's harshest measures in place, including a complete ban on asylum that Trump issued in March 2020, with Covid-19 as the justification. Under Biden, thousands of Haitian asylum seekers have been expelled before they even had the chance to ask for asylum. In the first two weeks of February, over 900 Haitians were deported, and Jozef says that there are now days when three different deportation flights have taken off for Haiti, which descended into a major political crisis in February when multiple politicians claimed the presidency.

Jozef dreams of a day when the archipelago of detention centers that jails immigrants and their families across the United States will fall. As president, Biden has the broad discretion to release almost everyone currently in ICE detention. Alternatives to detention exist, and Biden has no obligation to continue detaining asylum seekers, families, and children beyond a short processing period. For Jozef, fighting for this future is how she fights for Black lives. She's seen so much suffering inside immigration jails.

But for now, the struggle continues. According to Jozef, on February 1, the first day of Black History Month, ICE forced 102 Haitians onto a plane. Parents held children on their laps; many of the passengers were less than 2 years old. The flight took off from San Antonio, winged its way over the Gulf, and landed in Port-au-Prince. The next flight would take off just days later. **N**

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Liberty's Discontents

The contested history of freedom

BY TYLER STOVALL



ONE OF THE MORE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES to emerge during America's Covid-19 crisis concerns the wearing of face masks. Heralded by public health experts as a vital way to halt the spread of the disease, masks have also been attacked by conservatives as unwarranted restrictions on personal freedom. Donald Trump, who was briefly hospitalized with Covid in the final months of his presidency, defiantly refused to wear a mask in public, and he wasn't alone: Thousands of similarly barefaced supporters attended his rallies, public health consequences be damned. Many Americans have challenged the call to wear masks, and the public health research behind it, as an attack on their rights as citizens of a free country. Last June, protesters stormed a hearing in Palm Beach, Fla., at which public officials were considering whether to require the wearing of masks in public buildings. During

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the fiery session, one woman claimed, “You’re removing our freedoms and stomping on our constitutional rights by these communist dictatorship orders or laws you want to mandate.” As *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist Will Bunch noted after the meeting:

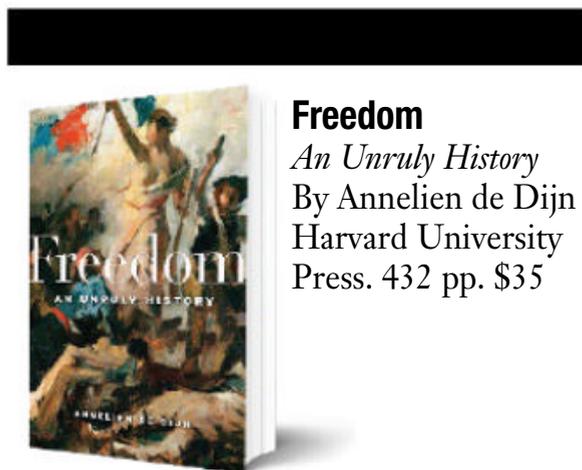
It was another great day for liberty—and yet a horrible one for tens of thousands of Americans who now may die needlessly because so many cling to a warped idea of freedom that apparently means not caring whether others in your community get sick. The reality is that those devil-worshipping elected officials and their mad scientists are trying to mandate masks in public for the same reasons they don’t let 12-year-olds drive and they close bars at 2 A.M.: They actually want to keep their constituents alive.

Give me liberty or give me death, indeed.

Ah, freedom! Few ideals in human history have been so cherished—or so controversial. The United States, in particular, has built its identity around the idea of freedom, from the Bill of Rights, enshrining various freedoms in the law of the land, to the giant statue of Lady Liberty in New York Harbor. And yet—interestingly, for such a foundational ideal—freedom has throughout history represented both the means to an end and the end itself. We wish to be free to pursue our most cherished goals in life, to make money as we will, to share our lives with whom we will, to live where we choose. Freedom empowers our individual desires, but at the same time it structures how we live with other individuals in large, complex societies. As the saying goes, my freedom to swing my fist ends just where someone else’s nose begins; in the words of Isaiah Berlin, “Total liberty for wolves is death to the lambs.” The tension between individual and collective notions of freedom highlights but by no means exhausts the many different approaches to the idea, helping to explain how it has motivated so many struggles throughout human history.

In her ambitious and impressive new book, *Freedom: An Unruly History*, the political historian Annelien de Dijn approaches this massive subject from the standpoint of two conflicting interpretations of freedom and their interactions over 2,500 years of Western history. She starts her study by noting that most people think of freedom as a matter of individual liberties and, in particular, of protection from the intrusions of big government and the state. This is the vision of liberty outlined in the opening paragraph of this essay, one that drives conservative ideologues throughout the West. De Dijn argues, however, that this is not the only conception of freedom and that it is a relatively recent one. For much

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Freedom

An Unruly History

By Annelien de Dijn
Harvard University
Press. 432 pp. \$35

of human history, people thought of freedom not as protecting individual rights but as ensuring self-rule and the just treatment of all. In short, they equated freedom with democracy. “For centuries Western thinkers and political actors identified freedom not with being left alone by the state but with exercising control over the way one is governed,” she writes. Liberty in its classic formulation was thus not individual but collective. Freedom did not entail escaping from government rule but rather making it democratic.

By opening up freedom to its multiple meanings, de Dijn explores an alternate history of the concept from the ancient world to the Age of Revolution to the Cold War, charting those moments when new notions of freedom—such as freedom from government supervision or repression—deviated from its more classical and long-standing definition as self-government. De Dijn thus shows how the rise of modernity brought about the triumph of a new idea of liberty. At the same time, her book invites us to consider the relationship between these two notions of freedom. For de Dijn, this relationship functions as a fundamental opposition, but one can also find in her history enough points in common between them to realize that individual liberty also requires collective freedom. For many, one

cannot be truly free if one’s community or nation isn’t; freedom must belong to one and to all.



De Dijn divides *Freedom* into three roughly equal parts. In the first, she tracks the rise of the idea of freedom in the ancient world, with a focus on the Greek city-states and the Roman Republic; in the second, she examines the revival of this idea in the Renaissance and the Age of Revolution; and in the third, she considers libertarian challenges to the classical notion of freedom and the rise of a new conception focused primarily on individual rights.

For most of this long history, de Dijn is quick to note, the classical idea of freedom as democratic empowerment held sway. The turning point, she contends, came with the reaction against the revolutionary movements of the late 18th century in North America, France, and elsewhere. Conservative intellectuals like Edmund Burke in Britain and liberals like Benjamin Constant in France not only rejected the era’s revolutionary ideology; they also developed a new conception of freedom that viewed the state as its enemy rather than as a tool for its triumph. Eventually, in the modern era, this counterrevolutionary conception of freedom became dominant.

The heart of *Freedom* thus consists of an in-depth exploration of how the demands of democracy gave birth to the original idea of freedom and how, in the face of the democratic revolutions of the late 18th century, the concept was once again remade. In tackling this rather unwieldy subject, de Dijn uses the approach of intellectual history to tell her story, centering her analysis around a series of foundational texts by famous and obscure writers and thinkers alike, ranging from classical scholars like Plato and Cicero through Petrarch and Niccolò Machiavelli to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Burke, John Stuart Mill, and Berlin. She skillfully interweaves this textual analysis with the flow of historical events, vividly illustrating the relationship between the theory and practice of freedom and reminding us that no concept is immune to change over time.

For de Dijn, the story of freedom begins with the Greek city-state, which marked not only the birthplace of democracy but also the origin of the democratic conception of liberty—the ideal of the self-ruling city-state. She

notes that a major part of the originality of Greek thinkers was not just to contrast their freedom with slavery (specifically the slavery of the Persian Empire) but also to reconceptualize freedom as liberation from political rather than personal bondage. By 500 BCE, several Greek city-states, most notably Athens, had begun to develop democratic systems of self-rule in which all male citizens took part in decision-making through general assemblies. De Dijn argues that ancient Greek ideas of freedom developed in this context, emphasizing that freedom came with the ability of people to rule themselves as free men. I use the words “free men” deliberately because women and, of course, enslaved persons had no right to participate in democratic self-government. That inconsistency in fact reinforces de Dijn’s general point: that participation in democracy was the essence of freedom in the ancient world.

In her discussion of freedom in classical Greece and Rome, de Dijn does not fail to note the many objections to this idea of liberty, some from leading philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. For example, in a passage that, by raising the key issue of property rights, seems all too modern, Aristotle noted, “If justice is what the numerical majority decide, they will commit injustice by confiscating the property of the wealthy few.” Gradually, many in Greece turned to another conception of freedom, one that emphasized personal inner strength and self-control over democratic rights. Yet the idea of democratic freedom did not die, even as these notions of personal rights took shape—and this was especially true with the formation of the Roman Republic.

