

CANARIES IN THE COALMINE | CAROLINE FREDRICKSON
SISTERS FROM SOUTH CENTRAL | DELL FRANKLIN
THE STORM IS OVER | KATHY KELLY

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 97



THE ORDER TO DESTROY

THE FACE OF OCCUPATION – A PHOTO STORY BY **MATS SVENSSON**



Cover photo: Mats Svensson

From his book, "Crimes,
Victims and Witnesses:
Apartheid in Palestine"
– See pages 26-31

ColdType

ISSUE 97 / APRIL 2015

-
- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 3. | HILLARY CLINTON: GLASS CEILINGS, SHATTERED LIVES | DAVID EDWARDS |
| 8. | NOW IT'S YEMEN'S TURN | CONN M. HALLINAN |
| 11. | SISTERS FROM SOUTH CENTRAL | DELL FRANKLIN |
| 14. | THE ACTIVIST, McDONALD'S AND AN UNDERCOVER COP | MARK METCALF |
| 17. | HOWLING IN DONETSK | PEPE ESCOBAR |
| 19. | THE IRANIAN ASCENDENCY | PETER VAN BUREN |
| 25. | SORRY FOR VLADIMIR | PHILIP KRASKE |
| 26. | COVER STORY – THE ORDER TO DESTROY | MATS SVENSSON |
| 32. | KLEPTOREMUNERATION | GEORGE MONBIOT |
| 34. | INEQUALITY AND PERPLEXING MIRACLES | JEFF NYGAARD |
| 36. | THE STORM IS OVER | KATHY KELLY |
| 40. | THE GREAT DIAMOND HEIST | STAN WINER |
| 44. | CANARIES IN THE COALMINE | CAROLINE FREDRICKSON |
| 49. | A WAY WITH WORDS | CHRIS HEDGES |
| 54. | COLD WAR 2.0 | WILLIAM BLUM |
| 58. | MUSIC TO THEIR EARS | NOAH ASKIN, DEAN PIERIDES & JOERI MOL |
| 60. | FIRST THE GUNS, NOW THE LAW | JONATHAN COOK |
| 63. | ANOTHER WORLD! | MIHAEL MEACHER |

Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

Hillary Clinton: glass ceilings, shattered lives

Yes, but what about Libya? **David Edwards** looks at the strangely-absent criticism of the US presidential contender in Britain's 'liberal' media

We live in a time when compassionate rhetoric is used as a weapon of state-corporate control. The rhetoric focuses on ethical concerns such as racial, gender and same-sex equality, but is disconnected from any kind of coherent ethical worldview. Corporate commentators are thereby freed to laud these moral principles, even as they ignore high crimes of state-corporate power.

Thus, it was deemed 'historic', even 'epoch-making', by our corporate culture that Barack Obama was elected the first black president of the United States. And it certainly was a triumph for racial equality. But the moral significance was hailed by a media commentariat that proceeded to gaze with blank indifference at the ethical trailblazer's bombing of seven countries, his deep involvement in four ongoing, full-scale wars, his devastation of Libya, and his abject failure to address the apocalyptic threat of climate change.

Alongside these horrors, Obama's involvement in the Honduran coup, his diplomatic and military support for Egypt's blood-soaked military junta, and his \$90bn in arms sales sent (in the last four years) to a Saudi Arabian tyranny wreaking havoc in Syria and Yemen, are mere footnotes.

None of this matters: for our corporate media, Obama remains, above all, the in-

spirational first black president.

Similarly, in evaluating Obama's possible successor, the *Guardian's* editorial 'view on Hillary Clinton' focuses on the problem that she is 'hammering the glass ceiling (again)' of gender inequality:

"with four years as her nation's chief diplomat on the world stage under her belt, Mrs Clinton's personal gravitas is even harder to quibble with than it might have been in 2008".

So, for the *Guardian* editors, Clinton has more 'personal gravitas' now – she actually has more dignity, should be taken more seriously. A remarkable response, as we will see. The *Guardian* continues:

"On foreign policy, her spell as secretary of state leaves her with a somewhat clearer record – she is associated with a rather more interventionist approach than Mr Obama. Her admirers would describe her as a happy mix of the smart and the muscular; doubters will recall her vote for the ruinous invasion of Iraq in 2003, and prefer the Obama-esque oath to first do no harm."

The cognitive dissonance could hardly be more glaring: Obama's colour and Clinton's gender are key ethical concerns, and yet Obama's responsibility for mass killing is not only not a concern, it is not even recognised. Instead, he continues to be presented as a benevolent non-intervention-

Obama's colour and Clinton's gender are key ethical concerns, and yet Obama's responsibility for mass killing is not only not a concern, it is not even recognised

MEDIA WATCH

As Obama created an ethical veneer out of his colour, so Clinton can use her gender

ist who has consistently chosen to ‘do no harm’.

‘Grandmother-In-Chief’

In a *Guardian* piece titled, “Clinton returns to smash glass ceiling, with gender at forefront of campaign”, US environment correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg writes:

“The finest moment in Hillary Clinton’s political life – so far – arrived on a hot June day in 2008, when she finally took ownership of her place in history as the woman who came so painfully close to shattering that ‘highest, hardest glass ceiling.’”

Goldenberg notes that Clinton “seems to have adopted a new persona: grandmother-in-chief”. She quotes Clinton:

“Becoming a grandmother has made me think deeply about the responsibility we all share as stewards of the world we inherit and will one day pass on. Rather than make me want to slow down, it has spurred me to speed up.”

If this sounds like vacuous PR blather, it is for a reason. On the BBC website, Anthony Zurcher notes that Clinton’s 2008 presidential bid was criticised because it “showed little personality” and lacked “a unifying vision”. In other words, Clinton did not stand for anything. So what does Clinton care about in 2015?

“that remains to be seen. There have been hints that she will embrace the economic populist wealth-gap message most notably touted by Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. She could also emphasise women’s rights, both in the US and internationally - a subject that has been close to her heart for her entire career.”

As Obama created an ethical veneer out of his colour, so Clinton can use her gender. Zurcher reports:

“Early indications are she will attempt to soften her image by emphasising her new role as a grandmother.”

In a rousing conclusion to her *Guardian* article, Goldenberg writes:

“Now it’s time for Clinton to pick up

where she left off. Seven years on, many of the issues previously sidelined as women’s concerns – minimum wage, equal pay, paid sick leave – have risen to the political mainstream, and Clinton shows every intention of trying to make them her own.”

Her sign-off:

“In every presidential election since 1980, women have turned out to vote in greater numbers than men. There will be many million more cracks to make before shattering that glass ceiling but Clinton is on her way.”

This was much closer to endorsement than impartial analysis, an impression Goldenberg reinforced by retweeting a message of support sent to Clinton by female Pakistan People’s Party Parliamentarian Sehar Kamran:

“Good Luck Hillary”

The tweet contained a thumbs-up sign for good measure. We tweeted and emailed Goldenberg:

“How is this retweet compatible with the idea that *Guardian* journalists are neutral, objective and independent? Should you really be openly rooting for the politicians on whom you are reporting?” (Email to Goldenberg, April 14, 2015)

Goldenberg replied on Twitter:

“oh, please. We all know RT = interesting NOT endorsement”

Readers can decide for themselves if it was interesting that someone tweeted “Good Luck Hillary” to Clinton.

In similar vein, *Guardian* columnist Deborah Orr tweeted:

“Go Hills! Imagine. A woman *Guardian* editor AND a woman US president.”

Indeed! Imagine having a newspaper editor like Rebekah Brooks AND a prime minister like Margaret Thatcher.

In the *Guardian*, in a piece titled, “Why Hillary Clinton would make the perfect US president”, Orr writes:

“She’ll be less tainted by the scandals and mistakes of previous administrations than any woman ever has been.”



I emailed the *Guardian's* Deborah Orr, asking why she had not mentioned Clinton's role in the Libya catastrophe

Hillary Clinton: Are glass ceilings more important than her record?

Photo: Frank Plitt

But anyway, “the symbolic power of her appointment [as a female president] transcends all else”.

Which perhaps explains why both Goldenberg and Orr fail to mention Libya, the country Clinton played a decisive role in wrecking while US Secretary of State (2009-2013).

I asked Goldenberg:

“How can you discuss Hillary Clinton's campaign without even mentioning Libya, the country she destroyed?”

Goldenberg replied:

“It's a piece abt gender & framing of @HillaryClinton candidacy, not foreign policy”

I responded:

“But you say ‘Clinton made several mistakes in the years . . . leading up to Sunday's launch’. Why not include the destruction of Libya?”

This was tongue-in-cheek. Libya, of course, was not a “mistake”; it was a major crime – all the more reason to mention it. I received no reply.

I also emailed Orr, asking why she had not mentioned Clinton's role in the Libya catastrophe. Orr clarified:

“Because that's not what the article was about.

“Best wishes

“Deborah Orr” (Email, April 14, 2015)

MEDIA WATCH

In all the coverage of Clinton's presidential bid recorded in the Lexis newspaper database, I have found not one inclusion of the destruction of Libya among her "controversies"

I responded: "Thanks for replying, Deborah. But the second sentence of the opening paragraph reads:

'She'll be less tainted by the scandals and mistakes of previous administrations than any woman ever has been.'

"And you write:

'No doubt many people consider it wrong to believe that Clinton should be president "just because she's a woman". No doubt many feminists are troubled by the way that Clinton is following in footsteps trodden first by her husband.'

"So clearly you are writing about these issues. Clinton has already followed in the warmongering footsteps of her husband, which you could have mentioned. It could hardly be more important or relevant."

Orr replied again:

"Your first quote.

"The sentences [sic] serves two purposes, one rhetorical, to express that no woman has been President, the other practical, to note that she is indeed tainted by scandals and mistakes. It is not the purpose of the sentence to explore those things in detail.

"Your second quote.

"There's a presumption in those sentences that people already know quite a bit about HC's record, and don't need to be told again. You may need to be told again. But I actually doubt that either you, or many other readers, do".

I replied:

"The destruction of Libya is not only not 'detail', it is arguably the defining fact, and crime, of Clinton's life. If an official enemy were responsible and under discussion, the idea that one could simply pass over, or take as read, their destruction of an entire country would be unthinkable."

Orr responded one last time:

"Noted.

"Thanks".

Libya – 'Hillary's War'

In March 2011, Clinton said:

"Gaddafi has lost the legitimacy to lead, so we believe he must go. We're working with the international community to try to achieve that outcome.' (Quoted, Maximilian Forte, 'Slouching Towards Sirte – NATO's War on Libya and Africa,' Baraka Books, digital version, 2012, p.325)

Writing in the *Sunday Times*, James Rubin comments:

"Former defence secretary Bob Gates has written that it was secretary Clinton's 'considerable clout' that tipped the balance in favour of action.' (Rubin, 'Why Hillary Clinton would make a better president than Obama,' *Sunday Times*, April 12, 2015)

In the *Telegraph*, Mary Riddell notes:

"More hawkish than Mr Obama or the dovelike vice president, Joe Biden, she backed the invasion of Afghanistan, while US action in Libya has been described as 'Hillary's War'."

The results: about 1.8 million Libyans – nearly a third of the country's population – have fled to Tunisia with 1,700 armed gangs fighting over a country in which chaos reigns.

In her memoir, "Hard Choices", Clinton revealed how she had also played a key role in supporting the coup in Honduras:

"In the subsequent days [after the coup] I spoke with my counterparts around the hemisphere, including Secretary [Patricia] Espinosa in Mexico. We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of [overthrown Honduran president] Zelaya moot."

Political analyst Mark Weisbrot commented:

"The question of Zelaya was anything but moot. Latin America leaders, the United Nations General Assembly and other international bodies vehemently demanded his immediate return to office."

In 2008, Clinton said:

"I want the Iranians to know that if I'm

the president, we will attack Iran [if it attacks Israel]. In the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them.”

Clinton also commented of Egypt’s then dictator, Mubarak:

“I really consider President and Mrs. Mubarak to be friends of my family.”

In 2006, Clinton co-sponsored a (failed) bill that would have criminalised the burning of the American flag. Clinton described it as ‘an opportunity to protect our flag’.

‘Hillary’s Moment’

In the BBC website article mentioned above, Zurcher writes: “If this is Hillary’s moment, she’s going to have to earn it.”

It is a trite but far from innocuous comment. Referring to Clinton by her first name indicates that “Hillary” is one of “the good guys”, unlike surname-only “bad guys” like Putin, Chavez, Gaddafi and Assad. Try imagining a BBC news piece commenting: “If this is Bashar’s moment, he’s going to have to earn it.”

In 2013, BBC journalist Kim Ghattas authored a book titled, “The Secretary – A Journey With Hillary Clinton from Beirut to The Heart of American Power.” Clinton, Ghattas explained, is “a rock star diplomat who finally let her hair down”.

As US Secretary of State, “Hillary” let her hair down in October 2011, after it emerged that Libyan leader Gaddafi (Muammar to his friends) had been beaten, sodomised with a knife and murdered. Moments after receiving the news, Clinton laughed, commenting: “We came, we saw, he died.” As Maximilian Forte observed:

“Ghoulis, chilling, and perverse was this utterly remorseless display of how bloodthirsty US power can be.” (Forte, op.cit., pp.359-360)

Zurcher notes that Clinton “faces an ongoing congressional investigation into her response to the attacks on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya”. This is Zurcher’s

only reference to Libya. Like the rest of the media, the failure to protect the US consulate is the only Libyan scandal worth mentioning. Thus, the *Independent* refers to Clinton’s “potential weaknesses, including controversies over her handling, as Secretary of State, of the 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, her use of a private email server while at the State Department and donations by foreign governments to the Bill Clinton foundation”.

In all the coverage of Clinton’s presidential bid recorded in the Lexis newspaper database, I have found not one inclusion of the destruction of Libya among her “controversies”.

It has been estimated that Clinton will raise between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion in the primary and general election campaigns, twice the amount Barack Obama and Mitt Romney each spent in 2012. The World Socialist Web Site notes the significance:

“To raise these vast sums, all potential presidents must thus pass through a screening process that involves a few thousand billionaires and near-billionaires... The financial oligarchy selects the possible candidates, a process now referred to as the “invisible primary”... Those selected are invariably right-wing, reliable defenders of corporate America, usually themselves millionaires or multimillionaires.”

Are we really to accept that gender equality counts more than the naked fraudulence of this “democratic” process, more than the bringing of death and destruction to entire countries? But this is exactly the message of the corporate “free press”, which works so hard to ensure that ethical discussion remains superficial, rootless, and powerless to challenge the status quo. **CT**

.....
David Edwards is co-editor of the
British media watchdog Media Lens
– <http://medialens.org>

Are we really to accept that gender equality counts more than the naked fraudulence of this “democratic” process, more than the bringing of death and destruction to entire countries?

Now it's Yemen's turn

Conn M. Hallinan contrasts the gathering of nations that led to the latest Middle East conflict to another that took place in Europe 200 years ago

More than 200 years divides those gatherings, but their goals were much the same: to safeguard a small and powerful elite's dominion over a vast area

While the ostensible rationale for Saudi Arabia's recent intrusion into Yemen is that the conflict is part of a bitter proxy war with Iran, the coalition that Riyadh has assembled to intervene in Yemen's civil war has more in common with 19th century Europe than the Middle East in the 21st.

When the 22-member Arab League came together at Sharm el Sheikh on March 28 and drew up its plan to attack Houthi forces currently holding Yemen's capital, Sanaa, the meeting bore an uncanny resemblance to a similar gathering of monarchies at Vienna in 1814. The leading voice at the Egyptian resort was Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal. His historical counterpart was Prince Klemens von Metternich, Austria's foreign minister, who designed the "Concert of Europe" to insure that no revolution would ever again threaten the monarchs who dominated the continent.

More than 200 years divides those gatherings, but their goals were much the same: to safeguard a small and powerful elite's dominion over a vast area.

There were not only kings represented at Sharm el Sheikh. Besides the foreign ministers for the monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Morocco, and Jordan – most

of the Arab League was there, with lots of encouragement and support from Washington and London. But Saudi Arabia was running the show, footing the bills, and flying most the bombing raids against Houthi fighters and refugee camps.

The Yemen crisis is being represented as a clash between Iran and the Arab countries, and part of ongoing tension between Sunni and Shiite Islam. The League accuses Iran of overthrowing the Yemeni government of Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, using the Shiite Houthis as their proxies. But the civil war in Yemen is a long-running conflict over access to political power and resources, not religion, or any attempt by Iran to spread its influence into a strategic section of the Arabian Peninsula. And the outcome, as long-time Middle East journalist Patrick Cockburn points out, is likely the spread of sectarian warfare throughout the region.

The Houthis, like the Iranians, are Shiites, but of the Zaydi variety, not one that many Iranians would even recognize. And while the Houthis have been at war with the central government off and on since 1992, the issues are profane, not sacred.

Yemen – about the size of France, with 25 million people – is the poorest nation in the Middle East, with declining resources, an exploding population, and a host of players competing for a piece of the shrinking pie.

Unemployment is above 40 percent and water is scarce. Oil, the country's major export, is due to run out in the next few years.

The country is also one of the most fragmented in the region, divided between the poorer north and the richer, more populous, south, and riven by a myriad of tribes and clans. Until 1990 it was not even one country, and it took a fratricidal civil war in 1994 to keep it unified. There is still a strong southern secession movement.