Similar to the city-states of Greece, the Roman Republic thrived for a while as the embodiment of freedom for its male citizens, grounding liberty in the practice of civic democracy. Overthrown by Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, the republic gave way to the Roman Empire, yet historians and philosophers like Livy, Plutarch, and Lucan continued to praise the virtues of the republican freedom fighters. In contrast, the empire—and even more so its successor (at least in terms of the moral imagination), Christianity—divorced freedom from democracy and instead conceived it as personal autonomy and the choice to accept authority. Out of the collapse of the classical city-states and republics came a new ideal of liberty, one no longer centered on collective life and political activity but instead on individual spirituality and a submission to power.

The defeat of democratic freedom by imperial absolutism would play a key role in shaping the revival of the ideal in the city-states of Renaissance Italy, underscoring the link between artistic liberty and self-government. The second part of *Freedom* considers this re-

vival in Europe from the Renaissance to the Age of Revolution. De Dijn notes, for example, that Renaissance thinkers embraced the ancient ideal of democratic liberty as a reaction against the aristocratic royalism of the Middle Ages; the rebirth of knowledge was equally a rebirth of freedom.

Like the Renaissance in general, this renewed idea of democratic freedom arose first in 14th-century Italy, where cities like Venice and especially Florence bore a certain resemblance to the city-states of ancient Greece. Humanists like Petrarch and Michelangelo embraced the idea; even Machiavelli, best known to posterity for advising would-be rulers in *The Prince*, argued in *The Discourses* for a return to the ancient model of freedom. In Northern Europe, writers and thinkers adopted the idea of democratic freedom in opposition to monarchical rule, frequently characterizing the latter as freedom’s opposite, slavery. This was especially true in England, where the Puritan insurgents who executed King Charles I in 1649, at the height of the English Revolution, referred to ancient models of liberty to justify their unprecedented action.

In de Dijn’s analysis, the revival of democratic freedom laid the ground for the Atlantic Revolutions of the late 18th century, which she refers to as the “crowning achievement” of the movement. Her analysis focuses primarily on the American and French revolutions, especially the former. Although she does mention the Haitian Revolution, it would be interesting to see how a fuller consideration of that event, and of the issue of slave revolt in general, might have shaped her analysis.

De Dijn’s consideration of the American and French revolutions continues her emphasis on two themes: the indebtedness of theoreticians and freedom fighters to the classical tradition, and the link between freedom and democracy. John Adams, for example, compared the American revolutionaries with the Greek armies that stood against Persia. A 1790 Paris revival of Vol-

taire’s play *Brutus*, about the most prominent of Caesar’s assassins, won acclaim from the Jacobin public. De Dijn notes how revolutionaries in both countries viewed submission to monarchy as slavery and insisted not just on its abolition but also on the creation of systems of government answerable to the people. She extensively discusses the importance of ideas of natural rights during this era, focusing on key documents like the US Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and she disputes the idea that these constituted individualistic rejections of government interference, arguing instead that they reflect the conviction that civil liberties can exist only in a democratic polity.

Yet if the Atlantic Revolutions marked the apogee of the Renaissance’s call for democratic freedom, they also constituted its grand finale, its swan song. In the final section of *Freedom*, de Dijn explores the historical reaction against democratic freedom that produced the currently dominant idea of liberty as freedom from state interference. This new interpretation arose out of the struggle against the American and French revolutions; as she notes in her introduction, “Ideas about freedom commonplace today...were invented not by the revolutionaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but rather by their critics.”

This is the heart of de Dijn’s argument in this section of *Freedom*, and she bases it on several themes. One is the idea, promoted by the German philosopher Johann August Eberhard, that political and civil liberty oppose rather than reinforce each other, that one could enjoy more individual rights and freedoms in an enlightened monarchy than in a democracy. The violence of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution gave this abstract argument concrete weight, enabling democracy to be portrayed as the bloody rule of the mob and turning many intellectuals against it. Burke was perhaps the best known of these conservative critics, but he was certainly not the only one. Others challenged the idea of majority rule, seeing in it not freedom but a tyranny of the many over the few that was inimical to individual rights. Constant rejected the revolutionaries’ attempts to return to the democratic freedom of the ancient world, arguing instead that, in the modern age, protecting individuals from government was the essence of liberty.

This conflict over the legacy of the Atlantic Revolutions gave rise, de Dijn argues, to modern liberalism, which during much

of the 19th century championed liberty and rejected mass democracy as the source of violent revolution and tyranny. Throughout Europe, liberals supported governments based on suffrage limited to men of property; as the French minister François Guizot famously proclaimed, if people wanted the vote, they should become rich. The upheavals of 1848 reaffirmed the dangers of revolutionary democracy for liberal intellectuals. Ultimately, liberalism merged with movements for popular representation to create that strangest of political hybrids, liberal democracy. As suggested by one of its foundational texts, Mill's great 1859 essay "On Liberty," a system of limited democracy would allow the masses some stake in government while at the same time protecting individual freedoms and property rights.

The 19th century brought new challenges to the individualist idea of freedom, however. In Europe, liberals viewed the rise of socialism as a threat to personal freedom, above all because it threatened the right to own property. In the United States, the Civil War challenged liberal ideas of democracy and property rights by freeing and enfranchising enslaved Black people. Indeed, we might say that the Civil War was framed around contested notions of freedom: In the South, much more than in the North, the war was initially portrayed as a struggle for freedom—not just the freedom to own slaves but more generally the ability of free men to determine their own fate. Likewise, in the North, "free men, free labor, free soil" became a central mantra of the Republican Party, and the war was also understood eventually as a struggle for emancipation.

As de Dijn argues, these challenges would only continue and increase during the early 20th century, leading to the decline of liberalism in the face of new collectivist ideologies like communism and fascism. The era of the two world wars seemed to many the death knell of individual liberty, perhaps even of the individual himself. Even the attempts to preserve freedom, such as the New Deal in the United States, seemed more inspired by the traditions of democratic freedom than by its liberal individualist renderings. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the victory of these forces in World War II would bring about a powerful revival of individualist liberalism.

In the decade after the collapse of Nazi Germany, intellectuals like Berlin and Friedrich Hayek would reemphasize the importance of individual freedom—what Berlin termed "negative liberty"—and their ideas would land on fertile soil in Europe and America. Much of this perspective arose out of the Cold War, with the Soviet Union representing the same kind of threat to conservative ideas of liberty that the Jacobin Republic had 150 years earlier. Cold War liberals reemphasized the principle of liberal democracy as, in effect, limited democracy with protections for individual rights against the passions of the mob.

De Dijn largely concludes her analysis of freedom's history with the aftermath of World War II, but it is worth extending her story to explore the success of this vision of liberty since the 1950s.

In the United States, in particular, the rise of the welfare state that began with the New Deal and culminated with the Great Society prompted a sharp counterreaction, one that framed its politics around the idea of individual liberty and resistance to big government. Traditional conservatives in the Republican Party as well as a growing number of neoconservatives linked their Cold War politics to their opposition to the welfare state, insisting that the Soviet Union's and the United States' experiments in social democracy had eroded freedom in both countries, and they were joined by those resisting the achievements of the civil rights movement, reinforcing the relationship between whiteness and freedom. Triumphant with the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, this anti-egalitarian notion of freedom has dominated the Republican Party and much of American political life ever since. The House Freedom Caucus, to take one current example, owes its existence to thinkers like Burke and Berlin.

Freedom is a challenging and compelling analysis of one of the greatest intellectual and popular movements in the history of humankind. De Dijn writes well, making a powerful argument that is both unusual and hard to resist. She shows how the very nature

of freedom can be interpreted in different ways by different people at different times. More specifically, she challenges conservatives who wrap their ideology in the glorious banner of freedom, revealing the long history of a very different vision of human liberation, one that emphasizes collective self-government over individual privilege. In doing so, she shows how philosophers, kings, and ordinary folk have used (and sometimes misused) the past to build the present and imagine the future.

This is a very rich and complex tale, one that raises interesting questions and suggests further exploration of some of its key themes. Following the lead of one of the great scholars of freedom, Orlando Patterson, de Dijn notes how many in the ancient world and at other periods in his-

tory conceived freedom as the opposite of slavery and yet also built ostensibly free societies that depended on the work of slaves. The denial of voting rights and thus freedom to women during most of history also speaks to this paradox. De Dijn underscores the importance of this contradiction, but it would be useful to know more about how people at the time addressed it. Slavery

has existed throughout much of human history, of course, but it is interesting to note that the new antidemocratic vision of freedom emerged most powerfully during a time characterized not only by the height of the slave trade but also by the thorough racialization of slavery. Could it be that it was easier to divorce freedom and democracy when slavery was no longer an issue for white men and when the vision of rebelling against slavery was upheld not only by ancient Greek fighters but also by Black insurgents in the Haitian Revolution?