The current war is a case in point. The Houthis fought six wars with former military strongman Abdullah Saleh, who was forced out of the presidency in 2011 by the GCC and the UN Security Council. Hadi, his vice-president, took over and largely ignored the Houthi – always a bad idea in Yemen. So aided by their former enemy, Saleh – who maintains a strong influence in the Yemeni armed forces – the Houthi went to war with Hadi. The new president was arrested by the Houthi, but escaped south to the port of Aden, then fled to Saudi Arabia when the Houthis and Saleh's forces marched on the city.

That's the simple version of the complexity that is Yemen. But complex was not a word encountered much at Sham el Sheikh. For the Arab League, this is all about Iran. The Houthis, said Yemen President-in-exile Hadi, are "Iranian stooges."

Most independent experts disagree. The Houthis, says Towson University professor Charles Schmitz, an expert on the group, "are domestic, homegrown, and have deep roots in Yemen going back thousands of years." He says that the Houthis have received support from Iran, but "not weapons, which they take from the Yemeni military." "Does that mean they are going to do Iran's bidding? I don't think so."

Both Democrats and Republican hailed the Saudi attacks. "I applaud the Saudis for taking this action to protect their homeland and to protect their own neighborhood," said House Speaker John Boehner (D-Oh). US Rep Adam Schiff (D-Ca), the senior

Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, agreed. The Obama administration says it is providing intelligence and logistical support for the operation.

US involvement in Yemen is long-standing, dating back to 1979 and the Carter administration. According to UPI, the CIA funneled money to Jordan's King Hussein to foment a north-south civil Yemen civil war, and US Special Forces have been on the ground directing drone strikes for over a decade.

This, of course, creates certain logical disconnects. The US is supporting the Saudi bombing in Yemen because the Houthis are allied with Iran. But in Iraq, the US is bombing the Islamic State (ISIS) in support of Iran's efforts to aid the Iraqi government's war on the ISIS. And while the Riyadh government is opposed to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, aided by US intelligence, it is attacking one of the major forces fighting al-Qaeda in Yemen, the Houthi. In the meantime, the Gulf Council has stepped up its support of the Nusra Front in Syria, a group tied to al-Qaeda and a sworn enemy of the Gulf monarchies and the US.

On one level this reaches the level of farce. On the other, the situation is anything but humorous. The Yemen intervention will deepen Shiite-Sunni divisions in the Islamic world and pull several countries into Yemen, the very definition of a quagmire. Cockburn points out that while the Arab League's code name for the Yemeni adventure is "Operation Decisive Storm," the military operation will almost certainly be the opposite. "In practice, a decisive outcome is the least likely prospect for Yemen, just like it has been in Iraq and Afghanistan. A political feature common to all three countries is that power is divided between so many players it is impossible to defeat or placate them all for very long."

Even if the Houthis are driven back to their traditional base in the north, it would be foolhardy for any ground force to take them on in the mountains they call home.

The US is supporting the Saudi bombing in Yemen because the Houthis are allied with Iran. But in Iraq, the US is bombing the Islamic State (ISIS) in support of Iran's efforts to aid the Iraqi government's war on the ISIS

ZONES OF WAR

Instead of endorsing what is certain to be a disaster, Washington should join the call by European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini for a ceasefire and negotiations

The Yemeni government tried six times and never succeeded. It is rather unlikely that Egyptian or Saudi troops will do any better. While the League did make a decision to form a 40,000 man army, how that will be constituted, or who will command it is not clear.

Besides stirring up more religious sectarianism, the Yemen war will aid the Saudis and the GCC in their efforts to derail the tentative nuclear agreement with Iran. If that agreement fails, a major chance for stability in the region will be lost. Saudi Arabia's new found aggressiveness – and its bottomless purse – will gin up the civil war in Syria, increase tensions in northern Lebanon, and torpedo the possibility of organizing a serious united front against the ISIS.

While the US has talked about a political solution, that is not what is coming out of the Arab league. The military campaign, says Arab League General Secretary Nabil el-Araby “will continue until all the Houthi militia retreats and disarms and a strong unified Yemen returns.” The bombings have already killed hundreds of civilians and generated tens of thousands of refugees. Gulf Council sources say that the air war may continue for up to six months.

Instead of endorsing what is certain to be a disaster, Washington should join the call by European Union foreign policy chief Federica

Mogherini for a ceasefire and negotiations. “I’m convinced that military actions is not a solution,” she said, calling on “all regional actors” to “act responsibly and constructively...for a return to negotiations.”

The Houthis are not interested in running Yemen. Senior Houthi leader Saleh Ali al-Sammad said that his organization “does not want anything more than partnership, not control.” Houthi ally and ex-president Saleh also said, “Let’s go to dialogue an ballot boxes,” not bombing. Yemen needs an influx of aid, not bombs, drones, and hell-fire missiles.

The Congress of Europe muzzled European modernism for more than a generation, just as the Gulf Cooperation Council and Egypt will do their best to strangle what is left of the Arab Spring. Prince Metternich remained Austria’s Chancellor until a storm of nationalism and revolution swept across Europe in 1848 and brought down the congress of reaction.

That day will come for the 21st century’s Metternichs as well. **CT**

.....
Conn M. Hallinan is a columnist for *Foreign Policy In Focus*, *A Think Tank Without Walls*, and an independent journalist. He is a winner of a Project Censored “Real News Award,” and lives in Berkeley, California

Get your FREE subscription to ColdType magazine

Just send an email to editor@coldtype.net and write subscribe in the Subject line



Sisters from South Central

Dell Franklin listens in on the conversation on a road trip to prison

At 8:30 on a Saturday morning the red-eye bus from LA pulled into the Greyhound station and disgorged three black women oozing a hard sexual beauty. Dressed in their finest, moving their fine asses, not trying to hide their ghetto scowls. They came to my door and announced they were going to the prison on the outskirts of San Luis Obispo and for me to wait while they went to the head for some last minute primping. They were bossy, like some of the tough black girls I went to school with at integrated Compton High down south on the fringe of South Central LA girls I got on well with and who referred to me humorously as “Norman,” which meant I was harmless.

They piled into the back seat, filling the cab with harsh perfume. I wondered if they were they visiting pimps, drug dealers, addicts, robbers, gang-bangers, or all of the above. I studied their smoky eyes in the rearview mirror.

“What you lookin’ at, white-boy?”

Boy? I was old enough to be their father or grandfather. “Nothin’, hon.”

“How come y’all wearin’ them funky shades with a pin holdin’ ‘em up? Who dress y’all?”

“My mother dressed me until I was 12,

and it’s been downhill ever since.” When there was no response, I said: “So how you doing this morning, girls?”

“How we doin’?” said the one who disapproved of my shades. “Sheee’it. Mothafuckin’ bus stop ev’ry town ‘long the way. Ain’t nowhere t’ eat. Ain’t nevah takin’ that nasty-ass bus up here again see MY man. He gon wait til he git his black ass out.”

“Y’all be back,” grumbled one of the sisters.

“You got that right,” added another.

“A-men!”

They gazed at the countryside as we pulled out of town, up Highway 1. They could not get over how much land there

was, and how green it was when they came up in winter.

“Girl, I movin’ up here soon as I get me some cash.”

“Hey boy, how much it cost rent a house up here?”

“Plenty. And you won’t like it, either.”

“How y’all know that?”

“It’s too white. Only black folks up here are Cal Poly jocks and brothers they let out of prison from the honor farm to clean the roadsides. Oh, there’s a black lady lives up here with her three kids. I take her to the market once a week. Her

“Sheee’it. Mothafuckin’ bus stop ev’ry town ‘long the way. Ain’t nowhere t’ eat. Ain’t nevah takin’ that nasty-ass bus up here again see MY man . . .”



ON THE ROAD

Before getting out, the lady who so disapproved of my shades told me to come back for them at 3:30 to take them to a shabby motel off the freeway that catered to those visiting the prison

husband drives a garbage truck down in LA all week and drives up here weekends, so she and the kids can live in this nice safe white town. Peaceful. No gangs. Very little crime. But she says there's nobody to talk to, nobody speaks her language. Her phone bills are huge. She misses the old neighborhood.

"Sheee'it."

I dropped them off at the medium security prison where the harder core inmates resided. The ladies paid, minus tip, and strode toward the office to wait at the end of a long line on a very warm morning, waiting to be checked in and inspected before spending a few precious hours with men who had years to serve, men in blue pants and blue work shirts with scowls and tattoos and weight-lifting torsos. Before getting out, the lady who so disapproved of my shades told me to come back for them at 3:30 to take them to a shabby motel off the freeway that catered to those visiting the prison. I promised to do so.

Conjugal visit

I was called immediately back to greyhound, where another woman waited for me - Reese. A heavysset black lady who ran a government office in downtown LA and had two children and was waiting for her husband to finish an 8-year armed robbery sentence and go straight - a man who had a year to go and had become a born-again Christian. Reese usually came alone, but this time brought her teenage son and daughter and wanted to stop at the supermarket to pick up groceries for a conjugal visit with her husband in one of the trailers on prison grounds, where couples spent 48 hours together every few months.

Reese had to wait because I had to tear to the airport and drive a pilot and crew to a downtown motel, and at the motel pick up another crew and drive them to the airport - a contractual priority - before I got to Greyhound, where Reese was

in a lather, having already lost an hour of visiting time with her anxiously waiting husband.

Like the other ladies, she'd taken the red-eye. She was in a terrible huff, and having trouble with her moody, scowling children, who whined about the discomfort and already stifling heat, both kids decked out in stiff new Wal-Mart duds. Reese was in what appeared her finest attire. Sweat rolled down her burnished chocolate face and smeared her mascara and make-up, and this large earth mother showed signs of cracking, perhaps crying, perhaps screaming in a primal way at the misery of it all.

"Where you been, baby?" She asked.

"Sorry, Reese. We're backed up, running late. Two cabs are down. I'm all alone. It's just been a mess."

She gazed at me. I was sweating profusely in the non A/C cab. "Well you cool down now. We'll make it."

Somehow she always cheered me up, and I cheered her up. She sat shotgun, window down, staring out while I swerved around town, the kids shifting and grimacing in back. I halted in front of the supermarket where Reese needed to stock up for the feast to be cooked for the family.

"You be back in fifteen minutes now, baby. You be here?"

"I'll try my hardest, Reese." It took me precious minutes to unload the three large suitcases from the trunk and stack them in front of the market where the boy was to guard them while white folks shuffled in and out, sneaking furtive glances at his sullen presence, his hair moist and glistening, new clothes blotched with sweat at the armpits, the boy growling and hating this strange environment. Just as I pulled away he began sassing Reese, who tore into him, humbling the boy who skulked off to sit by himself on a bench in the shade near an elderly lady who moved away, uneasy, close to panic.

It took me forty minutes to get back to them. Reese was with the kids at the bench, beside the stack of luggage and a shopping cart and enough food to feed half a battalion. Again I lifted the luggage and stacked it in the trunk. Then we started loading bags of meat and poultry and fish and gallons of juices and milk and soft drinks and produce and spuds and rice and eggs and bacon and sausage tubes and coffee and cookies and ice cream and chips and condiments...

There wasn't nearly enough room in the trunk. Reese had another spat with the boy and threatened to whack him and strand him there, and this was when I stepped in and took charge like a true cab pilot. I told Reese to calm down and instructed the two kids to sit in the back. Then Reese and I began to carefully stack the bags on the children, until their heads peeped above the massive jumble of bags. Most outrageous, the disgruntled boy had a watermelon atop his heap. Then I sat Reese and stacked the last bags on her lap, and she flashed me a weary smile and chuckled, then threw her head back and unleashed a hearty laugh, and I began to laugh, too, as I sat beside her, telling her it was almost over, we were almost home free.

As I drove out of town, Reese remarked on the beautiful wide open countryside and what a nice day it was, and she turned around and told her morose kids that soon they'd be with their daddy; everything was going to be okay.

She reapplied her make-up and primed her hair in a hand mirror as we climbed the last mile up the hill. We parked at the medium security prison and an inmate wheeled up a sled for her supplies. It took a while to fill it up. Afterwards Reese paid and tipped me a buck, patting my hand with warm appreciation that left me feeling truly humbled, and blessed. She was the only prison-visiting woman of all those I picked up at Greyhound, white or

black, who ever tipped me.

At the front of the slow-going line at the office, the three women I'd previously picked up spotted me and reminded me to be back at 3:30. When I returned at that hour after a hectic, non-stop afternoon, sweaty, stressed, drained, they were nowhere to be seen. As I pulled out, I saw them sitting in a sedan driven by another black woman. As usual they used me for insurance while soliciting a free ride to their motel. Those were the breaks.

Later that evening, toward the end of my 12 hour shift, I saw them on one of the main drags and beeped my horn. They waved and demandingly flagged me down. They complained of the rude stares they'd been getting, the honks and ugly comments from college boys at Cal Poly ("How come you ain't at KFC?") and other wise guys and the police, who stopped them and asked where they were from and what they were doing in San Luis Obispo.

"Like we ho's," fumed the one who'd found fault with my tilted shades.

"We ain't no ho's," exclaimed another. "We come here t' see our men!"

They were heading back to their room to have pizza and watch TV, and they wanted me to pick them up next morning and take them to the prison early so they didn't have to wait in the long line and lose time with their men. I told them I'd try, and I did, showing up early at their motel, but they were gone, again using me for insurance after probably driving to the prison with fellow sisters. I would not be their for them in the afternoon

As for Reese? Well, I'd be there for her in 24 hours. She always requested me as her personal cabby, and it always made me feel special and privileged to be there for her. **CT**

Dell Franklin is the founding publisher of California literary journal the Rogue Voice – <http://theroguevoice.com>

**"We ain't
no ho's,"
exclaimed
another.
"We come here
t' see our men!"**

The activist, McDonald's and the undercover cop

Mark Metcalf tells how a runaway policeman almost ruined the life of a young British protester

The judge ruled that children were exploited by advertising, that McDonald's paid low wages and served food with no positive nutritional benefit

The campaigner at the heart of the epic British McLibel legal battle in the 1990s who revealed that the man she considered her soulmate was an undercover police spy has urged others to speak out against surveillance and injustice.

Helen Steel was among five members of London Greenpeace who faced libel charges after distributing a pamphlet titled "What's Wrong With McDonald's: Everything They Don't Want You To Know" in 1986. This alleged that McDonald's exploited children with their advertising, promoted unhealthy food, paid low wages, were anti-union and were responsible for animal cruelty and environmental damage.

Three of them apologised to McDonald's but Steel, then a part-time bar worker, and unemployed postman Dave Morris refused to apologise. They chose, despite no legal aid being available, to defend the case.

What followed was the longest case in English legal history as the pair fought experienced libel lawyers who cost McDonald's an estimated £10 million. Steel and Morris raised around £40,000 to pay expenses and largely mounted their own defence and representation.

The full libel trial started in the High Court on 28 June, 1994. 130 witnesses gave evidence before the judge, Mr Justice Bell, delivered his 762-page judgment on 19 June, 1997. In a mixed ruling, the judge found some claims

unproven but agreed that children were exploited by advertising, that McDonald's paid low wages and served food with no positive nutritional benefit. The defendants were ordered to pay £60,000 damages. This was later cut by a third when the Appeal Court ruled that McDonald's regular customers had a very real risk of heart disease. Steel and Morris refused to pay their fines.

A free speech campaign saw protests outside two-thirds of the company's UK stores, and leaflets distributed in ever greater numbers. Commentators called the case "the biggest corporate PR disaster in history".

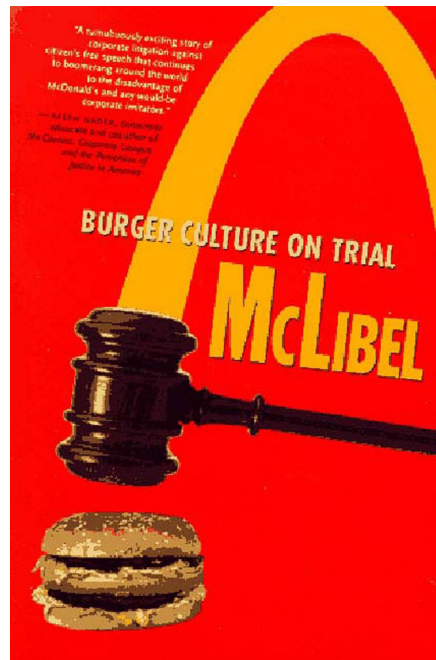
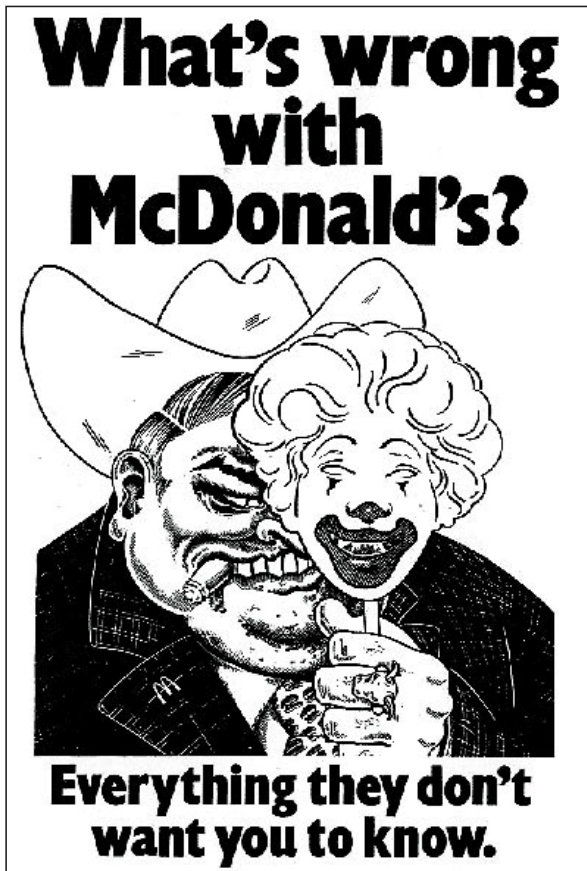
In response, McDonald's made little comment except to say that since the start of their legal action against Steel and Morris, "The world has moved on and so has McDonald's."