In her analysis, de Dijn stresses the triumph of the individualist narrative of freedom in the years after World War II, but it bears remembering that those years also witnessed the unprecedented success of social democratic states, which offered an alternate vision of freedom centered on social rights, redistribution, and working-class power. The success of these states came directly out of the wartime experience; millions who took part in the struggle against fascism fought not



Few ideals have been so cherished—or so contested—as freedom.

just against the Axis but for a more just and democratic world.

Moreover, the postwar era witnessed two of the greatest freedom campaigns in history: the struggles for the decolonization of European empires and the American civil rights movement. Both overwhelmingly cast themselves as crusades for a democratic vision of freedom. Julius K. Nyerere, the founding father of an independent Tanzania, wrote no fewer than six books with the word “freedom” in the title. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, arguably the greatest oration in 20th-century America, ended with the ringing words “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!” One should note that resistance to racial equality played a central role in the formation of contemporary conservative ideology, so that to an important extent, the movement for individual freedom was a movement for white freedom.

Finally, one should consider the possibility that, at times, de Dijn’s two ideas of freedom may have points in common. In 2009, at the dawn of the Tea Party movement, a right-wing protester reportedly shouted, “Keep your government hands off my Medicare!” This statement, grounded in ignorance of the fact that Medicare is a government program, prompted much derision. But we should take a second look at what this suggests about the relationship between these two contrasting ideas of freedom. The civil rights movement, to take one example, was a struggle for individual rights not based on skin color and, at the same time, for the protection of those rights by a more democratic government. To take another example, in June 2015, the movement for LGBTQ rights achieved one of its greatest victories in the United States with the Supreme Court’s legalization of same-sex marriage. But did this represent the triumph of a democratic movement for freedom or the destruction of government restrictions on the rights of individuals to marry? In other words, isn’t protecting individual freedom precisely a key point of modern democracy?

It is to de Dijn’s credit that *Freedom: An Unruly History* forces us to think about such important questions. At a time when the very survival of both freedom and democracy seems uncertain, books like this are more important than ever, as our societies contemplate both the heritage of the past and the prospects for the future. **N**



More Than Love

Kazuo Ishiguro’s futuristic inquiries into the present

BY KATIE FITZPATRICK



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I KEPT A LARGE BASKET OF STUFFED animals, Beanie Babies, and Cabbage Patch Kids in the corner of my room. The Cabbage Patch Kids were hand-me-downs from my older sisters, and they had little outfits knitted, in an unusually sentimental gesture, by my grandma. There were too many for me to play with regularly, and I would sometimes lie awake looking at the basket and feeling guilty about their neglect. Once or twice, I assuaged this guilt by dragging the basket to the center of my room, sitting down next to it, and taking out one doll at a time. “I love you,” I would tell each in turn. “I’m sorry I can’t play with you more often.” Then I would put it back and take out the next, knowing that this would never be enough to make up for the weeks and months of abandonment.

Klara and the Sun—British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro’s latest novel, and his first since winning the Nobel Prize in 2017—is narrated by a robot named Klara, created

to serve as an AF, or Artificial Friend, to lonely children. The novel begins in an AF store, where Klara spends her days observing the passersby outside, trying to understand the human world she will one day join. While she is hopeful about her future, readers glimpse what might await AFs like her: Josie, who eventually buys Klara, promises her that she will live in her bedroom, “not in some cupboard or anything.” Later, at a party, two teenage boys threaten to throw Klara across the room,

saying that their own Artificial Friend “lands on her feet every time” and hinting at the abuse many AFs may experience.

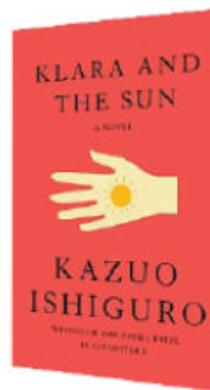
Although the early chapters focus on the exploitation of AFs, the novel gradually redirects our attention from Klara to Josie. Why is she lonely enough to want an AF in the first place? Ishiguro reveals that Josie too has been the subject of scientific experimentation. Along with other children from her social class, she has been mysteriously altered in order to become smarter, so as to be more competitive in the college admissions process. This “lifting,” as it is called, seems to have been directed by her mother, Chrissie, who hopes to secure Josie’s future in a world populated by the swelling ranks of the “post-employed.”

Despite its futuristic premise, *Klara and the Sun* is aimed at our present. It explores many of the subjects that fill our news feeds, from artificial intelligence to meritocracy. Yet its real political power lies not in these topical references but in its quietly eviscerating treatment of love. Through Klara, Josie, and Chrissie, Ishiguro shows how care is often intertwined with exploitation, how love is often grounded in selfishness. And this dynamic is not only interpersonal but central to today’s politics as well. Love, Ishiguro reminds us, is not always an antidote to exploitation and repression; it may even be the thing that makes us complicit in large-scale violence.

Ishiguro’s fiction has often explored the subject of complicity, but he has usually set these stories in a real or counterhistorical past. *An Artist of the Floating World*, published in 1986, features an aging artist reflecting on his participation in the Japanese imperialist movement. *The Remains of the Day*, which came out three years later, tells the story of a British butler who realizes that he has spent his life in the loyal service of a Nazi sympathizer. More recent works have also explored the forms of self-delusion that allow violence to flourish, but they’ve shifted from historical Britain or Japan to worlds of Ishiguro’s own invention. In his 2005 book, *Never Let Me Go*, he imagines a counterfactual 1990s England that triumphs over disease by producing a subordinate class of human clones whose organs are harvested. The novel is set at a boarding school where clones are raised by reformist liberal caretakers who give their young lives a veneer of normalcy but do nothing to challenge the organ-harvesting program that will eventually kill them.

Of all of Ishiguro’s previous novels, *Never Let Me Go* is the one readers are likeliest to connect with *Klara and the Sun*. The narrator of *Never Let Me Go*, a clone named Kathy H., can be seen as the template for Klara. Both have been taught to please the people who exploit them, and

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Klara and the Sun

A Novel

By Kazuo Ishiguro
Knopf. 320 pp. \$28

both are keen to perform well at such a task. In both novels, readers are presented with a similar narrative structure: Ishiguro unspools his plot gradually by using narrators who themselves are only just coming to understand the worlds in which they live. In a particularly nice touch, the latter novel restricts its metaphors to Klara’s own restricted range of experience. While still living in the AF store, she reflects that her shifting emotions are “like the shadows made across the floor by the ceiling lamps after the grid went down.” Once she moves to Josie’s house, the sky is described as “the color of the lemons in the fruit bowl” or “the gray of the slate chopping boards.”

The differences between *Never Let Me Go* and this novel are as revealing as the similarities. Klara is almost immediately established as inhuman, but Ishiguro spends the rest of the novel humanizing her, helping us chart the development of her own complex inner life. In *Never Let Me Go*, we follow the opposite trajectory: When we meet Kathy and the other clones at the start of that book, we have little reason to believe they are anything other than normal human children; it is only as the story unfolds that we learn that they are clones and, as such, are viewed as inhuman by their society.

Ishiguro’s study of the way we dehumanize others—even those who are essential to our survival—has led critics to explore the radical underpinnings of his work. Writing

in the *New Left Review*, Nancy Fraser notes that the novel should remind us of “those whom our social order...treats as spare parts—as sweatshop labour, as breeders, as disposable workers.” Mimi Wong adds that *Never Let Me Go* is a “masterpiece of racial metaphor.” While the race of Kathy and the other clones is never mentioned (and the film version casts them as white), Wong argues that their subordination mirrors both historical and contemporary forms of racism.

Klara and the Sun also allows us to draw similar parallels between Ishiguro’s science fiction and real-world exploitation. But there is one striking difference in the way these books depict oppression: In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones’ exploitation by humans hinges on people’s ability to dehumanize and forget them. Their lives are invisible to those who will one day use their organs. But in *Klara and the Sun*, the AFs’ exploitation hinges on people’s ability to humanize and know them. The AFs are harvested precisely for the kinds of human interactions they provide their human owners. While both novels consider the exploitation of so-called disposable workers, this book focuses on those we exploit primarily for emotional labor and care work—a timely commentary during a pandemic in which the essential workers who care for us are too often treated as disposable.

Anne Whitehead notes that in *Never Let Me Go*, empathy produces cruelty as much as care; empathizing with those close to us may be our justification for harming others. In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro makes a related argument: When our affection for others emerges from our own loneliness and desire for connection, it may never shed itself of selfishness and violence. Josie empathizes with Klara enough to solicit her consent (“I don’t want you coming against your will,” she tells her at the store) and to treat her as a confidante and friend, but this kind of empathy is not enough to undo the uneven basis of their relationship. If *Never Let Me Go* demonstrates how easily we can exploit those we never have to see, *Klara and the Sun* shows how easily we can exploit even those we claim to love.

At the end of the book, Klara reflects back on a mad scientist character named Mr. Capaldi, who had “searched and searched” to discover any special essence that could distinguish human beings

from AFs. Klara concludes that he was “searching in the wrong place.” There is “something very special,” she realizes, but it isn’t something inside us—a soul, a spirit, a consciousness. Instead, it is inside those who love us. Klara delivers this moral with full, nauseating sincerity, but it is in fact doubly tragic. First, this moral reminds us that Klara herself has been excluded from acts and feelings of genuine love, and second, it signals that she has not really understood the other characters in the novel, whose expressions of love are deeply flawed.

The limitations of human love are perhaps most visible in the relationship between Josie and her mother. Klara often tries to side with Josie, helping to steer their tense Sunday breakfasts away from “danger topics” like schoolwork. But Klara also becomes complicit in Chrissie’s cruelty toward Josie—a dynamic that first becomes apparent during a day trip to a waterfall.

Josie’s lifting has left her mysteriously ill and often bedridden. For this reason, she is thrilled when Chrissie promises to take her and Klara to a favorite hiking spot. But shortly before the much-anticipated trip, Chrissie tells Josie that she is too sick to go and takes Klara alone instead. Then, at the waterfall, Chrissie asks Klara if she will imitate Josie. In Josie’s voice, Klara tells Chrissie, “It’s okay, Mom, don’t worry. I’ll get well soon.” Klara is not only an artificial friend to Josie, then, but a substitute for her. To Chrissie, Josie herself proves to be a kind of doll, cherished but easily left behind or replaced.

The one meaningful relationship in *Klara and the Sun*—the one hopeful beacon of love—is found between Josie and a boy named Rick. They are neighbors who have grown up together and vowed to love each other forever, even though Josie is lifted and Rick is not. In a beautiful set of scenes, the two communicate their feelings to each other through what they call the “bubble game.” Josie, lying ill in her bed, draws figures—of herself, him, others—and passes them down to Rick, who sits on the floor at her bedside, adding speech bubbles to the drawings. Through this game, they discover the places where their interpretations of the world align and talk about the places where they do not. They discover a love that is defined not by one person impressing their desires onto another but by mutual understanding.

One of Josie’s drawings is covered with a tangled mesh of sharp-

looking objects, with a “tranquil space” in a bottom corner where “the figures of two small people could be seen, their backs to passers-by, walking away hand in hand.” Klara is moved by this image, and she eventually comes to believe that Josie will be healed, if only Rick’s love is strong enough. She’s right, in one way. In the end, Josie does get better, but she and Rick drift apart. Unable to attend the same college after Josie’s lifting, they “show kindness to each other” but are “now preparing such different futures.” Even love cannot transcend the dynamics of class.

Rick’s final conversation with Klara may also lead us to wonder how real their love ever was. “Josie and I will always be together at some level,” he explains. “I know I’ll always keep searching for someone just like her.” One might, at first, read this as a romantic sentiment. But it also suggests that, for Rick, Josie is substitutable. Like Chrissie, who has Klara act as Josie when her daughter is sick, Rick will find someone else who can play the role of Josie in his life. If Klara concludes that the love of others makes human beings special, then it is disturbing to see that those who love Josie see little unique about her.

One of the most startling moments in *Klara and the Sun* comes when Rick’s mother, Helen, accuses Josie’s father—casually, over sushi—of having “fascistic leanings.” Typically, fascism in an Ishiguro novel is a bit like sex in a Henry James novel: a pervasive presence, but one that can only be hinted at or circled around. Indeed, the characters gathered at the table react to this damning charge much as one might react to an unexpected sexual joke. “Mum, for God’s sake,” Rick sighs, while Josie’s father reminds Helen that they cannot have such a conversation “in front of the kids.”

In earlier works like *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro treated fascist violence as a half-repressed, unspeakable memory. Situated at what Francis Fukuyama called “the end of history,” these novels view the

violent clash of ideologies as a thing of the past. As Ishiguro explained in his Nobel lecture, his generation “grew up against the backdrop of the great clash...between capitalism and communism and witnessed what many of us believed to be a happy conclusion. But now, looking back, the era since the fall of the Berlin Wall seems like one of complacency,” one in which war, inequality, austerity, far-right ideologies, and “racism, in its traditional forms and in its modernized, better-marketed versions,” have been left to fester and grow. *Klara*

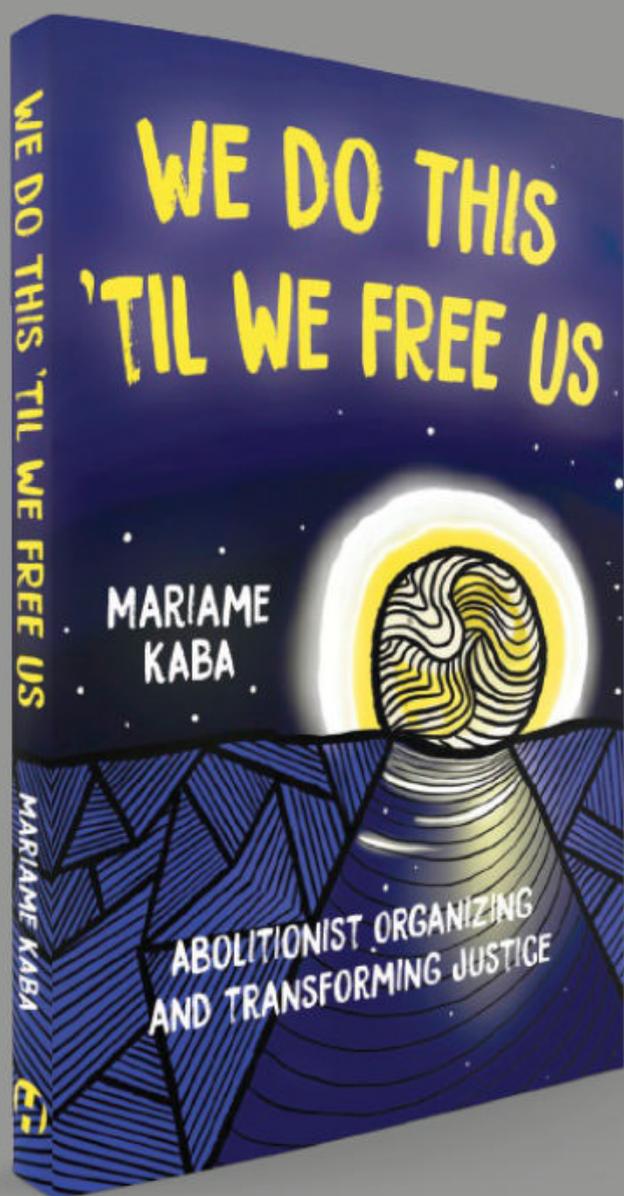
and *the Sun* is Ishiguro’s first post-Brexit, post-Trump novel, and it tackles rising far-right ideologies head-on; fascism, he suggests, is no longer unspeakable.

Indeed, it is only barely disavowed by the novel’s liberal characters. While Josie and Rick eat sushi with their parents, Rick’s mother explains that she once loved, and perhaps still loves, a man with similar fascistic leanings. “He always has done though I always tried not to notice...,” she trails off. For his part, Josie’s father defends his fascist allegiances by explaining that they give him a sense of belonging and community: “I’m sharing my life with some very fine people,” he explains. This may or may not be a reference to the supposedly “very fine people” Donald Trump saw marching for white supremacy in Charlottesville, Va., but either way, the exchange between these two characters demonstrates how our own loneliness may draw us toward violence or cause us not to notice it.

Ultimately, *Klara and the Sun* warns us against any naive faith in the power of love. We cannot trust that Rick’s love for Josie or Josie’s love for Klara will undo—or even challenge—the social hierarchies and the structures of power that define the modern world. Instead, we must do the harder work of recognizing the places where affection and violence produce each other, where love distracts us from fascism, where care shades into exploitation. *Klara and the Sun* is a story as much about our own world as about any imagined future, and it reminds us that violence and dehumanization can also come wrapped in the guise of love. ■



***Klara and the Sun* is a story as much about our own world as about any imagined future.**



New York Times Bestseller

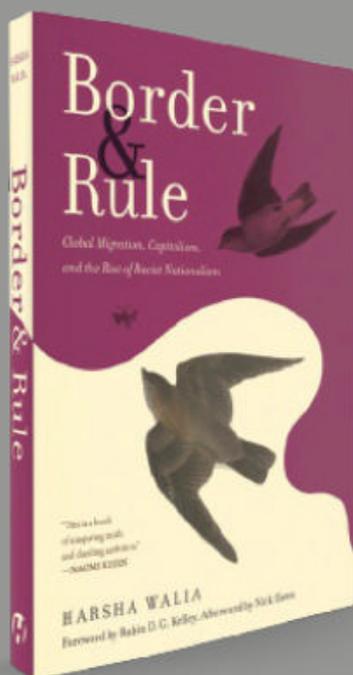
“THIS IS GENERATIONS-DEFINING.”

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“THANK GOODNESS FOR THIS URGENT BOOK.”