In 2005 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the lack of access to legal aid during the McLibel trial was in breach of the rights to a fair trial and freedom of expression. Steel and Morris were awarded £57,000 against the government.

Following the end of the legal case, a feature-length documentary film, "McLibel", was released directed by Franny Armstrong, with scenes directed by Ken Loach.

Deceiving

One of the authors of the LG pamphlet was Bob Robinson, who was later exposed as



Above: "McLibel, Burger Culture On Trial" tells the fascinating story of the McLibel case, which began with the circulation of a pamphlet, "What's Wrong With McDonald's" (left), co-authored by an undercover cop.

Another undercover officer, Mark Kennedy, had had several relationships with environmental activists he had spied upon

Bob Lambert, an undercover police officer who has since apologised for deceiving "law abiding members of London Greenpeace". Lambert was a member of the Metropolitan Police's Special Demonstration Squad (SDS), established in 1968 and during its 40 years in existence targeted political activists.

Another SDS member was John Dines, who posed as New Zealander John Barker. He began attending political meetings alongside Steel in 1987, before they began a relationship in 1990. They moved in together and discussed starting a family but, in 1992, Dines disappeared.

Steel searched extensively for her partner but with no success. Two years later, while walking home from the High Court during the McLibel trial, she had the instinct to call into the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriage office on the same street.

She eventually came across a record of a John Barker, aged eight, who had died of

leukaemia in the town Dines/Barker said he was from.

"The bottom fell out of my world," she said. "I thought I knew this guy and yet I did not even know his name. It cast doubt on all my other previous relationships, on everyone around me. If I could not notice that someone I loved and lived with wasn't real, who else might be fake and how I could know who to trust?"

"I thought about the possibility he might be an undercover police officer and that in turn made me nervous about telling other people in case it got back to the state. When I did eventually tell a couple of other old friends they thought I was being paranoid. This left me questioning my own sanity."

She even travelled to New Zealand to try to find Dines, after which the police, even though he had left the force in 1994, moved him to another country to prevent her finding out the truth.

“We all need to be speaking out against the current system where profits are put ahead of people’s lives and our communities”

Semi-official confirmation eventually arrived in 2011 when the former partner of an undercover officer told her Dines had been one, too.

Around this time it emerged that another undercover officer, Mark Kennedy, had had several relationships with environmental activists he had spied upon. Then gradually activists, journalists and the whistleblower Peter Francis, one of Dines’s former colleagues, began revealing the real story about the SDS, including the use of dead children’s identities. Dines, Lambert and Mark Jenner (the latter employed to spy on, among others, the author of this piece) suddenly found themselves in the newspapers.

Faking breakdowns

Seeking to prevent these human rights abuses from being repeated, Steel began legal action against the Metropolitan Police, along with other women who had also unknowingly had relations with undercover police officers. Some had even had children with officers who, usually after faking mental breakdowns, suddenly disappeared without explanation.

All the officers had occupied important positions, such as secretary or treasurer, in campaigns that covered anti-racism, miscarriages of justice, corruption and employment rights. These roles allowed the police to assemble information on the political activists involved.

It was the newspaper coverage of the SDS officers’ relationships with women political activists that pushed Steel towards speaking out once again – even though she has always found public speaking very difficult and used to let Morris do most of it.

“Some articles argued that what happened was no big deal or suggested that we were to blame for what had happened to us,” she said. “There were politicians defending the police officers and the Met Police. What was happening was so typical of women who have been sexually assaulted.

“Two of us decided to waive anonym-

ity and began publicly speaking. I am glad I have done so especially as I have received overwhelming public support. It has been a real relief to speak freely about what happened.”

She wishes she had not remained so quiet for many years. “Many more people should be speaking out, but because so many feel anxious about being ridiculed if they do then our society ends up being dominated by the voices of a few people who were mostly educated at public schools, where people are taught to speak confidently,” she said.

“It means they don’t get anxious about the impression they make even though they are talking nonsense about people whose lives they know absolutely nothing about, such as asylum seekers or disabled people. If there is no challenge then their views become accepted as fact rather than opinion.

“This case has exposed what was going on. While I don’t have that much faith in the justice system, it is a useful vehicle, combined with public campaigning, to seek some form of accountability and to try and prevent these events from happening to others.

“But I think that we all need to be speaking out against the current system where profits are put ahead of people’s lives and our communities. The whole system is corrupt and we need to discuss ways to create meaningful change.”

Radical change

Would she like to see radical change?

“I certainly would. Ultimately capitalism needs replacing as under it a tiny minority are extremely rich at the expense of the rest of the world.

“Those in charge are ruthless and lacking in empathy. We need a society that is based on co-operation and sharing so ultimately those running society need to go.

“Those who hold power don’t want alternative ideas to spread because it could threaten their privilege. “Ultimately, that’s why McLibel happened and why the Met spied on me.”

CT

.....
Mark Metcaolf is a freelance journalist based in Halifax, West Yorkshire, working mainly for the Big Issue and the publications of the union Unite. He has written 15 books on football and has been developing a series of reading and history projects for Unite’s education department

Howling in Donetsk

Pepe Escobar returns from a trip to the eastern Ukraine, scene of heavy fighting between pro-Russian rebels and the Ukraine military

I've just been to the struggling Donetsk People's Republic. Now I'm back in the splendid arrogance and insolence of NATOstan.

Quite a few people – in Donbass, in Moscow, and now in Europe – have asked me what struck me most about this visit.

I could start by paraphrasing Allen Ginsberg in *Howl* – “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness.”

But these were the Cold War mid-1950s. Now we're in early 21st century Cold War 2.0 Thus what I saw were the ghastly side effects of the worst minds of my – and a subsequent – generation corroded by (war) madness.

I saw refugees on the Russian side of the border, mostly your average middle-class European family whose kids, when they first came to the shelter, would duck under tables when they heard a plane in the sky.

I saw the Dylan of Donetsk holed up in his lonely room in a veterans' home-turned-refugee shelter fighting the blues and the hopelessness by singing songs of love and heroism.

I saw whole families holed up in fully decorated Soviet-era bomb shelters too afraid to go out even by daylight, traumatized by the bombings orchestrated by Kiev's “anti-terrorist operations”.

I saw a modern, hard-working industrial city at least half-empty and partially de-

stroyed but not bent, its residents able to survive by their guts and guile with a little help from Russian humanitarian convoys.

I saw beautiful girls hangin' out by Lenin's statue in a central square lamenting their only shot at fun was family parties in each other's houses because nightlife was dead and “we're at war”.

I saw virtually the whole neighborhood of Oktyabrski near the airport bombed out like Grozny and practically deserted except for a few lonely babushkas with nowhere to go and too proud to relinquish their family photos of World War II heroes.

I saw checkpoints like I was back in Baghdad during the Petraeus surge.

I saw the main trauma doctor at the key Donetsk hospital confirm there has been no Red Cross and no international humanitarian help to the people of Donetsk.

I saw Stanislava, one of DPR's finest and an expert sniper, in charge of our security, cry when she laid a flower on the ground of a fierce battle in which her squad was under heavy fire, with twenty seriously wounded and one dead, and she was hit by shrapnel and survived.

I saw orthodox churches fully destroyed by Kiev's bombing.

I saw the Russian flag still on top of the anti-Maidan building which is now the House of Government of the DPR.

I saw the gleaming Donbass arena, the

I saw refugees on the Russian side of the border, mostly your average middle-class European family whose kids, when they first came to the shelter, would duck under tables when they heard a plane in the sky

EYE WITNESS

I did not see the arrogance, the ignorance, the shamelessness and the lies distorting those manicured faces in Kiev, Washington and Brussels

home of Shaktar Donetsk football team and a UFO in a war-torn city, deserted and without a single soul in the fan area.

I saw Donetsk's railway station bombed by Kiev's goons.

I saw a homeless man screaming "Robert Plant!" and "Jimmy Page!" as I found out he was still in love with Led Zeppelin and kept his vinyl copies.

I saw a row of books which never surrendered behind the cracked windows of bombed out Oktyabrski.

I saw the fresh graves where the DPR buries their resistance heroes.

I saw the top of the hill at Saur-mogila which the DPR resistance lost and then reconquered, with a lone red-white-blue flag now waving in the wind.

I saw the Superman rising from the destruction at Saur-mogila – the fallen statue in a monument to World War II heroes, which seventy years ago was fighting fascism and now has been hit, but not destroyed, by fascists.

I saw the Debaltsevo cauldron in the distance and then I could fully appreciate, geographically, how DPR tactics surrounded and squeezed the demoralized Kiev fighters.

I saw the DPR's military practicing their drills by the roadside from Donetsk to Lugansk.

I saw the DPR's Foreign Minister hopeful there would be a political solution instead of war while admitting personally he dreams of a DPR as an independent nation.

I saw two badass Cossack commanders tell me in a horse-breeding farm in holy

Cossack land that the real war has not even started.

I did not see the totally destroyed Donetsk airport because the DPR's military were too concerned about our safety and would not grant us a permit while the airport was being hit – in defiance of Minsk 2; but I saw the destruction and the pile of Ukrainian army bodies on the mobile phone of a Serbian DPR resistance fighter.

I did not see, as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe international observers also didn't, the rows and rows of Russian tanks and soldiers that the current Dr. Strangelove in charge of NATO, General Breedhate, sees every day in his exalted dreams invading Ukraine over and over again.

And I did not see the arrogance, the ignorance, the shamelessness and the lies distorting those manicured faces in Kiev, Washington and Brussels while they insist, over and over again, that the entire population of Donbass, traumatized babushkas and children of all ages included, are nothing but "terra-rists".

After all, they are Western "civilization"-enabled cowards who would never dare to show their manicured faces to the people of Donbass.

So this is my gift to them.

Just a howl of anger and unbounded contempt. **CT**

.....
Pepe Escobar's new book is "Empire of Chaos: the Roving Eye Collection". He is roving correspondent for Asia Times Online.

**Read all back issues of ColdType & The Reader
at www.coldtype.net/reader.html
and www.issuu.com/coldtype/docs**

The Iranian ascendancy

Twelve years on, we now know who won the war in Iraq, writes **Peter Van Buren**

The US is running around in circles in the Middle East, patching together coalitions here, acquiring strange bedfellows there, and in location after location trying to figure out who the enemy of its enemy actually is. The result is just what you'd expect: chaos further undermining whatever's left of the nations whose frailty birthed the jihadism America is trying to squash.

And in a classic tale of unintended consequences, just about every time Washington has committed another blunder in the Middle East, Iran has stepped in to take advantage. Consider that country the rising power in the region and credit American clumsiness for the new Iranian ascendancy.

The US recently concluded air strikes in support of the Iraqi militias that Iran favors as they took back the city of Tikrit from the Islamic State (IS). At the same time, Washington began supplying intelligence and aerial refueling on demand for a Saudi bombing campaign against the militias Iran favors in Yemen. Iran continues to advise and assist Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom Washington would still like to depose and, as part of its Syrian strategy, continues to supply and direct Hezbollah in Lebanon, a group the US considers a terror outfit.

Meanwhile, the US has successfully negotiated the outlines of an agreement with Iran in which progress on severely

constricting its nuclear program would be traded for an eventual lifting of sanctions and the granting of diplomatic recognition. This is sure to further bolster Tehran's status as a regional power, while weakening long-time American allies Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States.

A clever pundit could undoubtedly paint all of the above as a realpolitik ballet on Washington's part, but the truth seems so much simpler and more painful. Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, US policy in the region has combined confusion on an immense scale with awkward bursts of ill-coordinated and exceedingly short-term acts of expediency. The country that has most benefited is Iran. No place illustrates this better than Iraq.

Iraq Redux (yet again)

On April 9, 2003, just over 12 years ago, US troops pulled down a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos Square, symbolically marking what George W. Bush hoped was the beginning of a campaign to remake the Middle East in America's image by bringing not just Iraq but Syria and Iran to heel. And there can be no question that the invasion of Iraq did indeed set events in motion that are still remaking the region in ways once unimaginable.

In the wake of the Iraq invasion and occupation, the Arab Spring blossomed and

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, US policy in the region has combined confusion on an immense scale with awkward bursts of ill-coordinated and exceedingly short-term acts of expediency

LOST CAUSE?

Who remembers President Obama declaring victory in 2011 and praising American troops for coming home with their “heads held high”?

failed. (The recent Obama administration decision to resume arms exports to the military government of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt could be considered its coup de grâce.) Today, fighting ripples through Libya, Syria, Yemen, the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa, and other parts of the Greater Middle East. Terrorists attack in once relatively peaceful places like Tunisia. There is now a de facto independent Kurdistan – last a reality in the sixteenth century – that includes the city of Kirkuk. Previously stable countries have become roiling failed states and home to terrorist groups that didn’t even exist when the US military rolled across the Iraqi border in 2003.

And, of course, 12 years later in Iraq itself the fighting roars on. Who now remembers President Obama declaring victory in 2011 and praising American troops for coming home with their “heads held high”? He seemed then to be washing his hands forever of the pile of sticky brown sand that was Bush’s Iraq. Trillions had been spent, untold lives lost or ruined, but as with Vietnam decades earlier, the US was to move on and not look back. So much for the dream of a successful Pax Americana in the Middle East, but at least it was all over.

You know what happened next. Unlike in Vietnam, Washington did go back, quickly turning a humanitarian gesture in August 2014 to save the Yazidi people from destruction at the hands of the Islamic State into a full-scale bombing campaign in Syria and Iraq. A coalition of 62 nations was formed. (Where are they all now while the US conducts 85% of all air strikes against IS?) The tap on a massive arms flow was turned on. The architect of the 2007 “surge” in Iraq and a leaker of top secret documents, retired general and former CIA Director David Petraeus, was brought back in for advice. Twenty-four-seven bombing became the order of the day and several thousand US military advisors returned to familiar bases to retrain

some part of an American-created army that had only recently collapsed and abandoned four key northern cities to Islamic State militants. Iraq War 3.0 was officially underway and many pundits – including me – predicted a steady escalation with the usual quagmire to follow.

Such a result can hardly be ruled out yet, but at the moment it’s as if Barack Obama had stepped to the edge of the Iraqi abyss, peered over, and then shrugged his shoulders. Both his administration and the US military appear content for the moment neither to pull back nor press harder.

The American people seem to feel much the same way. Except in the Republican Congress (and even there in less shrill form than usual), there are few calls for... well, anything. The ongoing air strikes remain “surgical” in domestic politics, if not in Iraq and Syria. Hardly noticed and little reported on here, they have had next to no effect on Americans. Yet they remain sufficient to assure the right wing that the American military is still the best tool to solve problems abroad, while encouraging liberals who want to show that they can be as tough as anyone going into 2016.

At first glance, the American version of Iraq War 3.0 has the feel of the Libyan air intervention – the same lack of concern, that is, for the long game. But Iraq 2015 is no Libya 2011, because this time while America sits back, Iran rises.

Iran ascendant

The Middle East was ripe for change. Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the last major transformational event in the area was the fall of that classic American stooge, the Shah of Iran, in 1979. Otherwise, many of the thug regimes in power since the 1960s, the height of the Cold War, had stayed in place, and so had most of the borders set even earlier, in the aftermath of World War I.

Iran should send America a fruit basket to thank it for setting the stage so

perfectly for its ascent. As a start, in 2003 the United States eliminated Iran's major border threats: Iraq's Saddam Hussein to the west and the Taliban in Afghanistan to the east. (The Taliban are back of course, but diligently focused on America's puppet Afghan government.) The long slog of Washington's wars in both those countries dulled even the reliably bloodthirsty American public's taste for yet more of the same, and cooled off Bush-era plans in Tel Aviv and Washington for air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. (After all, if even Vice President Dick Cheney couldn't pull the trigger on Iran before leaving office in 2008, who in 2015 America is going to do so?)

Better yet for the Iranians, when Saddam was changed in 2006, they not only lost an enemy who had invaded their country in 1980, launching a bitter war against them that didn't end for eight years, but gained an ally in the new Iraq. As US influence withered away with the failure of the March 2010 Iraqi elections to produce a broadly representative government, Iran stepped in to broker a thoroughly partisan settlement leading to a sectarian Shia government in Baghdad bent on ensuring that the country's minority Sunni population would remain out of power forever. The Obama administration seemed nearly oblivious to Iran's gains in Iraq in 2010 – and seems so again in 2015.

In Tikrit, Iranian-led Shia forces recently drove the Islamic State from the city. In charge was Qassem Suleimani, the leader of the Qods Force (a unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards), who had previously led the brutally effective efforts of Iranian special forces against US soldiers in Iraq War 2.0. He returned to that country and assembled his own coalition of Shia militias to take Tikrit. All of them have long benefited from Iranian support, as has the increasingly Shia-dominated Iraqi army.

In addition, the Iranians seem to have brought in their own tanks and possibly

even ground troops for the assault on the city. They also moved advanced rocket systems into Iraq, the same weapons Hamas has used against Israel in recent conflicts.

Only one thing was lacking: air power. After much hemming and hawing, when it looked like the assault on Tikrit had been blunted by well-dug-in Islamic State fighters in a heavily booby-trapped city, the Obama administration agreed to provide it.

On the US side, the air of desperation around the decision to launch air strikes on Tikrit was palpable. You could feel it, for instance, in this statement by a Pentagon spokesperson almost pleading for the Iraqi government to favor Washington over Tehran: "I think it's important that the Iraqis understand that what would be most helpful to them is a reliable partner in this fight against IS. Reliable, professional, advanced military capabilities are something that very clearly and very squarely reside with the coalition."

Imagine if you had told an American soldier – or general – leaving Iraq in 2011 that, just a few years later in the country where he or she had watched friends die, the US would be serving as Iran's close air support. Imagine if you had told him that Washington would be helping some of the same Shia militias who planted IEDs to kill Americans go after Sunnis – and essentially begging for the chance to do so. Who would've thunk it?

The limits of Air Power 101

The White House no doubt imagined that US bombs would be seen as the decisive factor in Tikrit and that the sectarian government in Baghdad would naturally come to... What? Like us better than the Iranians?

Bizarre as such a "strategy" might seem on the face of it, it has proven even stranger in practice. The biggest problem with air power is that, while it's good at breaking things, it isn't decisive. It cannot determine

Imagine if you had told an American soldier – or general – leaving Iraq in 2011 that, just a few years later in the country where he or she had watched friends die, the US would be serving as Iran's close air support

LOST CAUSE?

What Tikrit has, in fact, done is solidify Iran's influence over Prime Minister al-Abadi, currently little more than the acting mayor of Baghdad

who moves into the governor's mansion after the dust settles. Only ground forces can do that, so a victory over the Islamic State in Tikrit, no matter what role air strikes played, can only further empower those Iranian-backed Shia militias. You don't have to be a military expert to know that this is the nature of air power, which makes it all the more surprising that American strategists seem so blind to it.

As for liking Washington better for its helping hand, there are few signs of that. Baghdad officials have largely been silent on America's contribution, praising only the "air coverage of the Iraqi air force and the international coalition." Shia militia forces on the ground have been angered by and scornful of the United States for – as they see it – interfering in their efforts to take Tikrit on their own.

The victory in that city will only increase the government's reliance on the militias, whom Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi now refers to as "popular volunteers," rather than the still-limited number of soldiers the Americans have so far been capable of training. (The Pentagon might, by the way, want to see if Iran can pass along any training tips, as their militias, unlike the American-backed Iraqi army, seem to be doing just fine.) That also means that the government will have no choice but to tolerate the Shia militia atrocities and acts of ethnic cleansing that have already taken place in Sunni Tikrit and will surely follow in any other Sunni areas similarly "liberated." Claims coming out of Washington that the US will be carefully monitoring the acts of Iraqi forces ring increasingly hollow.

What Tikrit has, in fact, done is solidify Iran's influence over Prime Minister al-Abadi, currently little more than the acting mayor of Baghdad, who claimed the victory in Tikrit as a way to increase his own prestige. The win also allows his Shia-run government to seize control of the ruins of that previously Sunni enclave. And no one should miss the obvious symbolism that lies

in the fact that the first major city retaken from the Islamic State in a Sunni area is also the birthplace of Saddam Hussein.

The best the Obama administration can do is watch helplessly as Tehran and Baghdad take their bows. A template has been created for a future in which other Sunni areas, including the country's second largest city, Mosul, and Sunni cities in Anbar Province will be similarly retaken, perhaps with the help of American air power but almost certainly with little credit to Washington.

Iran in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen

Tehran is now playing a similarly important role in other places where US policy stumbles have left voids, particularly in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen.

In Syria, Iranian forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Qods Force, and their intelligence services, advise and assist Bashar al-Assad's military. They also support Hezbollah elements from Lebanon fighting on Assad's side. At best, Washington is again playing second fiddle, using its air power against the Islamic State and training "moderate" Syrian fighters, the first of whom refused to even show up for their initial battle.

In Yemen, a US-supported regime, backed by Special Forces advisers and a full-scale drone targeted assassination campaign, recently crumbled. The American Embassy was evacuated in February, the last of those advisers in March. The takeover of the capital, Sana'a, and later significant parts of the rest of the country by the Houthis, a rebel Shiite minority group, represents, in the words of one Foreign Policy writer, "a huge victory for Iran... the Houthis' decision to tie their fate to Tehran's regional machinations risks tearing Yemen apart and throwing the country into chaos."

The panicked Saudis promptly intervened and were quickly backed by the Obama administration's insertion of the United States in yet another conflict by ex-

ecutive order. Relentless Saudi air strikes (perhaps using some of the \$640 million worth of cluster bombs the US sold them last year) are supported by yet another coalition, this time of Sudan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and other Sunni powers in the region. The threat of an invasion, possibly using Egyptian troops, looms. The Iranians have moved ships into the area in response to a Saudi naval blockade of Yemen.

No matter what happens, Iran will be strengthened. Either it will find itself in a client relationship with a Houthi movement that has advanced to the Saudi border or, should they be driven back, a chaotic state in Yemen with an ever-strengthening al-Qaeda offshoot. Either outcome would undoubtedly discombobulate the Saudis (and the Americans) and so sit well with Iran.

To make things even livelier in a fragmenting region, Sunni rebels infiltrating from neighboring Pakistan recently killed eight Iranian border guards. This probably represented a retaliatory attack in response to an earlier skirmish in which Iranian Revolutionary Guards killed three suspected Pakistani Sunni militants. Once started, fires do tend to spread.

For those keeping score at home, the Iranians now hold significant positions in three Middle Eastern countries (or at least fragments of former countries) in addition to Iraq.

Iran ascending and the nuclear question

Iran is well positioned to ascend. Geopolitically, alone in the region it is a nation that has existed more or less within its current borders for thousands of years. It is almost completely ethnically stable and religiously, culturally, and linguistically homogeneous, with its minorities comparatively under control. While still governed in large part by its clerics, Iran has seen evolving democratic electoral transitions at the secular level. Politically, history is on Iran's side. If you set aside the 1953 CIA-backed

coup that ousted the democratically elected prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and put the US-backed Shah in power for a quarter of a century, Iran has sorted out its governance on its own for some time.

Somehow, despite decades of sanctions, Iran, with the fourth-largest proven crude oil reserves and the second-largest natural gas reserves on the planet, has managed to hold its economy together, selling what oil it can primarily to Asia. It is ready to sell more oil as soon as sanctions lift. It has a decent conventional military by local standards. Its young reportedly yearn for greater engagement with the West. Unlike nearly every other nation in the Middle East, Iran's leaders do not rule in fear of an Islamic revolution. They already had one – 36 years ago.

Recently, the US, Iran, and the P5 (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China) reached a preliminary agreement to significantly constrain that country's nuclear program and lift sanctions. It appears that both the Obama administration and Tehran are eager to turn it into an official document by the end of June. A deal isn't a deal until signed on the dotted line, and the congressional Republicans are sharpening their knives, but the intent is clearly there.

To keep the talks on track, by the end of June the Obama administration will have released to the Islamic Republic a total of \$11.9 billion in previously frozen assets, dating back to the 1979 Iranian takeover of the US embassy in Tehran. In addition to the straight-up flood of cash, the US agreed that Iran may sell \$4.2 billion worth of oil, free from any sanctions. The US will also allow Iran approximately \$1.5 billion in gold sales, as well as easier access to "humanitarian transactions." Put another way, someone in Washington wanted this badly enough to pay for it.

For President Obama and his advisers, this agreement is clearly a late grasp (or perhaps last gasp) at legacy building, and

For President Obama and his advisers, this agreement is clearly a late grasp (or perhaps last gasp) at legacy building, and maybe even a guilty stab at justifying that 2009 Nobel Peace Prize

LOST CAUSE?

One hopes that America will not use that military and economic strength to lash out at the new regional power it inadvertently helped midwife

maybe even a guilty stab at justifying that 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. The urge to etch some kind of foreign policy success into future history books that, at the moment, threaten to be grim reading is easy enough to understand. So it should have surprised no one that John Kerry, Obama's once globe-trotting secretary of state, basically took up residence in Switzerland to negotiate with the Iranians. He sat at the table in Lausanne bargaining while Tikrit burned, Syria simmered, his country was chased out of Yemen, and the Saudis launched their own war in that beleaguered country. That he had hardly a word to say about any of those events, or much of anything else going on in the world at the time, is an indication of just how much value the Obama administration puts on those nuclear negotiations.

For the Iranians, trading progress on developing nuclear weapons for the full-scale lifting of sanctions was an attractive offer. After all, its leaders know that the country could never go fully nuclear without ensuring devastating Israeli strikes, and so lost little with the present agreement while gaining much.

Being accepted as a peer by Washington in such negotiations only further establishes their country's status as a regional power. Moreover, a nuclear agreement that widens any rift between the US, Israel, and the Saudis plays to Tehran's new strength. Finally, the stronger economy likely to blossom once sanctions are lifted will offer the nation the possibility of new revenues and renewed foreign investment. (It's easy to imagine Chinese businesspeople on Orbitz making air reservations as you read this.) The big winner in the nuclear deal is not difficult to suss out.

What lies ahead

In these last months, despite the angry, fearful cries and demands of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Saudi royals, and neo- and other conservatives in

Congress, Iran has shown few signs of aspiring to the sort of self-destruction going nuclear would entail. (If Iran had created a bomb every time Netanyahu claimed they were on the verge of having one in the past two decades, Tehran would be littered with them.) In fact, trading mushroom clouds with Israel and possibly the US never looked like an appealing goal to the Iranian leadership. Instead, they preferred to seek a more conventional kind of influence throughout the Middle East. They were hardly alone in that, but their success has been singular in the region in these years.

The US provided free tutorials in Afghanistan and Iraq on why actually occupying territory in the neighborhood isn't the road to such influence. Iran's leaders have not ignored the advice. Instead, Iran's rise has been stoked by a collection of client states, aligned governments, sympathetic and/or beholden militias, and – when all else fails – chaotic non-states that promise less trouble and harm to Tehran than to its various potential enemies.

Despite Iran's gains, the US will still be the biggest kid on the block for years, possibly decades, to come. One hopes that America will not use that military and economic strength to lash out at the new regional power it inadvertently helped midwife. And if any of this does presage some future US conflict with an Iran that has gotten "too powerful," then we shall have witnessed a great irony, a great tragedy, and a damn waste of American blood and resources. **CT**

Peter Van Buren blew the whistle on State Department waste and mismanagement during the Iraqi reconstruction in his first book, "We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People". He writes about current events at his blog, We Meant Well.

His latest book is "Ghosts of Tom Joad: A Story of the #99Percent".

This essay was originally published at <http://tomdispatch.com>

Sorry for Vladimir

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin.
 First there's his name, not Ryan or Newton,
 But a thud or a punch, the spitting of pips,
 That rolls down the tongue and pops off the lips.
 And he looks like a wrestler ready to choke
 Some poor s.o.b. who cracked a bad joke.

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin.
 So high in the polls? You're darn-tootin'.
 But scorned abroad for his taciturn grace,
 Asserting his power, not knowing his place,
 Yet working with Hillary, John and The One,
 As they picked off his allies, wars yet unwon.

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin.
 Not a nice guy, but surely well-suitin'
 The times of an empire falling to pieces,
 Its business held up by quan'tative eases.
 He kindly received their silly "reset"
 And braced for an onslaught, ongoing yet.

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin.
 He does what he does with minimal shootin'.
 His foes being glad of Ukranian fascists,
 He sent the Crimea his boys without patches.
 They snapped off a portion to wide applause,
 Except in the West, where statesmen dropped jaws.

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin,
 Tricked by the West for their refutin'
 A gents' accord to observe the stat'-quo
 And making of Europe a steady strip-show.
 Yet still he abides, he's sent out no nukes,
 Unlike old Brezhnev, he's put up no dukes.

I've always felt sorry for Vladimir Putin,
 His ruble tankin', his oil mootin'.
 With China he's made amends and said,
 "We give you oil, you give us bread,"
 Not a dumb thing for a leader to do,
 Except for ol' Vlad, whom they love to chew. **CT**

Philip Kraske is from Minneapolis but has lived for the past 30 years in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His four novels, of varied plots but centering on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009.



Remembering Danny Schechter

Don't miss our special 48-page
 tribute to the News Dissector

 [Click here to download](#)

The order to destroy

A family is about to become homeless in a Palestinian village near Jerusalem. Words and photos by **Mats Svensson**

It is Wednesday afternoon, 5 November. I am at Silwan, south of Jerusalem's Old City, where a house is to be demolished. Before I reach the house, I stop and look up at all the windows, at all the balconies, and at all the flat roofs. People are everywhere. Old, young, women, men. Soldiers. Everyone gazing in the same direction. I am struck by the silence.

Women stand in the shade, away from the sun. An old man behind the soldiers tries to shout something, but his cry gets caught behind the bars of despair. I see the desperation in his eyes. I see how his back is bent. I see how the soldier, the soldier who looks like a teenager, shoves him away. He cannot get through. A young soldier carries water bottles. Water for all the soldiers.

I turn to the shade and face the women. Unlike the soldiers with green clothes and heavy weapons, I see dignity. No expressions of hopelessness, but no hope, either. As if

This is an excerpt from "Crimes, Victims and Witnesses: Apartheid in Palestine," by Mats Svensson, published by Real African Publishers, Johannesburg, South Africa





IN THE FRAME



I think, 'This is not real. I must have walked onto a film set'

they are in an inferior position but still have not lost. As if they have lost everything, but still have everything left.

I have still not reached the house but am stopped by soldiers on horseback. Soldiers who shout at me. I am saved by a photographer from Reuters who speaks to me, as if he recognises me. Together we go on, past clusters of soldiers. Past men with combat equipment; men who do not look proud; men who dodge my eyes; men who do not wish to be photographed.

When I reach the site, the film cameras have begun to register, second upon second.

The stage is bathing in a clear light as the sun is setting high above us, over the rooftops. For the photographers, this is the best lighting. It is light that creates contrasts, that creates depth against the white limestone walls.

I think, "This is not real. I must have walked onto a film set." As if the director had moved from Fårö to Jerusalem. As if Ingemar Bergman was adapting Selma Lagerlöf's book, "Jerusalem," for the screen. In front of me I see how Sven Nykvist shapes his right hand, shapes a three-sided figure to block out the unessential, concentrates and locks the gaze while the director behind him



The young soldiers are about to destroy, dominate, take over, demolish, create despair, humiliate, be in control, stand in the center



quietly watches. How I wish it were the case, that in front of me I am watching a performance: that everyone around me is acting. That it is about a tragedy between father and son, or about Swedish farmers who had left Nås for the Holy City. But these feelings last for only a short moment.

I am immediately pulled back to reality when a young soldier points while raising his automatic weapon ten degrees, aiming at the man in the door who is carrying the red carpet, the one that had just covered the floor. A small table had stood on that carpet. Around the table had been a couch, some armchairs

and chairs. This is where they had celebrated Eid and friends had come to visit last Friday. Children had played on the floor and they had drunk strong Arabic coffee.

The silence is almost palpable. The neighbor has become an enemy. Hundreds of soldiers, many of them young, now carry heavy weapons and combat equipment. The order to destroy has been given.

The young soldiers are about to destroy, dominate, take over, demolish, create despair, humiliate, be in control, stand in the center.

In the periphery stands a lonely American

A young soldier points while raising his automatic weapon ten degrees, aiming at the man in the door who is carrying the red carpet

IN THE FRAME

diplomat. He registers and takes notes. I am glad and impressed by his presence. When a house is demolished, he is there; when a family is thrown out on the street, he is present.

Then the silence is broken. The house is emptied. Everything has been brought out and placed in a large pile. Toys, toothpaste, the sofa bed, the yellow teddy bear, plastic flowers, tables, carpets, a refrigerator with photos of happy children.

The men are forced away; the soldiers' attentiveness is sharpened. Everyone's gaze is sharpened. Everyone is looking at the yellow machine, the machine with the large axe, which reminds us of a dentist's drill. But here there is no one drilling. Here it is not about being careful; here something is to be axed, struck, broken.

Everyone watches when the man in the machine-from-hell approaches the house, lifts the large thorn and begins to axe through the roof. The ground trembles. The man who earlier tried to cry raises his hands towards the soldiers who prevented him from approaching the house and then he aims his hands towards the sky, to the Almighty.

Hell is suddenly in front of me. I stand beside the family that has lost everything. In front of us we see the machine that breaks their home into pieces, killing all hope. The young soldier who, in a democratic society, should protect the weak was not allowed to do so.

I see spectators from near and far. Fellow beings, journalists, diplomats and activists. Children who are scared of what they see and who wonder whose house will be demolished tomorrow.

I look around and see all the young, all the boys. Boys standing on the roofs, on the balconies, who stand in groups. They begin to talk, begin to point towards the house which is soon a pile of rubble and towards the soldiers.

The young boys stood beside me. They saw a family removing all of their belongings. They saw the family watching their house



In front of us we see the machine that breaks the family's home into pieces

become crushed. In the middle of Jerusalem, a few hundred meters from Via Dolorosa.