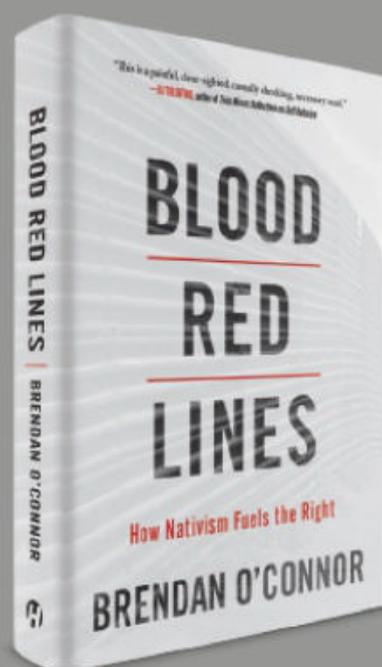
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—Nick Estes



The Two Narratives

Ami Ayalon's political evolution

BY RAJA SHEHADEH

AMI AYALON'S *FRIENDLY FIRE* IS A BOOK THAT SITS UNEASILY between two narratives. In one, Ayalon, a former director of the Israeli security service Shin Bet, repeats the story that Israel tells the world: that the failure to achieve peace in the region is due to Palestinian terrorism and the refusal to accept Israel's existence. In the other, he offers a personal account of how his understanding of that story—and of the Palestinians themselves—has changed drastically over time.

In telling the first story, Ayalon gives the impression that all would have been well if only the Palestinians hadn't refused to come to terms with the Jewish state. But what makes *Friendly Fire* a unique contribution to understanding what is taking place in contemporary Israel, and what needs to be done to achieve peace, is its author's audacity and readiness to confront the myopia of this narrative and consider its shortcomings.

Who is Ami Ayalon? For a long time, he was a loyal member of the Israeli military and security ser-

vices, someone who had eagerly bought into the assumptions on which the state is based and its history narrated. For 20 years, Ayalon served in Flotilla 13, the Israeli version of the Navy SEALs, and he describes himself during this period as a person for whom "the Palestinian militants were mere targets which [he] took without flinching." He then served as a commander of the Israeli Navy before being appointed chief of the Shabak, also known as Shin Bet.

Born in Tiberias in 1945, Ayalon currently lives in the northern moshav, or set-

tlement, of Kerem Maharal. The moshav, he tells us, was once the prosperous Palestinian village of Ijzim, and he in fact lives in a house that belonged to a Palestinian. Yet even though the Galilee has a large Palestinian population, he admits that he rarely sees any Palestinians on a daily basis.

For Ayalon, the fact that his moshav was built on the ruins of a Palestinian village is merely one episode in a long history of displacement. Throughout the region, he writes, "you can't dig a hole without turning up some trace from eight strata of time. Canaanites, Israelites from the First and Second Temple periods, Persians, Greeks, Byzantines, Arabs, and Ottomans all established settlements in our area." He tells us this so that we won't worry too much about this pattern of displacement—and yet, of course, the Palestinians of Ijzim lived there only 72 years ago, not thousands of years earlier. Their displacement is not ancient news but part of an immediate reality. They, along with their entire nation, are deprived of not only their homes but also a future.

To Ayalon's credit, part of the story of *Friendly Fire* is the way in which he eventually comes to terms with this fact. By the end of the book, he acknowledges that Israel's salvation will only be achieved when it confronts this past. But before doing so, he gives us a history of why his myopia persisted for as long as it did.

Fighting in the War of 1967, Ayalon and his comrades subscribed to the Jabotinsky doctrine of the "iron wall": They had to continue fighting until their strength forced their enemies to accept Israel's existence as a *fait accompli*. This sense of righteousness persisted after the war: Traveling through the occupied West Bank, Ayalon failed to see the Palestinians living there, just as he had failed to see the Palestinians living in the Galilee. Instead, all he saw were rocks, trees, and empty land to settle. In fact, he admits that the only thing that kept him from becoming a settler himself was his military service. "Someone," he explains, "had to defend all that liberated land."

For Ayalon, the new settlements represented a continuation of the idealism that he'd been raised with. Israel's occupation of Palestinian land was part of a larger historical project of settlement, not unlike the earlier kibbutz movement. One of the common assumptions that his book dispels is that the settlement of the West Bank was primarily a Likud party project. As Ayalon tells us, while it was true that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin couldn't say

enough about Judea and Samaria, the biblical names for the West Bank, the establishment of settlements in the region was not a project of the Israeli right but rather of the Labor government that preceded Likud's rise to power. The first settlements were inaugurated by Labor immediately after the occupation in 1967. Under the administration of Levi Eshkol, with the secular Moshe Dayan as defense minister, Israel "quietly created the space for settlements in direct violation of international law explicitly forbidding an occupying power from building on conquered territory," Ayalon writes.

The settlements drew support from the left as well as from the right. Early settlements, such as Ofra, received guidance from members of the Labor kibbutz Merom Golan, people who knew "how to create facts on the ground." Ofra, which is not far from Ramallah, where I live, was built mainly on privately owned Palestinian land, not only in violation of international law but also of many Israeli rules.

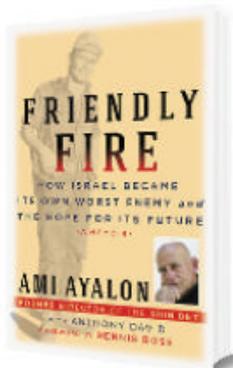
Ayalon admits that had he been in the government then, he would have done the same thing: "The more settlements, the less likely a future American president would force us to hand back the land of our forefathers to our enemies like Eisenhower had done in 1956 with the Sinai Peninsula." But even so, he reminds us that his own involvement in the settlement movement would not have been motivated by "Zionist-socialist New Man ideology nor the post-Holocaust ethos of Never Again." Rather, "it all came down to the thrill of adventure and danger, the intoxicating adrenaline of the fight—the desire to push our limits. Swimming faster, diving deeper, running farther, and shooting less out of careful deliberation than instinct and intuition constituted the formula for survival. In our line of work, if you hesitated, your target would drop you."



One exceptional feature of *Friendly Fire* is that Ayalon, by charting his own transformation, articulates the range of attitudes many Israelis have toward their Palestinian neighbors. For example, before the first intifada, the author, like many Israelis, only saw satisfied, contented people in Gaza and thought that the occupation was benefiting them. "Unlike the French in Algeria, we weren't colonists; we were liberating land that had belonged to us since antiquity. As for the Palestinians, we were 'enlightened conquerors.' We built them universities and roads and introduced modern agriculture." Only later did he come to realize how mistaken he was, how his prior view of the occupation was an example of colonial wishful thinking.

So, with time, Ayalon's position began to change. In Gaza during the first intifada, he was riding in a military jeep that came under a hail of stones as it drove

Raja Shebadeh is a founder of *Al-Haq* and the author of *Strangers in the House*, *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*, and *Going Home*.



Friendly Fire

How Israel Became Its Own Worst Enemy and the Hope for Its Future

By Ami Ayalon, with Anthony David

Steerforth Press.

320 pp. \$27

through a camp. Later that night, he reflected on what had happened. He remembered a boy not older than 15 gazing at him with hatred: "His look which felt like a declaration of war struck me harder than the shrapnel." It was then that he saw himself through the eyes of this youngster. "On the kibbutz I was raised to hate the oppressor and to value human dignity and freedom above all else, and according to those values I had to agree with the boy in the camp: I was a hateful occupier and oppressor of millions of Palestinians who aspired to political independence," he writes.

Later, his experiences "in and out of the Shabak interrogation room" shattered his "lifelong preconceptions about the Palestinians." His time in the Shabak forced him to realize that for peace to be truly achieved, Israel needed to stop dehumanizing the Palestinians. His reckoning with this fact was so total that he insisted to his peers that the Palestinian militants he'd once described as "mere targets" must be seen as human beings, even if he still situated their humanity within the context of Israel's struggle "to end terrorism." As Ayalon observes, if Israel wanted to end terrorism, "we couldn't continue regarding them as eternal enemies, and we needed to stop dehumanizing them as animals on the prowl.

They are people who desire, and deserve, the same national rights we have."

Specific incidents during his time in the Shabak only deepened this view. When Ayalon visits the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and talks to their leaders, what he hears worries him. "Reading about the settlers and their mindset was one thing," he discovers; sitting across the table from the likes of Noam Livnat, "who truly believed that God had given him power over Arabs," was something entirely different. It was the first time, Ayalon writes, that he had ever heard anyone defend what can only be described as apartheid: two sets of laws, rules, and standards and two separate infrastructures. "If Arabs behaved themselves and acquiesced to our dominion, we'd allow them access to water and a bit of electricity," he recalls Livnat saying. "The fact that we hadn't yet driven them over the Jordanian border was, to his mind, a sign of our benevolence."