In the middle of the hopelessness I tell myself that this must be stopped, that together we can stop the madness. We have to stop saying it is meaningless, stop all forms of the cynicism that have become part of reality among foreigners, among diplomats in Jerusalem. There must, at the end, be some kind of damned law and order in this place.



Those of you who decide over your country's foreign policy in relation to Palestine are quite few. Few but powerful. That power must be managed well when your decisions affect the young peoples' views on democracy and arouse and extinguish dreams.

My mobile phone vibrates. The UN, through OCHA, writes that three more houses are being demolished today: more people are about to become homeless. **CT**



**CRIMES, VICTIMS
AND WITNESSES:
Apartheid in Palestine**

Mats Svensson

Real African Publishers,
Johannesburg,
South Africa

\$40 (Amazon.com)

Kleptoremuneration

Theft through excessive rewards: that's today's dominant business model, writes **George Monbiot**

Carole is shouted at by family members for being late and not spending enough time with each client, then upbraided by the company because of the complaints it receives

There is an inverse relationship between utility and reward. The most lucrative, prestigious jobs tend to cause the greatest harm. The most useful workers tend to be paid least and treated worst.

I was reminded of this while listening to a care worker describing her job. Carole's company gives her a rota of, er, three-half hour visits per hour. It takes no account of the time required to travel between jobs, and doesn't pay her for it either, which means she makes less than the minimum wage. During the few minutes she spends with a client, she might have to get them out of bed, help them on the toilet, wash them, dress them, make breakfast and give them their medicines. If she ever gets a break, she told the radio programme "You and Yours", she spends it with her clients. For some, she is the only person they see all day.

Is there more difficult or worthwhile employment? Yet she is paid in criticism and insults as well as pennies. She is shouted at by family members for being late and not spending enough time with each client, then upbraided by the company because of the complaints it receives. Her profession is assailed in the media, as the problems created by the corporate model are blamed on the workers. "I love going to people; I love helping them, but the constant criticism is depressing," she says. "It's like always being

in the wrong".

Her experience is unexceptional. A report by the Resolution Foundation reveals that two-thirds of frontline care workers in the UK receive less than the living wage. Ten percent, like Carole, are illegally paid less than the minimum wage. This abuse is not confined to the UK: in the US, 27% of care workers who make home visits are paid less than the legal minimum.

Let's imagine the lives of those who own or run the company. We have to imagine it, as, for good reasons, neither the care worker's real name nor the company she works for were revealed. The more costs and corners they cut, the more profitable their business will be. In other words, the less they care, the better they will do. The perfect chief executive, from the point of view of the shareholders, is a fully fledged sociopath.

Such people will soon become very rich. They will be praised by the government as wealth creators. If they donate enough money to party funds, they have a high chance of becoming peers of the realm. Gushing profiles in the press will commend their entrepreneurial chutzpah and flair.

They'll acquire a wide investment portfolio, perhaps including a few properties, so that – even if they cease to do anything resembling work – they can continue living off the labour of people like Carole, as she

struggles to pay extortionate rents. Their descendants, perhaps for many generations, will need never take a job of the kind she does.

Care workers function as a human loom, shuttling from one home to another, stitching the social fabric back together, while many of their employers, shareholders and government ministers slash blindly at the cloth, downsizing, outsourcing and deregulating in the cause of profit.

It doesn't matter how many times the myth of meritocracy is debunked. It keeps re-emerging, as you can see in the current election campaign. How else, after all, can the government justify stupendous inequality?

Cheats never prosper?

One of the most painful lessons a young adult learns is that the wrong traits are rewarded. We celebrate originality and courage, but those who rise to the top are often conformists and sycophants. We are taught that cheats never prosper, yet the country is run by spivs. A study testing British senior managers and chief executives found that, on certain indicators of psychopathy, their scores exceeded those of patients diagnosed with psychopathic personality disorders in the Broadmoor special hospital.

If you possess the one indispensable skill – battering and blustering your way to the top – incompetence in other areas is no impediment. The former chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, Carly Fiorina, features prominently on lists of the USA's worst bosses: quite an achievement when you consider the competition. She fired 30,000 workers in the name of efficiency, yet oversaw a halving of the company's stock price. Morale and communication became so bad that she was booed at company meetings. She was forced out, with a \$42m severance package. Where is she now? About to launch her campaign as presidential candidate for the Republican party, where, apparently, she's considered a serious contender.

It's the Mitt Romney story all over again.

At university, I watched in horror as the grand plans of my ambitious friends dissolved. It took them about a minute, on walking into the corporate recruitment fair, to see that the careers they had pictured – working for Oxfam, becoming a photographer, defending the living world – paid about one fiftieth of what they might earn in the City. They all swore that they would leave to follow their dreams after two or three years of making money. Need I remark that none did? They soon adjusted their morality to their circumstances. One, a firebrand who wanted to nationalise the banks and overthrow capitalism, plunged first into banking, then into politics.

Flinch once, at the beginning of your career, and they will have you for life. The world is wrecked by clever young people making apparently sensible choices.

The inverse relationship doesn't always hold. There are plenty of useless, badly-paid jobs, and a few useful, well-paid jobs. But surgeons and film directors are greatly outnumbered by corporate lawyers, lobbyists, advertisers, management consultants, financiers and parasitic bosses consuming the utility their workers provide. As the pay gap widens – chief executives in the UK took 60 times as much as the average worker in the 1990s and 180 times as much today – the uselessness ratio is going through the roof. I propose a name for this phenomenon: kleptoremuneration.

There is no end to this theft except robust government intervention: a redistribution of wages through maximum ratios and enhanced taxation. But this won't happen until we challenge the infrastructure of justification, built so carefully by politicians and the press. Our lives are damaged not by the undeserving poor but by the undeserving rich. **CT**

.....
George Monbiot

We celebrate originality and courage, but those who rise to the top are often conformists and sycophants. We are taught that cheats never prosper, yet the country is run by spivs

Inequality and perplexing miracles

Jeff Nygaard looks into economic miracles and discovers that the real story is not always found in the headline

An Atlantic magazine article came to the conclusion that Minneapolis is a 'miracle'. But only if you're white

On March 3 the *New York Times* ran a story headlined “While India Is Booming, Mothers Go Hungry.” The story reported that “A child raised in India is far more likely to be malnourished than one from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe or Somalia, the world’s poorest countries.” How can this be? wonders the *Times*. Indeed, “The poor health of children in India, even after decades of robust economic growth, is one of the world’s most perplexing public health issues.”

It’s not that perplexing, as we can see if we skip ahead four weeks to a *Times* article of March 31, headlined “How Income Inequality Can Be Bad for Your Health.” That story reported that “New evidence suggests that living in a community with high income inequality also seems to be bad for your health.”

The *Times* quoted Bridget Catlin, the co-director of a project called the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, which conducted the inequality study for counties in the US, and found that, “It’s not just the level of income in a community that matters – it’s also how income is distributed.” There are lots of things that affect mortality rates, but the fact is that “for every increment that a community became more unequal, the proportion of residents dying before the age of 75 went up,” according to the study. S.V. Sub-

ramanian, a professor of population health and geography at Harvard, “who has studied the phenomenon,” says that “Inequality effects, over and above average income, are pretty well established.” And it’s not just in US counties, but “existing literature suggests there are relationships between income inequality and life expectancy among countries in the world.”

India, for example. Despite “decades of robust economic growth,” the March 3 article reported that the “poor health of young Indian women” is “an important factor” in the high rates of infant mortality in that country. “The reasons for Indian mothers’ relatively poor health are many,” says the *Times*, “including a culture that discriminates against them. Sex differences in education, employment outside the home, and infant mortality are all greater in India than in Africa.”

Shortly before these two stories appeared, the *Atlantic* magazine ran a story titled “The Miracle of Minneapolis,” which came to the conclusion that Minneapolis is a “Miracle” because the city’s overall economic indicators – median household income, college-graduation rate, poverty rate, affordable housing, young-adult employment rates, and so forth – are very good. The key word there is “overall.” As it turns out, the “Miracle” only applies to white people. The disparities are so great, in fact, that a few

years ago the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ran a story about Census data on Minnesota with the headline “A Great State to Live in – For Whites.” (I reported on this back in July 2010, in *Nygaard Notes*, issue458.)

The existence of these appalling disparities is well-known. The day after the *Atlantic* tooted the Minneapolis horn the *Washington Post* published a blog entry entitled “If Minneapolis is so great, why is it so bad for African Americans?” That post reported that a recent study “analysed the black-white gap in census indicators such as household income, homeownership and educational attainment. It ranked Minnesota as the worst state for financial inequality.”

And local educator Mike Spangenberg said on his blog “Question the Premise” that “Minnesota was recently named the second-worst state in the country for Black people to live. [At least we’re better than Wisconsin!] Minnesota has the worst educational inequity for Latino students in the

country; Minnesota ranks dead last in the country in graduating Native American students.” The list could go on.

All of these three anecdotes – about poor women in India, about inequality and mortality, and about the Whites-Only Miracle of Minneapolis – illustrate a truth that people with privilege have a hard time grasping. And that truth is this: How much wealth a society has is far, far less important than what a society does with the wealth it has. Were journalists to keep this simple truth in mind, they would be much less likely to be “perplexed” if a country’s growth fails to benefit its people. And we’d be less likely to read articles telling us that a city that is among the worst in the country in terms of racial disparities is a “miracle.” **CT**

.....
Jeff Nygaard, based in Minneapolis, is the editor of Nygaard Notes at <http://nygaard notes.com> – where this article was first published

How much wealth a society has is far, far less important than what a society does with the wealth it has



Download and read back issues of

ColdType

at <http://coldtype.net/reader.html>

The storm is over

Kathy Kelly writes from a Lexington prison

Prisoners from drought-ridden areas wish they could collect the rainwater and send it home

Lightning flashed across Kentucky skies a few nights ago. “I love storms,” said my roommate, Gypsi, her eyes bright with excitement. Thunder boomed over the Kentucky hills and Atwood Hall, here in Lexington, KY’s federal prison. I fell asleep thinking of the gentle, haunting song our gospel choir sings: “It’s over now, It’s over now. I think that I can make it. The storm is over now.”

I awoke the next morning feeling confused and bewildered. Why had the guards counted us so many times? “That was lightning,” Gypsi said, giggling. The guards shine flashlight in our rooms three times a night, to count us, and I generally wake up each time; that night the storm was also a culprit.

As the day continued we saw large pools of water had collected at each entrance to Atwood Hall. Prisoners from drought-ridden areas wish they could collect the rainwater and send it home. Fanciful notions, but of the kind, at least, that can help us remember priorities. I suppose it’s wise, though, to focus on what can be fixed. The elevator here, for instance.

The Department of Justice Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 provides 27.4 billion in discretionary funding. In state prisons alone, it’s estimated that taxpayers spend an average of \$31,286.00 per inmate per year. (The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration

Costs Taxpayers, p. 9). But, for most of the 2.5 months that I’ve lived here in Atwood Hall, the elevator from the basement to the 3rd floor, which should serve close to 300 women, has been out of order. According to inmate-dot-com, our in-house rumor mill, a decision was made, last month, not to fix it. In the past several weeks, two women arrived in wheelchairs and another new prisoner is blind.

Easy exercise – for some

I like moving from the basement to the third floor on the staircase. It’s easy exercise. But traveling up and down the stairs can be life-threatening for many prisoners here.

Ms. P. seems to be in her seventies. Wiry white hair, fixed in a braid that reaches down her neck, surrounds her golden brown face. I like to imagine a framed oil painting of her gracing the first floor entrance.

A few nights ago, I watched her toil to haul herself, hanging on to the handrail, from the basement to the first floor. She needed to rest on the landing, winded, her heart pounding, barely able to speak. But Ms. P. made the best of it. “Ms. P.,” said another prisoner comfortingly, “maybe they’ll get this elevator fixed this week.” “I’d contribute my entire month’s salary if it would help repair the elevator!” Ms. P. said with a chuckle. She very likely earns \$6.72 per month, at 12 cents an hour. Three of us

readily agreed to match her donation, which would amount to about \$28.

We need Ms. P.'s lightheartedness. But I've seen flashes of fury, followed by sad resignation, like lightning giving way to rain, in the faces of guards and prison administrators witnessing these scenes occurring on their watch, but as powerless to stop them as to call off those storms the other night.

A ray of brilliant sun fell for me last weekend with a visit from an old friend, parent to a lovely child I was especially delighted to see. Once again, I am luckier than so many whose loved ones lack the means for regular and intensive travel. Through our conversation in the prison visiting room, I learned the story of Thompson FCI, a freshly-constructed but never-occupied federal prison near Clinton, Iowa. My friend's folks, who live near the town, have speculated for years, as have all the town's residents, about when or whether the empty prison would ever open. Right now, my friend said, there's only one full time employee in the prison, the warden, and his job is to mow the lawn.

Apparently, local people have been pinning for the Bureau of Prisons to act. "The BOP's positive impact on rural communities is significant," says a 2015 paper issued by the Department of Justice. "By bringing in new federal jobs, stimulation of local businesses and housing, contracting with hospitals and other local vendors, and coordinating with local law enforcement, the BOP improves the economy of the town and the entire region where these rural facilities are located."

Yet government's promises to aid small towns with "prison money" often ring false. In an article entitled "The American Prison, Open for Business?" (*Peace Review*, vol. 20, issue 3), Stephen Gallagher notes that although prisons may bring with them high-paying jobs, "most employees of the prison industry do not live in the host communities." "In a joint WSU/MSU study, it was found that 68 percent of the corrective jobs

were held by people who did not even live in the county that housed the prison where they worked. In another study in California, it was found that less than 20 percent of the jobs went to residents of the host community." And most people living in poor rural communities aren't eligible for the better-paying jobs in the prison system.

12 cents an hour

Communities desperate to host a new prison should also consider the wages that will be paid to the prisoners. What company would choose to hire local non-inmate workers when the BOP can forcibly hire inmates to work for 12 cents an hour, right in their homes, with no need to consider employee benefits, pay raises, vacation pay or insurance. Prison labour creates a labour pool that is always available and can be maintained in a manner similar to the cost of maintaining slaves. If neighboring people lose their jobs, if they have to steal to try to get by, they can always wind up living in the prison.

I'm hard-pressed to see how this can possibly benefit an area's economy, that is if its "economy" is understood to include all the area's people, and not just the wealthiest who can influence prison placement.

When prisons are constructed in rural, southern areas, the political elites can count the entire prison population as part of their census, bringing federal funds into their jurisdictions, but without much pressure to share funds with their new 'constituents,' since the prisoners by and large can't vote. Blighted urban areas lose funds desperately needed for education, housing, health care and infrastructure, while rural people compete to be hired as jailers.

One morning last week, a neighbor across the hall told us she feared she would choke on her own sobs as she cried herself to sleep. I wondered how many times the flashlights would re-awaken her during the night. She had been counting on a sentence reduction and her lawyer had told her, just

Prison labour creates a labour pool that is always available and can be maintained in a manner similar to the cost of maintaining slaves

BEHIND BARS

For many, a “free market” will mean the choice to lose our homes or find a home behind bars, or else to make a living keeping other people there

the previous day, that her case is complicated and she most likely wouldn't qualify. “I can't do 3 1/2 more years here,” she said, completely distraught. “I just can't!” “Yes, you can,” insisted one of the friends gathering to console her. I watched appreciatively, two people caught in the storm and guiding each other through it.

We hear about the droughts, and the temperature records, and we recognize that more storms are coming. The recent, and for many never-ended, financial crisis was a storm, and I notice that politicians and pundits are in full swing demanding a new regional war overseas with the arguments we'd hoped the nation had learned to reject twelve years ago. We can expect these threats, with ecological scarcity underlying them all, to build into each other: the perfect storm. We remember that storms can build quickly. “I can't do 3 more years” might well be a statement truer, and truer for many, many more people, than my suffering fellow inmate ever imagined. We could be working together preparing shelter.

Staying free

Many people of Clinton, Iowa will clamor for the prison to open, but not for more direct government help, communal help to foster employment and development in the area. For many, a “free market” will mean the choice to lose our homes or find a home behind bars, or else to make a living keeping other people there; but without the choice, in an increasingly undemocratic nation, to pool our resources as a community and help each other to stay free; compassionately, or even sanely, to shelter each other from this storm. The jobs will come when

strangers file in, in chains - that's freedom. I look around me at “freedom,” and at how Ms. P. is getting a step up in the world.

We could awake into the world, build affinities between the suffering people locked in Atwood Hall and its managers, between the struggling rural community of Clinton and the urban desperate they wait to see bused in. Just about everyone longs to raise their children in a world where drought, storms, and brutal want won't loom as insoluble, inevitable catastrophes. Working together we could reclaim misspent resources and correct misguided policies. Our fear and isolation from each other, aiming to get a step up above our neighbors, our reluctance to live in a shared world, may be worse than the other storms we face.

The other storms will come, and we will have to see how we weather them, but what if our terrible fear of each other could pass us by? What if, for those of us doing the easiest time, “I can't do 3 more years” became “I won't make you do 3 more years” - became our part in a chorused “we won't do 3 more years!” ringing through our society. How miraculous it would be to hold our children and grand-children and sing, “I think that we can make it. The storm is over now.”