Yehuda Etzion, another settler, tells Ayalon that he wants to destroy the Dome of the Rock, Islam's third most holy site, and replace it with the Third Temple. But it was Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira's theocratic plot to change the laws of Israel that left the strongest impression. Shapira hoped to "turn an Arab living in the Land of Israel into a *ger*, or resident alien," a plan that Ayalon feared would undermine Israel's legal system. After hearing from these settlers, he could only conclude that "these are the people we should be really afraid of."

As shocking as their pronouncements were, what finally led to Ayalon's change of heart was the Oslo Accords and their aftermath. He came to agree with former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Dan Shomron, who, at the beginning of the first intifada, told Israeli politicians that "Palestinian terrorism wasn't a military phenomenon and as such the army couldn't defeat it. All the army could do was fight back the flames to create breathing room for the politicians to launch a political process."

After Oslo, Ayalon repeated Shomron's message whenever his advice was sought: "Ultimately, ending terrorism depends on politics." In his view, the accords had made Al Fatah, the old enemy, into a partner. Now Israel's enemies were the Islamist groups, primarily Hamas. And yet even here, despite Israel's military might, it

would become clear that politics, not force, was the only thing that could lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In the end, Ayalon believed, only the leadership of Yasir Arafat could defeat Hamas. Moreover, if the Palestinian Authority worked with Israel to fight Hamas, then Israel would have to follow through on the terms of the Oslo Accords and withdraw from over 90 percent of the occupied territories. While the Shabak was stuck in the past, the rest of Israel was ready for a new era of politics—perhaps even peace.

In the course of his awakening, Ayalon began to wonder why it had taken so long. “Why hadn’t we officers been handed translations of [the Palestinian declaration of independence] in 1988?” he writes. And what if Israel had “recognized Arafat’s strategic shift ten years earlier?” Might the country “not be facing Hamas’s suicide bombers”?

One answer is telling. Writing about the uncertain years of the late 1980s and early ’90s, Ayalon discusses how then-Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, through the military government in the occupied territories, secretly supported Hamas in the hope that the religious group would undercut the nationalists in the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Israeli establishment was not ready for the politics of peace, including its members who later claimed such a mantle.



nce Ayalon left the Shabak, he became outspoken about the failure of Israel’s establishment to understand the conflict and provide Israelis with security. Often making himself unpopular, particularly in interviews conducted during the

second intifada, he told the Israeli public what it did not like to hear.

In one interview with TV news host Shelly Yachimovich, Ayalon insisted that “our instinctive resort to disproportionate force...has created the opposite of what we want to achieve. We jeopardize our own security each time, in the name of security, our soldiers gun down Palestinian stone-throwers, and our actions fuel calls for revenge.” He added that “when Palestinians felt that preventing terrorism would lead to the end of our occupation and the establishment of their own state, they cooperated with us. What most Palestinians sought, more than anything, wasn’t our blood—they just wanted to trust that the Israeli government would end the occupation and allow them to be free. And we’ve given them little reason to trust us.”

Yet despite all his efforts, Ayalon admits, his advice “had little long-term institutional effect on the Shabak and none on the army.” The killings continued. This led Ayalon to venture into politics himself. Once he became convinced that the Israeli government, and in particular the Shabak, would continue as before, he joined up with the Palestinian academic Sari Nusseibeh to launch a new initiative: a pair of organizations, the Palestinian People’s Campaign for Peace and Democracy and its Israeli counterpart, the People’s Voice.

The twin groups’ strategy was to change the direction of the conflict by taking diplomacy out of the smoky back rooms and into the streets. Their platform included the following principles: There would be two states, for two nations, based on the June 4, 1967, borders, with selective acre-to-acre land swaps to benefit both peoples. Palestinian refugees would mainly return to the demilitarized state of Palestine, while the Jewish settlements that remained in Palestinian territory would be evacuated. Israel would explicitly acknowledge its role in the suffering of the Palestinian people and participate in an international fund to compensate Palestinian refugees for their 1948 losses. Once a peace deal was signed, both sides would renounce all other claims. Jerusalem would be the open capital of both states, with the Arab neighborhoods under Palestinian control and the Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli control.

Reading Ayalon’s revealing book, one can see that he has come a long way. Perhaps his most commendable conclusion is that Israel will never achieve peace until “we change the narrative about the past and admit to ourselves that the Palestinians have a right to their own country alongside Israel, and on land we claim as ours.” And yet while Ayalon has revised his beliefs, he also remains unwilling to take responsibility for his role in the conflict between the two peoples in the first place, whether through his work in the Shabak or his participation in the murder of Abu Jihad, a cofounder of Al Fatah, in 1988.

At one point in the book, Ayalon shrugs at the possibility that the International Criminal Court in The Hague will try people like him for the crime of torture—a practice often used by the Shabak, even though Ayalon personally believed “that torture produced bad intelligence [and] dehumanized the torturer.” This makes me wonder whether a man who has made such a huge shift in his perspective toward Palestinians and their history is really willing to take responsibility for his past in an organization that he calls “the sewer.” On one matter, Ayalon is certainly right: For peace to be achieved, we need politics. But for politics to be achieved, we also need contrition from those, like Ayalon, whose crimes still haunt the Palestinian people.

BEYOND THE CORPORATE MEDIA’S LIMITED SPECTRUM: THE NEWS THAT DIDN’T MAKE THE NEWS

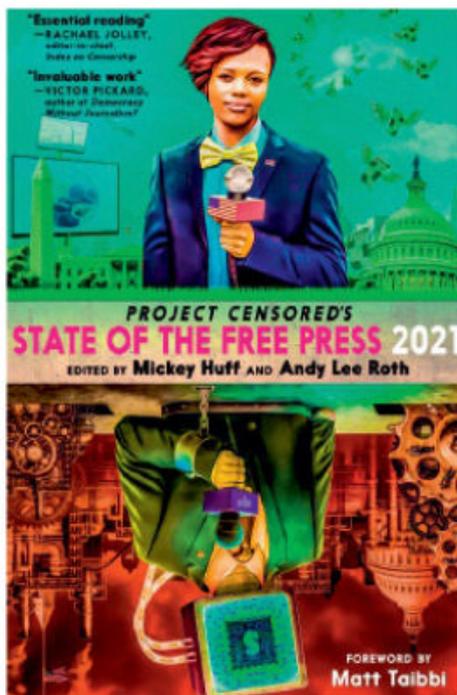
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A Collective Experience

Can a new film capture the revolutionary energies of the Black Panthers?

BY STEPHEN KEARSE

IN THE SUMMER OF 1967, FBI DIRECTOR J. EDGAR HOOVER issued the first in a series of memos outlining how the bureau would deal with what it deemed “black nationalist hate groups.” The memos, sent to the FBI offices participating in Cointelpro, the bureau’s covert (and illegal) counterintelligence program, are as infuriating and terrifying as they are outlandish. They claimed that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee were “violence-prone.” They declared that the FBI must prevent “a true black revolution” and likened a potential coalition of domestic Black political groups to Kenya’s Mau Mau rebellion. They even posited that Martin Luther King Jr. and Elijah Muhammad were peers, as if there were no substantial differences in their outlooks and tactics. The memos were more a racist projection than a work of intelligence.

Judas and the Black Messiah takes its title from these memos, in which Hoover warns of a “messiah who could unify, and electrify the militant black nationalist movement.” The film, directed by Shaka King, focuses on the FBI infiltration of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party. Plotted like a thriller, the biopic uses the operation to ex-

plore the Black Power era and condemn the government apparatus that snuffed it out.

The titular messiah is Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya), the charismatic chairman of the chapter, who was the group’s spokesperson and one of its key organizers until his assassination by Chicago police working with the FBI. Judas is William O’Neal (LaKeith Stanfield), an informant who provided the information that led to Hampton’s death. The juxtaposition of these opposing visions of Blackness—radicalism versus complicity—powers the film, staging Hampton’s death and O’Neal’s deceit as a showdown between a Black revolutionary and a Black saboteur. When the filmmaker Terence Nance was shown an early cut of the film, he reportedly responded by say-

ing, “It kind of makes you question, which ancestor are you?”

The stark binary of savior and traitor has mixed results. In some ways, it makes the story juicier and more propulsive. King structures the story as a gritty thriller, introducing us to O’Neal on the night he stages a carjacking and following him as he’s recruited by the FBI, welcomed by the Panthers, and later swept up by the consequences of his actions. Stanfield’s performance is deliciously squirrely, swinging between comedy, bluster, and confusion. He imbues O’Neal with an intense longing, treating the mole’s dueling allegiances like unrequited loves. Though the FBI uses O’Neal’s criminal record as a cudgel, the scenes where he interacts with his handler (Jesse Plemons), mostly in a swanky restaurant, feel like illicit rendezvous. And when O’Neal is with Hampton, he’s conspicuously in awe of the man’s words.