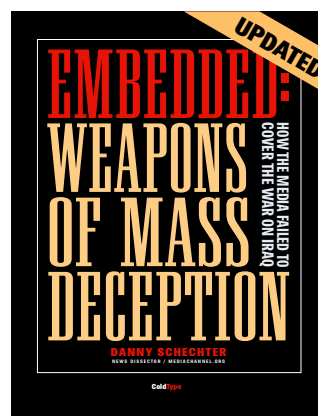
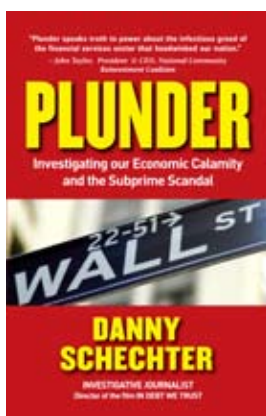
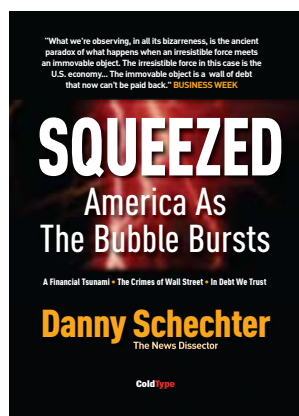
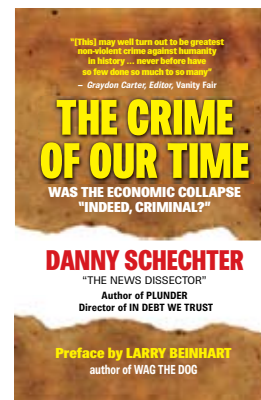
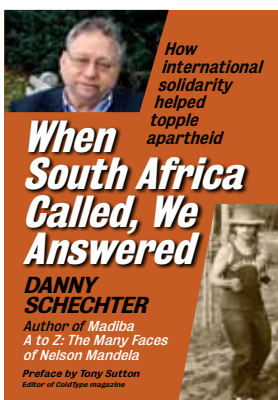
.....
Kathy Kelly**, co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org) is nearing the end of a federal prison term incurred for participation in an anti-drone protest. She can receive mail at: **KATHY KELLY** 04971-045; **FMC LEXINGTON; FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTER; SATELLITE CAMP; P.O. BOX 14525; LEXINGTON, KY 40512.

This article was first published on TeleSUR.

WORDS and PICTURES

Download ColdType's photo essays at
<http://coldtype.net/photo.html>

REMEMBERING DANNY SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015



As an appreciation of the work of Danny Schechter, the News Dissector, over the past 50 years, we're giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net

Download them at:

<http://coldtype.net/SchechterBooks.html>

The great diamond heist

The phrase 'blood diamonds' is usually linked to the brutal West African wars of the 1990s but, as **Stan Winer** reports, diamonds financed devastating conflicts in southern Africa long before that

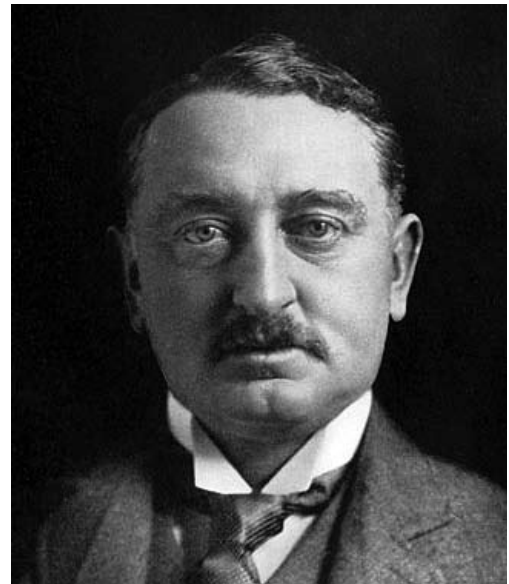
Activists at the University of Cape Town in South Africa have won a campaign forcing the university council to remove an apartheid-era statue honoring British imperialist Cecil Rhodes

At the outskirts of the small South African town of Kimberley lies the biggest human-made hole in the world, unimaginatively referred to by the locals as "The Big Hole". It is a popular tourist attraction. Yet few visitors to this heritage site recognize that, on a deeper level of meaning, it symbolizes the very nadir of colonial depravity. It is metaphor for the gaping hole that exists in the public awareness of past events that have shaped the tortuous history of southern Africa. But that might possibly be about to change.

Twenty-five years after the official abolition of apartheid, activists at the University of Cape Town in South Africa have won a strident campaign forcing the university council to remove an apartheid-era statue honoring an historical figure closely associated with Kimberley and its Big Hole. It is a statue of British arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes, which for many decades dominated the entrance to the university's main campus.

The student campaign has ignited a frenzy of public debate about the merits of removing or retaining onerous public symbols of the apartheid and colonial eras. Numerous other colonial and apartheid-era statues across the country, including one of Queen Victoria, have been attacked, defaced, damaged or dismantled by vandals, while South African president Jacob Zuma appeals for calm.

It remains to be seen if the disputed re-



British arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes: his statue is the cause of much racial ill-feeling in South Africa.

moval or retention of apartheid symbols will advance or retard significantly the broader politics of remembering and forgetting in the country. But one thing is certain: the Big Hole will remain for a very long time to come, and its hidden history can be traced back to around the year 1800. That was when a mixed-race group of about 600 disaffected migrants, calling themselves Griquas and led by a former slave, trekked away from the Cape Colony, crossed the Orange River frontier, and settled in a deserted region which



Kimberley's Big Hole, historical site of the world's richest diamond discovery

Fortune hunters from all over southern Africa and from Europe, America and Australia fought over claims, while at the same time remaining united in the common purpose of being the masters of black labour

they named Griqualand.

It is a dry, dusty, desolate place, yielding just enough spring water to sustain human and animal habitation. When the Griquas first settled here, they thought no one else would covet this inhospitable place. They would at last be free from the depredations of colonialism. Or so they thought. But that was before the discovery of the world's richest deposit of diamonds.

Diamond rush

Britain had in 1795 seized the Cape colony from the Dutch during the Napoleonic wars in Europe, to prevent French ships from using the port of Cape Town. The colony subsequently became a permanent British possession. Then, in June 1871, a white prospector announced the discovery of an 83.50 carat (16.7g) diamond at the place now known as Kimberley, so named after Earl Kimberley, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies. The site of this discovery just happened to be within Griqua territory, but fortune hunters never did bother to raise any question with the Griquas as to ownership of the mining rights.

Just a few days earlier, the British colonial secretary, in a despatch dated May 18, 1871, had already authorized the British High Commissioner in Cape Town to "extend the British territory in South Africa" by annexing Griqualand. It seems unlikely that the close timing of these two events would have been purely coincidental.

The site of the Kimberley diamond discovery was at a small hill sitting astride a number of extinct volcanic pipes – tube-shaped tunnels that once carried molten rock to the surface from deep in the earth. In this case, the molten rock contained diamonds. The small hill was soon replaced by the Big Hole as fortune hunters from all over southern Africa and from Europe, America and Australia fought over claims, while at the same time remaining united in the common purpose of being the masters of black labour.

Seven hundred individual claims or plots of ground containing a little more than 83 square metres were marked off and taken possession of. Thirty thousand black labourers toiled away in that confined space, but were themselves prohibited from owning claims or dealing in diamonds. They were

BLOOD DIAMONDS



An old illustration depicts the battle of the Shangani, during the first Matabele War in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)

Any dark-skinned person in the vicinity who could not prove he was employed as a servant or labourer was declared a vagrant and subjected to flogging

subjected to constant body searches and restricted to their huts and tents by nighttime curfew. Any dark-skinned person in the vicinity who could not prove he was employed as a servant or labourer was declared a vagrant and subjected to flogging.

The deeper the diggings progressed, the greater became the danger of cave-ins and flooding. Still, there was no shortage of cheap labour. Boers had by this time also emigrated from the Cape Colony and occupied the traditional lands of local African tribes in the neighbouring territories where, after a succession of violent frontier wars, they had established their republics of Free State and Transvaal. The pastoral tribesmen, dispossessed of pasturage for their herds of cattle and sheep, had no option but to sell their labour for a pittance or face starvation. This was slavery in all but name, despite or because slavery had officially been abolished since 1834.

Griqua leader Nicolaas Waterboer, through

a legal advocate, had during all this time been importuning the British colonial authorities at the Cape to respect Griqualand's sovereign independence and its ownership of the land upon which the diamond field was situated. To no avail. Finally, in May 1878 an armed rebellion broke out. The lightly armed Griquas were no match for colonial troops armed with cannon and breach-loading rifles. A massacre ensued, with the colonial forces suffering only nine fatalities. It signaled the beginning of the end of the Griqua nation. Most of the survivors would migrate several hundred miles to the northwest, settling ultimately in South West Africa (now Namibia).

To this day, the rebellion and its causes are conspicuously absent from textbooks on South African history. This is not entirely surprising. As George Orwell once put it: "The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history". But, if you search diligently

through private collections of archival material, you will find it recorded in the journals of Christian missionaries stationed in Griqualand at the time.

All the while, hills of sifted earth continued to rise around the evolving Big Hole, in tandem with the rapid growth of the adjacent, ramshackle town of Kimberly. When the British traveler and writer Anthony Trollope visited the place in 1877, he observed: “An uglier place I do not know how to imagine.” A different type of Briton who would not find the place at all unattractive was Cecil John Rhodes.

“Blood diamonds”

With finance provided by the Rothschild dynasty in 1887, Rhodes started buying up individual claims at the Kimberley site, amalgamating them into what became De Beers Consolidated Mines, the world’s richest diamond mining conglomerate, of which Rhodes was the director. Three years later, Rhodes entered politics and became the seventh prime minister of the Cape Colony. In that capacity he also became the principal architect of apartheid, implementing a range of racist policies including the removal of dark-skinned people from the Cape voters roll.

Meanwhile, back in Kimberley, De Beers was flourishing. Rhodes, having accrued a vast personal fortune from it, then founded his British South Africa Company in 1890. A 700-strong mercenary force recruited by the company and calling itself a “Pioneer Column”, departed from Kimberley to occupy what would later become the British colony Rhodes modestly named after himself – Rhodesia.

Armed with breach-loading rifles and five Maxim machine guns capable of firing 500 rounds a minute, the objective of the “pioneers” was to search for gold and precious stones, each “pioneer” having been promised 3,000 acres of land and 15 mining claims in return for his service. Their invasion precipitated a series of bloody wars with local

Matabele and Ndebele tribes before they were bludgeoned into eventual submission with the help of regular British troops who intervened to “protect British lives.” Rhodes put it rather more bluntly: “I prefer land to niggers.”

Rhodes’ private army never did discover gold or diamonds in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), so they turned their attention southwards, towards the Boer Republic of Transvaal, where they planned to seize the Johannesburg goldfields. Boer commandos ambushed the raiders en route, killing a number of them and forcing the remainder to surrender. The incident strained relations irreparably between Britain and the Boers, and a full-scale war was soon to follow, in which many thousands would die on both sides.

Mining operations at the Big Hole were abandoned eventually in the 1930s, when the diamond-bearing geological pipe was finally depleted. Still, the DeBeers cartel today retains a virtual monopoly dominating every aspect of the international diamond industry. It operates open-pit, underground, large-scale alluvial, coastal and deep sea mining operations not only in Africa and Canada, but also the cutting, polishing, setting into jewelry, pricing and selling of diamonds in 28 countries around the world.

The concept of “blood” or “conflict diamonds” came about in 2003, in reference to the brutal, diamond-funded wars of the 1990s in Sierra Leone and West Africa. Yet as the historical record shows, Rhodes’ diamond-fuelled dream of empire served to finance and precipitate devastating conflicts in Africa long before the term “blood diamonds” became fashionable in humanitarian and Hollywood circles.

Bizarrely, the United Nations initiative established in 2003 to curb the sale of blood diamonds is called the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme – Kimberley supposedly being the international benchmark for ethical behavior in identifying whether a diamond is “blood” or clean, and to monitor ethical practices in the diamond industry. **CT**

The DeBeers cartel today retains a virtual monopoly dominating every aspect of the international diamond industry

.....
Stan Winer is a South African-based writer and researcher. He is author of the book “Between the Lies” (Southern Universities Press, London: 2004). His website is www.truth.hertz.net

Canaries in the coalmine

An excerpt from the book, *Under The Bus: How Working Women Are Being Run Over*, by **Caroline Fredrickson**

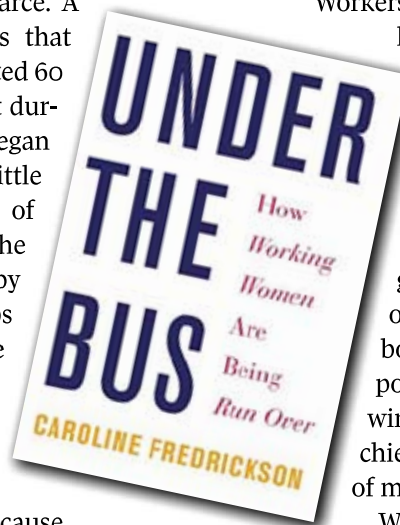
Workers in dead-end jobs, no matter how hard they work and scrimp and save, have a nearly impossible task in raising themselves out of poverty

Overall, American workers are not doing well. Incomes have flattened, even for couples with two incomes, and people are working longer hours than ever. Organized labour has sharply contracted in the United States, and globalization, with increased outsourcing and offshoring of jobs, has pushed down wages for most Americans. Good jobs are more and more scarce. A recent study estimates that midwage jobs constituted 60 percent of the jobs lost during the recession that began in 2008 but only a little more than 20 percent of those created during the subsequent recovery; by contrast, low-wage jobs were 21 percent of the jobs lost during the recession but have been close to 60 percent of the new jobs created post-recession. Because of how little these jobs pay, Americans work dramatically longer hours per employee than workers in any other developed country. This is true even though more and more workers are able to get only part-time work, despite their

need for full-time hours – meaning the longer hours actually reflect people who work two or even three jobs. And since the 1970s, there has been a precipitous decline in the number of jobs with benefits; fewer workers have a pension or health insurance.¹⁸ Lowest wages, longest hours, loss of benefits. This is not the “American exceptionalism” we have been promised.

Workers in dead-end jobs, no matter how hard they work and scrimp and save, have a nearly impossible task in raising themselves out of poverty. Yet conservative economists deplore social programs and still peddle the false hopes raised by the Horatio Alger story and the persistent myth of the American Dream. In his book on the lives of the working poor, David Shipler, Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* bureau chief, punctured a hole in the myth of mobility:

While the United States has enjoyed unprecedented affluence, low-wage employees have been testing the American doctrine that hard work cures poverty. . . . Some have found that work works. Others have learned that it doesn't. Moving in and out of jobs that demand much and pay little, many people tread just above the of-



UNDER THE BUS:
How Working
Women Are
Being Run Over

Caroline Fredrickson
The New Press
\$25.95

ficial poverty line, dangerously close to the edge of destitution. An inconvenience for an affluent family – minor car trouble, a brief illness, disrupted child care – is a crisis to them, for it can threaten their ability to stay employed.

Unrelenting attacks from free market advocates who can't stomach government programs, even when – or perhaps especially when – they are helping people, have shrunk eligibility and funding for critical antipoverty efforts and killed efforts to provide child care and sick leave. These changes have helped propel the stunning growth of inequality in America, which poses a truly moral dilemma for our nation, and challenges us to do better . . . or else.

And who has borne the brunt of these changes? Women. By and large, women, and particularly women of color, have been the canary in the coal mine signaling the growing insecurity of work in America. Although the United States had a higher percentage of men than women in the early 1950s, women are now the majority, making up close to 51 percent. Overall, the working population has grown significantly more female, diverse in race and ethnicity, and older. In sheer number, whites are the largest group in poverty, but women of color, especially those with children, are grossly overrepresented.

It will be no surprise to anyone that women make up the vast majority of nannies and manicurists, or that they fill most of the jobs as home health care aides and maids who clean houses for a living. What is less well-known is that these extremely poorly paid service sector jobs dominate the low-wage economy, and women make up 53 percent of the low-wage workforce. (The low-wage workforce, or “working poor,” is defined as persons who spent at least twenty-seven weeks in the labour force but whose incomes fell below the official poverty level.) They are domestic workers, caring for children and the elderly, cleaning houses, or otherwise serving in someone's

home; they wait tables or act as hostesses in restaurants; they are “independent contractors,” cutting hair and doing makeup and nails, cleaning offices and homes, and taking care of lawns and gardens. They work for small businesses as receptionists and secretaries. Many of them work part-time jobs.

An overview of the statistics helps put these facts in perspective.

- Women are now 63.9 percent of breadwinners or co-breadwinners (co-breadwinners are those who earn at least one-quarter of their families' income).

- Women are 63 percent of minimum-wage workers.²⁷ Minimum-wage workers are approximately 5 percent of all workers, and their numbers are growing. In 2013, 16.8 million women earned less than \$11 per hour.

- Women are 73 percent of tipped employees, including waiters, manicurists, and hairdressers. These workers make only \$2.13 per hour before tips.

- Women are 86 percent of personal care aides, a profession expected to grow 49 percent from 2012 to 2022. Within that category, they are 94 percent of child care workers and 88 percent of home health aides.

- Women are 35 percent of the 10.3 million independent contractors.

- Women are 63 percent of part-time workers.