Hampton, whom Kaluuya brings to life with fiery confidence, leads a steadier life—but he too flirts with major change. As he educates new recruits, gives speeches, and traverses Chicago to form alliances with other political groups like the Young Lords and the Young Patriots Organization, he’s pursued by Deborah Johnson (Dominique Fishback), who is drawn to the Panthers after one of his outreach efforts. In one especially magical scene, they bond over a Malcolm X speech playing on vinyl, quoting the recording to each other with wide, conspiratorial grins. As they grow closer, Johnson questions the constant mentions of death and violence in Hampton’s speeches. Her conviction that he choose life over martyrdom is directed at the audience as well as Hampton. These competing threads of subterfuge, tenderness, and creative license help *Judas and the Black Messiah* escape the usual staidness of biopics, which tend to exalt historical figures and traffic in hagiography rather than storytelling.

But the film is curiously circumspect about the experience of Black Power. In its fixation on the FBI’s efforts to ensnare Hampton, it presents the Panthers more as a target than a party, never quite inhabiting their perspective. Beyond Hampton’s arresting lectures and prescient coalition-building, scant attention is paid to the inner workings of the Chicago chapter or the national organization. Allusions to Panthers in exile

(Eldridge Cleaver), incarcerated leaders (Huey P. Newton), and dead comrades (Bunchy Carter) are so fleeting they feel like minor details.

And then there's the film's uneven interest in the experiences of the members who flank Hampton as he moves about the city. While one real-life Panther, Jake Winters, is mourned in a touching conversation between Hampton and Winters's mother after he is killed in a police shootout, another Panther, the fictional Judy Harmon, is never mentioned again after surviving another intense gun battle with Chicago police. Meanwhile, a leader of the Illinois chapter, Bobby Rush, appears throughout the movie but says little. At one point, as Hampton contemplates his return to prison, he asks, "Is the party about me or is it about the people?" The film tacitly chooses Hampton.

Historical dramas, by their nature, are filled with omissions. But it's striking that the film has so little interest in Black Power as a collective experience—how it empowered groups and communities that were otherwise ignored, how it competed with other political ideologies, how it was pursued differently by the Panthers' many contemporaries, some of whom the Panthers disparaged. The film rejects the notion of Hampton as a messiah, but it declines to advance or explore another framework.

Betrayal is a constant theme in films about the Panthers and other Black militants, from Mario Van Peebles's ham-fisted *Panther* to Tanya Hamilton's haunted *Night Catches Us* to Spike Lee's clumsy *BlackKkKlansman*, which begins with the infiltration by law enforcement of a Black radical group. Even the Afrofuturist superhero fantasy *Black Panther* is fueled by this theme: The rakish villain Erik Killmonger is motivated by the death of his father, who was killed for betraying the Wakandan state. While there's clearly precedent for this motif—the informants the FBI hired to infiltrate the Panthers were largely Black—*Judas and the Black Messiah* highlights how reductive the theme can be. In focusing on O'Neal's betrayal, the film narrows the FBI's gross abuse of power into a character study.

For all of the movie's nods to the fullness of the Chicago Panthers, it's O'Neal who drives the narrative, tonally and thematically. Alongside the standard beats of an undercover-cop story—planting evidence, wearing a wire, nearly being outed—sequences from O'Neal's real-life appearance in the civil rights documentary series *Eyes on the Prize* are reenacted and used as interludes throughout. Shot with stark, bright lighting that contrasts with the rich, dark hues of the rest of the film, these moments emphasize O'Neal's duplicity, reminding us that he will survive all the chaos he's helping to foment. This all makes for gripping psychodrama and riveting plotting, but too often it places O'Neal alone in the center of the turmoil.

The film nods at the other Panthers' struggles, and flashes of personality emerge in asides and

deviations from the plot, from one Panther antagonizing a cop by reading Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" to another heroically confronting two officers conducting an unwarranted pat-down of some Black men. But only O'Neal and Hampton feel whole. The rest of the Panthers—with the exception of Johnson, who visibly hardens over the course of the film thanks to sterling acting by Fishback—seem like props rather than characters. They're often filmed surrounding Hampton rather than interacting with him, as though they were his vassals, not his comrades.

In an interview, King argued that O'Neal's waffling makes for a more compelling story. "Fred Hampton came into this world fully realized," he said. "He knew what he was doing at a very young age. Whereas William O'Neal is in a conflict; he's confused. And that's always going to make for a more interesting protagonist." But while the tension and intrigue of O'Neal's changing loyalties propel the story, the singularity of his experience grows contrived and narrows the political scope of the narrative being told. Centering on O'Neal, the film overvalues the weight of his particular betrayal and ignores the larger story of the Panthers and the structures that were devoted to their failure.

T

he film's main mode is restraint, a style that occasionally suits its depiction of the government's leering gaze. A movie about the Black Panthers would seemingly lend itself to spectacle and provocation, but King insists on *vérité* and immersion. Every galvanizing Hampton speech is a spatial experience as well as a rhetorical one, the camera roving

the rooms and crowds the chairman addresses. As he deplures fascism and advocates for community power, we see faces scrunching and lighting up and grimacing, bodies moving, fists raised. Hampton was a phenomenal public speaker, so this is to be expected. But King gets something else too: In the scene in which Hampton returns to Chicago from prison and gives a riveting homecoming speech, the editing highlights the feedback between speaker and audience. Switching between tableaux and profiles, the room shrinks and expands in cadence with Hampton's inflections, accenting the communal and individual impacts of his words. The sequence feels designed to insist that Hampton was not the center of gravity, not the messiah.

Violence, too, is used cautiously. When cops assault the Panther headquarters, the shootout is punctuated by reaction shots from a crowd of enraged onlookers. King clearly casts the cops as encroachers

but doesn't revel in the Panthers' holding their ground, instead emphasizing the one-sidedness of the exchange. When the Panthers give up and are brutalized while being handcuffed, the

camera cuts away from the blows and lingers on the concerned faces of the witnesses. Compared with a film like Kathryn Bigelow's *Detroit*, in which police brutality is gratuitously at its center, King makes clear that the purpose of the scene is state power rather than Black affliction. The move tacitly anticipates a viewer already inundated with images of Black death.

The movie's climax, a nighttime police raid that leaves Hampton and another Panther dead, is just as controlled. There's no dwelling on the beliefs of the perpetrators, who are obscured in darkness as they sweep through Hampton's apartment, guns blazing. There's no lingering on the bullet holes that pock the walls. The victims, who have every reason to be outraged, don't cry. We don't even see Hampton die; instead, we see Johnson experience his death, Fishback's face a stoic visage as gunfire flashes behind her. The film's even keel can render it inert, especially when it depicts the FBI, which King resists embellishing despite the outrageous nature of Cointelpro. But in moments like this, King's austerity is pure clarity. Fred Hampton was assassinated by his government. **N**

The stark juxtaposition between radicalism and complicity powers the film.



Letters

Along the Texas Border

The last sentence in Jaime Garcia and Rick Treviño's article "The Trump Meridian" [Feb. 22/March 1] reads, "As to what lessons we can learn from it... we're still trying to figure that out." But they had figured it out—it's right there in their article (and in the articles about the not-so-poor people who had just attacked the Capitol). All the bottom half of the country wants is to be sure they can have a job that pays above the minimum wage, enough money to put food on the table and a roof over their heads, an affordable health care plan, and a chance for their children to make it in this country. This was borne out throughout the article. What else is there to say?

FRANK L. FRIEDMAN
Adjunct and Emeritus Professor,
Computer & Information Sciences
Temple University
PHILADELPHIA

Thanks for publishing "The Trump Meridian" and noting my hometown of Brownsville, Tex. But the article omits a vital point. Yes, there was a shift toward Donald Trump in the 2020 election along the border. But hundreds of thousands of Texas border residents, all registered to vote, did not do so. And in the entire state, less than 67 percent of the registered voters voted. What's more, there are millions of citizens in Texas who are eligible to register to vote. They didn't. Get the picture? The rest of the states also have millions of people who are registered and do not vote, and millions more who could register and don't. That is the much bigger story: discovering the answer to why

there are so many nonvoters in the United States. Write it—before 2022 and 2024.

EUGENE NOVOGRODSKY
BROWNSVILLE, TEX.

Leveling Up

Re "Back Talk" [Feb. 22/March 1]: Alexis Grenell's column rang a bell for me, as someone who taught college students the value of comparative politics for 35 years. She needs to be applauded for her persuasive case that "we need to level up to a parliamentary system." Compared with our current system, a conversion to a parliamentary system would ensure more democracy, less factionalism, more accountability, and the kinds of public policy that reflect the wishes of a majority of Americans. A simple vote of no confidence would have avoided the two failed efforts to impeach Donald Trump and erased the myth of checks and balances. Many who have lived under the parliamentary design rarely covet life under a presidential system such as ours. No system is perfect, but we can do much better with a new one.

DAVID W. DENT
Professor Emeritus,
Towson University
BROOMFIELD, COLO.