Women occupy jobs that are excluded from legal protections, making the workers very easy to exploit and underpay. Even when there are protective laws, they are easy for employers to ignore, because there is very little enforcement. So, in addition to dominating the low-wage workforce, women, particularly women of color, dominate the unregulated or minimally regulated workforce. These facts have a growing relevance because not only is this group already surprisingly large, but these jobs are also the ones more and more people will hold in coming years. Projections for job growth forecast that, in the future, we will see the

By and large, women, and particularly women of color, have been the canary in the coal mine signaling the growing insecurity of work in America

BOOK EXCERPT

Even for women and families who do have some job protections and have two incomes, many do not have family leave, either paid or unpaid

biggest increase in job categories that are low paid and currently dominated by women. As more and more men are shut out of manufacturing jobs with decent wages, men are facing these same conditions. Stephanie Coontz, a frequent commentator on women and work, wrote in the *New York Times* that “millions of men face working conditions that traditionally characterized women’s lives: low wages, minimal benefits, part-time or temporary jobs, and periods of joblessness. Poverty is becoming defeminized because the working conditions of many men are becoming more feminized.”

Families are changing and women’s wages have become necessary for families to stay afloat. So the fact that women dominate sectors of the workforce covered by few, if any, protective laws means that their families suffer as well. If we ever had an Ozzie and Harriet family structure, it is surely gone now. A lifestyle that used to require one man’s salary now takes two incomes to meet expenses. For poorer families, those in the lower 20 percent of income, the importance of women’s wages is even greater, with more than 66 percent of women bringing in as much as or more than their husbands.

Not surprisingly, the challenges for single mothers are even more substantial. While more than three-quarters of high income working women are married or have a partner who works full-time, only 14 percent of low-income women workers are in such relationships. In a growing number of families, women are the sole earners; these households are our economy’s poorest segment. Between 1970 and 2009, the percentage of single working mothers with children under eighteen doubled, and right now almost four in ten American mothers serve as the only breadwinners for their families. This increase has been accompanied by a corresponding growth in the number of children of single mothers who are poor. In 1959, 24 percent of such children were below the poverty line; in 2010, 55 percent of children living with a single mother were poor. To

look at it another way, in 2009, 28 percent of unmarried working women with children earned less than the poverty level, compared to only 8 percent of all women workers. The adverse impact on these children, and our nation’s future, is substantial.

Even for women and families who do have some job protections and have two incomes, many do not have family leave, either paid or unpaid. Most families find the cost of child care staggering, with far too few slots in Head Start and other early education programs, and private child care taking up a third or more of many families’ budgets. The cost of child care rivals that of college tuition, and the quality of the facilities and teachers is often suspect. A professor at Baruch College in Manhattan with a PhD in anthropology, Carla Bellamy brings in \$74,000 per year, putting her in the group of higher earners, but even with her composer husband’s income bringing them up to \$110,000 per year, they struggle to pay for child care for their two children. There’s nothing left over for anything nonessential. She said, “Our entire disposable income goes to child care. . . . It’s not a tragic story, but is tiring and tiresome. I have a career, I work really hard, and yet I get no break.” She was even tempted to take a second job waiting tables during her summers off but needed the time to do the writing and research essential to keeping her teaching job – publish or perish is a truism in academe.

So how did we get into this sad state of affairs? We tend to think things are not so bad – maybe not in Sweden’s league in gender equality, but not in the Stone Age either. After all, we have banned discrimination against women, required equal pay for equal work, and adopted family leave legislation. But most people do not know that we allow discrimination by small employers and leave more than half of women out of the family leave law. Or that we cut certain workers out of the wage and hour laws. Or that part-time workers are rarely entitled to benefits. Child care breaks the bank for

many families, and very few workers have paid family leave. A confluence of factors, including race, ethnicity, immigration status, and gender, has put an array of workers beyond the protections of the law. Domestic workers, farmworkers, day labourers, tipped employees, minimum-wage workers, guest workers, workers in so-called right-to-work states, independent contractors, and temps are all thrown under the bus. And over the years this contingent of workers has grown as more women enter the workforce, unions decline, industrial jobs disappear, and our population becomes browner.

Beneath all this is a history of racism and sexism upon which the structure of our labour protections was built. Through both direct and intentional efforts spearheaded by legislators during the New Deal to exclude workers based on their race and sex, and the statutory limitations built into later laws, certain workers have slipped through the holes in our porous system of labour protections. In each case, vulnerable groups were the bargaining chips for the policy's enactment. This is not to blame the leaders, women and men, who fought so hard to achieve the protections we have. At every step in the process, some of those seated at the table were trying their best to create good policy, but to do so they felt they had to give something up. Over and over it was women – especially women of color – who were thrown under the bus. In the case of the New Deal legislation protecting workers' rights to join a union and to earn overtime after forty hours of work in a week, Senate Dixiecrats conditioned their votes on the exclusion of household workers and field hands so they could continue to benefit from their cheap labour. Charles Hamilton Hughes, the head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), described the Social Security Act when it passed in the 1930s “as a sieve with the holes just big enough for the majority of Negroes to fall through.” Unfortunately the holes in the

sieve have not been filled, and many, particularly women of color, are still falling through.

When you layer the Family and Medical Leave Act on top of the Fair Labour Standards Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, you can see that each time political compromises were made to get legislation passed, certain women, often the same women, got shut out – and by design. Over time, as the United States developed and augmented its labour protections, the poor, the immigrant, and African American and Latino workers have been left out – and a disproportionate number of these are women. A nanny, for example, faces legally acceptable discrimination – it is absolutely legal for an employer to fire a woman because of her sex or refuse to hire a nanny because she is black – has no provisions for leave if she is having a child, and can be forced to work long hours without overtime, all because of the size and type of her employer.

Right now, the path to prosperity is steep for most families. They struggle to get by on two incomes (if they are lucky), with few benefits, unpredictable work schedules, limited sick leave, and unaffordable child care. It is clear that Americans want change – all races at all levels of the income scale. We work too hard; our families suffer from neglect; and we have little time to pursue the intangible good things in life allowed by a bit of time for oneself. Wages, hours, leave, and child care – each demands a new way of thinking, where we abandon our traditional assumptions about how the workplace should be structured. We can no longer relegate the fight for a fair and equal workplace to a discussion at the “women's caucus” or describe policies addressing child care and family leave as “women's issues.” And we cannot allow the conversation to be dominated by the issues facing corporate CEOs and high-level bureaucrats.

With respect to wages, for our nation's fiscal health, as well as for women and their families, eliminating the gap between

Domestic workers, farmworkers, day labourers, tipped employees, minimum-wage workers, guest workers, workers in so-called right-to-work states, independent contractors, and temps are all thrown under the bus

BOOK EXCERPT

We have to stop treating workers like machine parts and we have to end on-call and just-in-time staffing, where workers' schedules are arbitrarily changed, creating havoc in child care arrangements and financial plans

men's and women's wages would have a significant and positive impact. Economists estimate that bringing women's wages up to a level equal to that of men would raise women's earnings by more than 17 percent, and family incomes would climb yearly by almost \$7,000 per family, or \$245.3 billion nationwide. A key element of lifting women's wages is combating occupational segregation and improving enforcement of discrimination laws, which will enable more women to earn higher wages and expand the opportunities available to both sexes. We have to stop treating workers like machine parts and we have to end on-call and just-in-time staffing, where workers' schedules are arbitrarily changed, creating havoc in child care arrangements and financial plans. Benefits need to be decoupled from full-time status to ensure that employers are not encouraged to drop workers' hours to avoid providing health care or family leave. And we must finally adopt a paid sick leave and family leave policy. Our current laissez-faire approach means that many mothers, and not only those who are low income, are forced to give birth and immediately come back to work, with negative consequences for both mother and child. And a country without a child care system disserves working parents, their children, and our nation's future. An expensive and mostly private system provides decent care to few families and affordable care to almost none. Most

important, we need to move to universal programs that do not exclude certain workers because of their job titles or employer size or because they have been designated as a temp or a contractor. In essence, we need to consider whether the "system" as a whole works or not – and make systemic and not narrowly targeted changes so that we can all benefit.

Many authors have examined the plight of these different types of workers; lots of historians have noted the separate instances when loopholes in the safety net were created; everybody now knows that median living standards are stagnating or declining in America. This book puts it all together, explaining how this huge and growing segment of the workforce – overwhelmingly female and of color – was created, how and why it is growing, and how if we don't fix this problem, all American workers will be swallowed by this trend.

So while the media debate "opt out" and "lean in," the real focus should be on trying to plug the holes in our safety net. Women work, and increasingly they are filling jobs with few benefits, low wages, and unpredictable schedules. Even middle-class Americans are suffering from the consequences of the changes in our workplaces and the need for two incomes. Our workplace laws threw women of color under the bus from the beginning, but we will all get run over if we don't reinvent our system to get everyone on board. **CT**

**Read all back issues of ColdType & The Reader
at www.coldtype.net/reader.html
and www.issuu.com/coldtype/docs**

A way with words

Chris Hedges finds some juicy quotes in the letters of Ralph Nader

There was a time in Washington when a letter from Ralph Nader to the president or a Cabinet official might evoke not only a response but a press conference, news reports and action. Nader, with his armies of lawyers and citizen action committees behind him, could mobilize formidable forces, inside and outside government, on behalf of citizens. But with the rise of the corporate puppet Ronald Reagan, and once Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party sold out to corporate power in exchange for corporate money, electoral politics became farce, legislation and laws were turned over to lobbyists and corporate attorneys, and the citizen, whom Nader has spent his life defending, became irrelevant.

Nader still writes letters to the powerful, pounded out on his 50-year-old manual Underwood typewriter, but they are rarely answered. That he writes them, that he refuses to surrender and doggedly struggles against all odds for a restoration of American democracy and the rule of law, makes Nader one of the moral and intellectual giants of our age.

Nader's newest book, "Return to Sender: Unanswered Letters to the President, 2001-2015," a collection of letters to Barack Obama and George W. Bush (whom Nader once called "a corporation running for the presidency masquerading as a human being"), was inspired, he said, by the letters between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams and between Justice Oliver

Wendell Holmes and Harold Laski. In Nader's letters the path to ruin built by corporate and imperial power is laid bare and the vision of a future freed from environmental catastrophe, corporate totalitarianism and financial exploitation and collapse is spelled out with quixotic clarity. Bush and Obama may not have read these letters, but American citizens should. True to Nader's understanding of the importance of public utilities and public service, he dedicates the book to "the US Postal Service, the people who make it work, and those citizens who have defended its critical role in thousands of communities throughout our country's history starting with Benjamin Franklin."

"Correspondence with presidents or politically elected people is the only way a citizen can connect with an elected representative, and deliver a fact," Nader said when he spoke last month at a New York bookstore. "If you try to do it through the press, it'll either be blacked out, censored, filtered, ignored. If you try to do it at a fundraiser, there are no deliberative dialogues at fundraisers. If you try to do it at a rally, where the attendees are preselected, you put your hand up and ask a pointed question they'll escort you out of the auditorium. The only way you can try to connect with your political rulers, whether it's legislators, governors, presidents, whatever, the only way you can connect is through correspondence. And that is being shut down at an accelerated rate, especially since the onset of the Internet.

Nader still writes letters to the powerful, pounded out on his 50-year-old manual Underwood typewriter, but they are rarely answered

WRITE ON

“Did you mean the ‘timeless principles’ that drove you and Mr. Cheney to invade the country of Iraq which, contrary to your fabrications, deceptions and cover-ups, never threatened the United States?”

It’s as if the politicians said, ‘You don’t have to write us letters, you can always tweet us, or you can always send us an email.’ Well, the White House shut down its fax machine, and has an email restriction to 2,500 characters.”

“It’s not easy to put together a book of letters and admit on the cover that they weren’t even acknowledged,” he said. “Because most people would say why would I want to minimize myself? Why would I want to admit doing this? And my answer is that when the system is so closed and self-replicating that it renders us powerless, the first step in gaining power is not to appear like we have no power. It’s not to concede our powerlessness.”

“The importance of correspondence also is extenuated by the overwhelming focus on screens, especially by the younger generation,” Nader went on. “If I was to attach an element of animism to some words in the dictionary, ‘horizon’ would say, ‘Oh me, oh my, so few people look at me these days.’ And the word ‘sidewalk’ would say, ‘Oh me, oh my, I’ve never had more people look in my direction, as these days.’ And they [members of the younger generation] are looking at screens. People spend endless time text-messaging, all the rest of it, day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute. They know what they’re doing through their iPhone. What they don’t know is what their iPhone is doing to them. They don’t know what the opportunity cost is, the lack of sociability, the lack of human personal connections. I don’t know any other way to start social movements of change unless people get together person to person. The Internet will tell you there’s an event. The Internet will bring you incredible information [at] ... the speed of light. But it will not motivate you. With very few exceptions it does not go from virtual reality to reality. It will motivate some people to connect, but a large percentage of people don’t connect. The sidewalks are uninhabited. The city councils are full of empty seats [in the audience areas]. The courtrooms are barren, when they’re operating these days. The rallies have never been smaller.”

Nader’s dry humor is evident throughout

the letters. One of his letters to Obama came from “a captured” bacterium in a petri dish. “Dear President Obama, My name is E. coli O104:H4. I am being detained in a German laboratory in Bavaria, charged with being ‘a highly virulent strain of bacteria.’ ” The E. coli points out that malaria, mycobacterium tuberculosis and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) alone cause more than 3 million deaths each year. It argues that the most deadly global “terrorists” are disease-resistant bacteria and viruses. E. coli urges the president to devote far more resources to protecting citizens from epidemics rather than waging endless and futile wars in the Middle East.

Another letter is a response to a solicitation in 2014 to donate money to the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

“Dear President Bush,” Nader writes, “A few days ago I received a personalized letter from your Presidential Center that included a solicitation card for donations that actually provided words for my reply. They included ‘I’m honored to help tell the story of the Bush Presidency’ and ‘I’m thrilled that the Bush Institute is advancing timeless principles and practical solutions to the challenges facing our world.’ (Below were categories of ‘tax deductible contributions’ starting with \$25 and going upward.)

“Did you mean the ‘timeless principles’ that drove you and Mr. Cheney to invade the country of Iraq which, contrary to your fabrications, deceptions and cover-ups, never threatened the United States? Nor could Iraq, under its dictator and his dilapidated military, threaten its far more powerful neighbors, even if the Iraqi regime wanted to do so.”

As a gift for the library’s collection, Nader enclosed in his response the book “Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions,” by Clyde Prestowitz.

The letters cover the urgent need for labour reform, the restoration of the rule of law domestically and internationally, a call to restore the quality of the nation’s drinking water, the necessity of campaign finance reform, the importance of raising the minimum wage,

prosecution of corporate criminals on Wall Street, the structural violence of poverty, the need to put on trial those US leaders who orchestrated our war crimes in the Middle East, the demand that Israel be sanctioned for its crimes against the Palestinians, an end to wholesale government surveillance, and the importance of empowering regulatory agencies. Nader writes the letters – given titles in the book such as “Protect Gaza,” “The Abuse of Prisoners,” “Take labour Day Seriously” and “Pardon John Kiriakou” – from the perspective of those who suffer from the abuses of corporate and imperial power. His outrage at what is done to the vulnerable and the weak is palpable.

He wrote President Obama on Nov. 9, 2013:

“We strongly urge you to compose a letter of remorse, including an offer of compensation, to 9-year-old Nabila ur Rehman. She is a surviving grandchild of the 68-year-old Pakistani grandmother who was reduced to a grisly corpse by a drone strike you ordered last year. No claim or evidence has surfaced indicating the slain grandmother was mistaken for a jihadist or circulating among them.

“The details of the apparent murder were related by the 9-year-old child recently in a congressional hearing hosted by Representative Alan Grayson (D-FL): ‘It was the day before Eid. My grandmother asked me to come help her outside. We were collecting okra, the vegetables. Then I saw in the sky the drone and I heard a ‘dum dum’ noise. Everything was dark and I couldn’t see anything, but I heard a scream. I don’t know if it was my grandmother, but I couldn’t see her. I was very scared and all I could think of doing was just run. I kept running but I felt something in my hand. And I looked at my hand. There was blood. I tried to bandage my hand, but the blood kept coming.’

“Speaking as American citizens, we are ashamed of what was done to that grandmother and granddaughter and what continues to be done to innocents. Silence would make us morally complicit in the cruelty that found expression in the grandmother’s kill-

ing. It would be no defense to echo the inelegant remark of a former secretary of defense: “[S]tuff happens.”

Playing prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner in secret to destroy individuals abroad on your say-so alone is fueling enmity against the United States that endangers us all – another example of blowback reminiscent of the birth of al-Qaeda from our participation in the disintegration of Afghanistan. Malala Yousafzai, a 16-year-old Pakistani heroine and Nobel Peace Prize nominee [now winner], recently informed you at the White House that “drone attacks are fueling terrorism. Innocent victims are killed in these acts, and they lead to resentment among the Pakistani people.”

In the same vein is a letter he sent to Obama in 2011 on labour Day.

“Dear President Obama,

“Happy labour Day! This is your third opportunity as president to go beyond your past tepid labour Day proclamations. You could convey to 150 million workers that you stand with them by honoring your campaign pledge to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 over three years. You can add that a \$9.50 minimum is still less than what workers made under the minimum wage in 1968, adjusted for inflation, when worker productivity was half of what it is today. Besides, businesses like Walmart have received windfalls year after year due to the minimum wage lagging behind inflation for decades.

“Your second promise in 2008 was pushing for card check legislation – a top priority for the AFL-CIO, whose member unions helped elect you. ‘Give me the card check,’ Rich Trumka, now AFL-CIO president, told me in 2004, ‘and millions of workers will organize into unions.’