Correction

"Amid the Wildfires," by Micah Uetricht [Feb. 22/March 1], incorrectly stated that Mike Davis burned his draft card in 1963 and drove a meat truck to a New Mexican restaurant called the Chicken Shack. He burned his draft card in 1965, and the Chicken Shack was located in California.

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Q&A

Ro Khanna

US Representative Ro Khanna is consistent. The California Democrat was an outspoken critic of former president Donald Trump's unauthorized use of military force in the Middle East, and he immediately objected when President Joe Biden ordered air strikes targeting Iranian-backed militias in Syria on February 25. I spoke with Khanna, a member of the House Armed Services Committee and the Peace and Security Task Force of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, on how Democratic members of Congress should respond to military actions by a Democratic president.

—John Nichols

JN: Why was it necessary to speak up so quickly and so boldly about Biden's decision to bomb Syria?

RK: I had told myself that I would try not to criticize the president in the first 100 days. I so desperately want the president to succeed. It's important for our party. It's important for our country. But I didn't expect the president to engage in bombing the Middle East in the first 100 days, either.

I thought it was so important that, early on, Congress take a stand and lay a claim, lay down a clear marker, that we cannot continue the cycle of escalation and bombing in the Middle East that has been counterproductive. Certainly we can't continue it without [the president] coming to Congress for the authorization of military force and trying to seek to work in coalition with the United Nations under international law.

JN: Beyond the broader principles, there were specific concerns with this mission, correct?

RK: This was not an imminent threat. It was not that our troops were stationed there and there was intelligence that, if the president didn't act, the troops would be in harm's way in 24 hours or 48 hours or even in a week. I mean, this was a retaliatory threat, and it was clearly not authorized under even a tortured reading of the AUMF [Authorization for Use of Military Force of 2001].

I mean, [this strike] was against Iranian militias in Syria. If anything, in Syria, President Obama had tried to seek an authorization and had failed, and so the congressional record was actually opposed to any escalation in the Middle East.

We can't have a view that, OK, if it's a small attack, then the presi-

dent has discretion, but if it's a large attack, then the president has to come to Congress—because small attacks often escalate into large attacks.

JN: It was notable that several Senate Democrats raised concerns. Do you think there is a greater understanding among Democrats that it's important to speak up when there's a Democratic president?

RK: I do! We saw Tim Kaine, who I think carries a lot of weight because he's a very respected voice across the ideological spectrum on matters of foreign policy, come out and be critical. We saw Chris Murphy do that, and Bernie Sanders did that.

I believe the White House took notice. It was no coincidence that a few days later they're openly talking about how we need to have a new conversation about the authorization of military force in Congress, and that the president supports that and supports Congress asserting its role. From reporting I read—and obviously I don't have any information on this—but the reports I've read [indicate] that it has given the White House pause in terms of further strikes against the Iranian militia or in Syria. So I think that speaking out early was very important, because it set a tone that the Congress will not be rolled over by the executive branch on matters of war and peace, and that these issues are bigger than party loyalty.

JN: Drawing up a new AUMF is perilous. Real effort has to go into defining what is authorized, right?

RK: Well, John, you hit the nail on the head on what the challenge has been. Every time [US Representative] Barbara Lee builds a stronger coalition to repeal the AUMF, the debate gets caught up in "Well, what's going to replace it?" One point that should be consistent in whatever replaces it is a sunset provision—that these authorizations shouldn't last more than, ideally, a term of Congress.

N

"I thought it was so important that, early on, Congress take a stand."



Breakthrough From #1 U.S. Hospital Clears up Sinus and Nasal Problems - Fast!

New discovery targets infected throat mucus - to stop post nasal drip, congestion, runny noses, coughing, sneezing, ringing ears, and sore throats

By **Wayne B. Roberts**

Associated Health Press

Doctors at a medical center based in Minnesota have discovered the real cause of nearly all sinus and nasal infections. They were shocked to find it is infectious fungi you inhale through your nose.

Now, a breakthrough 100% natural formula, **Sinuprol**, can help get rid of chronic sinus infection, called "sinusitis" - an insidious condition that can lead to blood clots and brain infection, causing abscesses, meningitis, and even death!

The sinus infection can also spread to your facial bones, triggering headaches, fever, and swelling in the eye socket -- which in some cases can cause loss of vision.

How Sinuprol works

Sinuprol is the **FIRST** nasal treatment that can quickly flush infected mucus from your nose -- without surgery.

Antibiotics, antihistamines, and steroid-containing nasal sprays are no help in fighting sinus infection. In fact, over-the-counter decongestant sprays can actually harm the small hairs lining your nose, causing mucus to build up even more.

The result? Only Sinuprol can dry up runny noses, end constant coughing, and unclog your swollen nasal channels - safely, swiftly, and effectively.

"Up to now, the cause of chronic sinusitis has not been known," says Dr. David Sherris, ENT. "In fact, fungus is likely the cause of nearly all these problems."

Dr. Gary Bennett, MD says, "The root cause of fungal sinus infections is the exposure to fungus and mold spores in the air. Once inhaled, the fungi can become lodged in the mucosal lining of the sinuses."

Fungi triggers 96% of sinus problems

Top doctors have found that chronic sinus in-

fection is caused by inhaling 40 different types of infectious fungus in the air you breathe. The proof? In a study of 210 people with sinus infections, 96% of them had fungus in their mucus.

Did you know you take approximately 24,000 breaths daily, inhaling 90 percent of the infection-causing fungi in your body through your nose? Or that insulation with poor ventilation, plus indoor mold and air pollutants, have triggered a plague of sinus and nasal problems affecting millions?

How? These harmful fungi hide in your throat, where they infect your mucus, causing your nasal passages to swell up.

Result: Congestion, dripping mucus, runny nose, endless sneezing, constant coughing, ringing in your ears, sore throat, and tenderness of the face. No wonder millions of sinus sufferers are now rejoicing about this new solution!

The natural alternative to nasal sprays

Sinuprol is a unique drug-free formulation made from all-natural ingredients. These include *Urtica Dioica*, *Pinus Maritima*, *Petasites Hybridus*, and other herbs clinically proven to fight fungal infection.

For instance, a clinical study published in the *Journal Phytotherapy Research* found that *pinus maritima* extract reduced nasal symptoms by 42% in just 8 weeks. In addition, Sinuprol also supports your upper respiratory system, so that you breathe more freely.

Dries up runny noses

A stuffed-up nose may be just a cold. Or, it may be something far worse: a sinus infection, otherwise known as "sinusitis."

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), about 37 million Americans suffer from sinusitis. Sinus infections are responsible for 16 million doctor visits and \$150 million annually spent on prescription medications.

Helps with allergies, too.

"Allergic rhinitis" is a chronic nose cold sparked by an allergy attack. Sinuprol can help end the sneezing, watery eyes, and congestion caused by allergic rhinitis. How? By blocking and sweeping out dust, mold, pollen, fungus, and animal hair before they cause bigger problems.

In a study appearing in *Advances in Therapy*, 580 patients took 16 mg



STUNNING RESEARCH SHOWS that 38 different kinds of harmful fungus may be hidden in your mucus, causing sinus nightmares. Now a new doctor approved treatment dissolves infected mucus to help you breathe easier.

of butterbur leaf extract, an active ingredient in Sinuprol, daily for 2 weeks. The symptoms of allergic rhinitis, which included sneezing and congestion, improved in 90% of the participants.

Keeps your nose fungus-free

Having sinus infection is not the norm: The National Institutes of Health reports that "healthy sinuses contain no bacteria or other germs. Mucus is able to drain out and air is able to circulate."

Whether your sinus discomfort is the result of an allergy, a fungus, virus, or from a bacterial infection, Sinuprol can help drain away infected mucus. The formula is manufactured in an FDA-registered facility. And no prescription is required.

50% OFF FOR THE NEXT 10 DAYS

This is the official release of Sinuprol for The Nation readers. Therefore, everyone who calls within the next 10 days will receive 50% OFF their first order. A toll-free hotline number has been set up for local readers to call for this 50% OFF savings. The number will be open starting at 7:00 am today and only for the next 10 days.

Sinuprol is **GUARANTEED** to work great for you - or you **PAY NOTHING** with a 90-day unconditional money-back guarantee. It is **NOT** sold in stores or online. No prescription or doctor visit is required.

If Sinuprol does not rapidly clear up your sinus and nasal symptoms ... or you are dissatisfied for any other reason (or for no reason at all) ... just returned the unused portion or even the empty bottles for a prompt product refund. That way, you risk nothing.

All you have to do is **CALL TOLL-FREE 1-800-876-5607** and provide the operator with the special 50% OFF discount approval code: **SNP142**.

Important: Due to Sinuprol's popularity and recent media exposure on ABC, CBS and FOX NEWS, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not get through immediately, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 10-day deadline for 50% OFF will have to pay more for Sinuprol.