“I may have missed something but when was the last time you championed card check after you took your oath of office? Did you bring labour together, the way you brought big business together for their demands, and launch a public drive to overcome many of the obstructions workers now have to confront under the present corporate-driven union-busting climate?

“Businesses like Walmart have received windfalls year after year due to the minimum wage lagging behind inflation for decades”

WRITE ON

“We’re being governed by corporations who are strategically planning every aspect of our lives. They are strategically planning our elections, our politics, our government, our media, our food, our transportation, our foreign policy, our allocation of public budgets”

And this letter, sent July 21, 2014.

“Dear President Obama,

“The moral authority to govern is an intangible, but very real, characteristic, especially in times of harsh public events. It stems significantly from one setting an example.

“You have impaired that moral authority in three areas. First, were you to tell other countries not to engage in unlawful hostilities against other people, they would respond that you have used armed force and other interventions against countries and people in ways that violate our Constitution, federal statutes, the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Charter. Certainly that is what even your ally Israel would cite were you to criticize and sanction their war crimes against the people of Palestine year after year, including the use of US-supplied weapons for “offensive” purposes banned by federal law.

“Second, from the moment in 2008 when you opted out of the federal check-off funding of post-primary presidential campaigns and raised vastly more money from donors on Wall Street, other well-to-do donors, and the Internet, your credibility regarding campaign finance reform has been diminished. This explains in part why such reform has been low on your priorities list. “Do as I say, not as I do” doesn’t sound very authentic.

“Third, on Thursday, July 17, 2014, two tragedies occurred. The Malaysian Boeing 777 passenger plane was shot down over southeast Ukraine, and the Israeli army, with the support of the Israeli air force, commenced a ground invasion in Palestinian Gaza. That day you were conducting two fundraisers with wealthy donors outside of Washington. Rushing to adjust back to your presidential duties didn’t counter the negative imagery.

“For someone who does not exactly have a Jim Farley type of personality, you certainly go to a lot of exclusive, political fundraisers all around the country. This allocation of your time is not only an unsavory distraction from your presidential responsibilities, but it comes at an opportunity cost for other types of public interest and charitable groups whose gath-

erings would like to hear your timely remarks. Have you or your associates ever thought of having Internet fundraisers with large numbers of people contributing smaller amounts and absorbing less of your time and that of your entourage going in and out of traffic to and from the destinations?

“Unrelated to any moral authority to govern, you can, at the very least, immediately launch, with other nations, efforts to provide emergency assistance to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis presently afflicting Gazan children, women and men deprived of food, water, shelter, and medicine. They are besieged, defenseless, impoverished, and in dire circumstances.”

“As has been said, democracy is not a spectator sport,” Nader wrote to Obama in 2014. “It requires a motivated citizenry, along with rights, remedies, and mechanisms that facilitate people banding together as candidates, voters, workers, taxpayers, consumers and communities. Concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the few who decide for the many is the great destroyer of any society’s democratic functions. It was Justice Louis Brandeis who memorably stated that ‘we can either have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both.’ And another well-regarded jurist, Judge Learned Hand, declared, ‘If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice.’”

“We’re being governed by corporations who are strategically planning every aspect of our lives,” Nader told the gathering in New York. “They are strategically planning our elections, our politics, our government, our media, our food, our transportation, our foreign policy, our allocation of public budgets. They’re even strategically planning our genes, and the genetic inheritance of the globe. They’re planning childhood. Childhood is exposed to direct marketing and violent programming. They are undermining and circumventing family authority, the authority of mothers and fathers over their own children, by direct and massive

24/7 marketing to 4-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 8-year-olds, 10-year-olds. And then the addictive industries move in, hooking them for a lifetime. Correspondence is the only thing left in terms of freedom, other than a spot call to a talk show host where you get in a hundred words before they pull the plug.”

“We are an advanced Third World country,” Nader said. “Not ‘we are becoming.’ We are an advanced Third World country with unsurpassed armaments and science and technology, because we want to show off to the rest of the world. But you look at the rest of our country, and 80 percent of the people are poorer today than they were in 1973. Look at the way most people live. You turn on the TV, that’s not most people. That’s the rich and famous.”

“Your generation has got to get a movement going,” he said to a young woman at the end of his talk. “Elizabeth Warren actually said, why are the students charged a higher rate [on loans] than Wall Street banks? Like 6 percent instead of virtually

nothing? And she asked that question. Now you have a senator [Warren] that millions of students can rally around. The problem is that the students sign on to these contracts but the ax doesn’t fall until after they graduate. So they don’t feel it when they are able to congregate in their own auditoriums and student centers. And when they’re out there [after college], they’re scattered. Defused. Even though the Internet is supposed to be able to rally them. But I don’t give them any excuses, because they’re always bragging about the Internet, and all of their friends, and all of their links, right? They should be able to do it in 24 hours. Millions of students ... are beaten down, and can’t buy a house at age 30, even though the interest rates are low, and are just frightened beyond their wits that by the time they’re 60 they’re still paying their student debt.”

I asked Nader afterward if he set aside certain periods in the day to write his letters.

“No,” he said. “My indignations are aroused any time of day or night.” **CT**

“Millions of students ... are beaten down, and can’t buy a house at age 30, even though the interest rates are low, and are just frightened beyond their wits that by the time they’re 60 they’re still paying their student debt”

.....
Chris Hedges,
a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, writes a regular column for Truthdig <http://truthdig.com> – every Monday

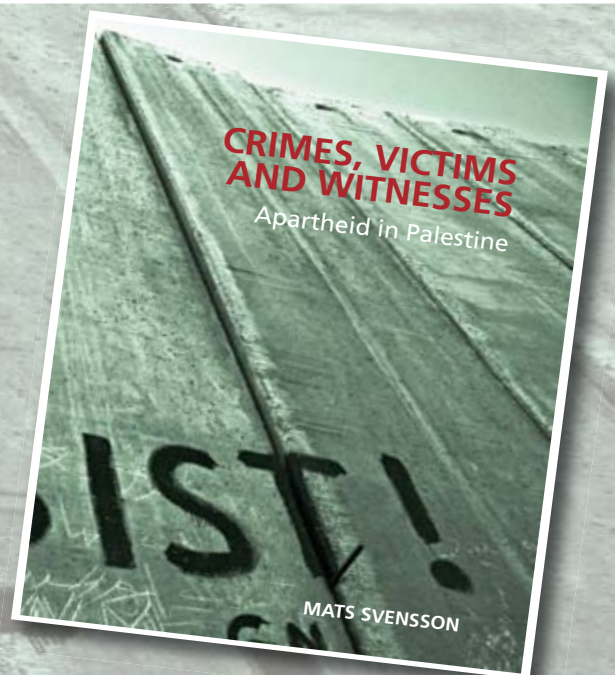
Lyrical, simple, poignant, powerful.

***Crimes, Victims and Witnesses* will demolish your preconceptions.**

Written for the global citizen, it should be read by everyone.

*Mats Svensson’s work serves as a witness to the crime of apartheid under the colonial-settler mentality of the Israeli state. **Crimes, Victims and Witnesses** presents an evocative tale in sad, sometimes enigmatic terms, accompanied by photos that are all too real about the destruction and beauty of Palestinian land and culture.*

— **Jim Miles, Foreign Policy Journal**



Available now:

www.amazon.com

www.ipgbook.com

Cold War 2.0, part 1

William Blum lifts the lid on more curious antics in the corridors of power

“The suggestion is always that the American flights are good and beneficial and don’t cause tension, and that other people’s flights do cause tension”

In my last “Anti-Empire Report” (*ColdType* Issue 95) I brought you the latest adventure of US State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki trying to defend the indefensible. She said then: “As a matter of longstanding policy, the United States does not support political transitions by non-constitutional means,” which prompted me to inform my readers: “If you know how to contact Ms. Psaki, tell her to have a look at my list of more than 50 governments the United States has attempted to overthrow since the end of the Second World War.”

On March 13 her regular attack on all things Russian included this exchange with Associated Press writer Matthew Lee:

Lee: On this issue, did you get any more about this request to the Vietnamese on Cam Ranh Bay and not allowing the Russians to – and not wanting them to allow – you not wanting them to refuel Russian planes there?

Psaki: Well, just to be clear – and maybe I wasn’t as clear yesterday, so let me try to do this again – it’s – our concern is about activities they might conduct in the region, and the question is: Why are they in the region? It’s not about specifically refueling or telling the Vietnamese not to allow them to refuel. [emphasis added]

Lee: So there hasn’t been a request to stop refueling them, or there has?

Psaki: It’s more about concerns. It’s not

as much about Vietnam as much as it – as it is about concerns about what activities they would be in the region for.

Lee: Okay. Well, you – I mean, there are US planes flying over there all the time.

Psaki: Sure, there are.

Lee: So you don’t want Russian planes flying there, but it’s okay for US planes to fly there? I mean, I just – it gets to the point where you – the suggestion is that everything the Russians are doing all the time everywhere is somehow nefarious and designed to provoke. But you can’t – but you don’t seem to be able to understand or accept that American planes flying all over the place, including in that area, is annoying to the Chinese, for one, but also for the Russians. But the suggestion is always that the American flights are good and beneficial and don’t cause tension, and that other people’s flights do cause tension. So can you explain what the basis is for your concern that the Russian flights there in the Southeast Asia area are – raise tensions?

Psaki: There just aren’t more details I can go into.

Cold War 2.0, part II

Last month, the Obama administration released a series of satellite images that it said showed the Russian army had joined the rebels in a full-scale assault to surround troops in the area around the city. Russia has

denied that it is a party to the conflict, and it was impossible to verify the three grainy black-and-white satellite images posted to Twitter by the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt.

According to the United States, the images, commissioned from the private Digital Globe satellite company, showed artillery systems and multiple-rocket launchers Thursday in the area near Debaltseve.

“We are confident these are Russian military, not separatist, systems,” Pyatt tweeted. (*Washington Post*, February 15, 2015)

When the time comes to list the ways in which the United States gradually sunk into the quicksand, slowly metamorphosing into a Third-World state, Washington’s campaign of 2014-15 to convince the world that Russia had repeatedly invaded Ukraine will deserve to be near the top of the list. Numerous examples like the above can be given. If I were still the jingoistic nationalist I was raised to be I think I would feel somewhat embarrassed now by the blatant obviousness of it all.

For a short visual history of the decline and fall of the American Empire, see the video “Imperial Decay” by Class War Films (8:50 minutes).

During Cold War 1.0 the American media loved to poke fun at the Soviet media for failing to match the glorious standards of the Western press. One of the most common putdowns was about the two main Russian newspapers – *Pravda* (meaning “truth” in Russian) and *Izvestia* (meaning “news”). We were told, endlessly, that there was “no truth in Pravda and no news in Izvestia.”

As cynical as I’ve been for years about the American mainstream media’s treatment of ODE (Officially Designated Enemies), current news coverage of Russia exceeds my worst expectations. I’m astonished every day at the obvious disregard of any kind of objectivity or fairness concerning Russia. Perhaps the most important example of this bias is the failure to remind their audience that the US and NATO have surrounded Russia – with

Washington’s coup in Ukraine as the latest example – and that Moscow, for some odd reason, feels threatened by this. (Look for the map online of NATO bases and Russia, with a caption like: “Why did you place your country in the middle of our bases?”)

Cold War 2.0, part III

Following the murder of Russian opposition leader, and former Deputy Prime Minister, Boris Nemtsov in Moscow on February 27, the West had a field day. Ranging from strong innuendo to outright accusation of murder, the Western media and politicians did not miss an opportunity to treat Vladimir Putin as a football practice dummy.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution urging an international investigation into Nemtsov’s death and suggested that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Council, and the United Nations could play a role in the probe.

US Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham introduced a Senate Resolution condemning the Nemtsov murder. The Resolution also called on President Obama and the international community to pursue an independent investigation into the murder and redouble efforts to advance free speech, human rights, and the rule of law in Russia. In addition, it urged Obama to continue to sanction human rights violators in the Russian Federation and to increase US support to human rights activists in Russia.

So it went ... all over the West.

Meanwhile, in the same time period in Ukraine, outside of the pro-Russian area in the southeast, the following was reported:

January 29: Former Chairman of the local government of the Kharkov region, Alexey Kolesnik, hanged himself.

February 24: Stanislav Melnik, a member of the opposition party (Partia Regionov), shot himself.

February 25: The Mayor of Melitopol, Sergey Valter, hanged himself a few hours before his trial.

February 26: Alexander Bordiuga, depu-

Perhaps the most important example of this bias is the failure to remind their audience that the US and NATO have surrounded Russia – with Washington’s coup in Ukraine as the latest example – and that Moscow, for some odd reason, feels threatened by this

Even if Iran makes a superior effort to satisfy IAEA and Washington's demands on all issues, it would remain questionable to what extent and how rapidly the sanctions would be removed

ty director of the Melitopol police, was found dead in his garage.

February 26: Alexander Peklushenko, former member of the Ukrainian parliament, and former mayor of Zaporizhi, was found shot to death.

February 28: Mikhail Chechetov, former member of parliament, member of the opposition party (Partia Regionov), "fell" from the window of his 17th floor apartment in Kiev.

March 14: The 32-year-old prosecutor in Odessa, Sergey Melnichuk, "fell" to his death from the 9th floor.

The Partia Regionov directly accused the Ukrainian government in the deaths of their party members and appealed to the West to react to these events. "We appeal to the European Union, PACE [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe], and European and international human rights organizations to immediately react to the situation in Ukraine, and give a legal assessment of the criminal actions of the Ukrainian government, which cynically murders its political opponents."

We cannot conclude from the above that the Ukrainian government was responsible for all, or even any, of these deaths. But neither can we conclude that the Russian government was responsible for the death of Boris Nemtsov, the American media and politicians notwithstanding. A search of the mammoth Nexus news database found no mention of any of the Ukrainian deceased except for the last one above, Sergey Melnichuk, but this clearly is not the same person. It thus appears that none of the deaths on the above list was ascribed to the Western-allied Ukrainian government.

Where are the demands for international investigations of any of the deaths? In the United States or in Europe? Where is Senator McCain?

Torture via sanctions

Discussions on constraining Iran's nuclear program have been going on for well over a year between Iran and the P5+1 (the five

nuclear powers of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany), led by the United States. Throughout this period a significant stumbling block to reaching an agreement has been the pronouncements of Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA is the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, and its inspections are considered a key safeguard against countries using civilian nuclear energy technology to produce weapons.

Amano has consistently accused Iran of failing to reply fully and substantially to queries about "possible military dimensions" of present and past nuclear activities, or failing to provide sufficient access to nuclear facilities.

Failure by Iran to comply fully with IAEA demands undermine Tehran's efforts to win the lifting of crippling UN, US and other sanctions, which currently prohibit foreign companies from doing business with Iran and deny access to the global financial system. Media coverage of the negotiations regularly emphasize Amano's claims of Iran's insufficient responses to IAEA's demands. It is thus worth inquiring just who is this man Amano.

In 2009 Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano became the head of the IAEA. What the Western media routinely fail to remind its audience is that a US embassy cable of October 2009 (released by Wikileaks in 2010) said Amano "took pains to emphasize his support for US strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded the [American] ambassador on several occasions that ... he was solidly in the US court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program."

Even if Iran makes a superior effort to satisfy IAEA and Washington's demands on all issues, it would remain questionable to what extent and how rapidly the sanctions would be removed, particularly under a Republican-controlled Congress. Iran specialist

and author Gareth Porter recently wrote that “the United States and its allies have made no effort to hide the fact that they intend to maintain the ‘sanctions architecture’ in place for many years after the implementation of the agreement has begun. Last November, administration officials explained that US sanctions would only be removed after the International Atomic Energy Agency had verified that ‘Tehran is abiding by the terms of a deal over an extended period of time’ in order to ‘maintain leverage on Iran to honour the accord.’”

To appreciate the extraordinary degree of pressure and extortion the United States can impose upon another country we should consider the case of Libya in the decade-plus following the destruction of PanAm Flight 103 in 1988 over Scotland. To force Libya to “accept responsibility” for the crime, Washington imposed heavy sanctions on the Gaddafi regime, including a ban on international flights to Libya and payment of billions of dollars to the families of the victims. Libya eventually did “accept responsibility” for the crime, although it was innocent. As difficult as this may be to believe, it’s true. Read my account of it here.

Even after Libya accepted responsibility it still took years for the US to wipe out the sanctions, and it’s not clear that at the time of Gaddafi’s death in 2011 all of them had been removed. Once a nation becomes an Officially Designated Enemy of the empire the methods of torture can be exquisite and endless. Cuba is presently negotiating the end of US sanctions against Havana. They will need to be extremely careful.

“Like others of his ilk – such as David Horowitz and Christopher Hitchens – he learned too much in college and too little since.” Sam Smith

I’ve never been too impressed by what college a person went to, or even if they attended college at all. Gore Vidal did not attend any college; neither did H. L. Mencken; nor did Edward Snowden, who has dem-

onstrated a highly articulate and educated mind. Among the many other notables who skipped a college education are George Bernard Shaw, Ernest Hemingway, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Then we have graduates from Ivy League colleges like George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Tom Cotton. I don’t have to present the case for Bush’s less-than educated mind; we’re all only too familiar with its beauty. But Obama has matched Georgie Boy for stupidity and inanity time and time again. My favorite, which he’s used on at least five occasions, is his reply to questions about why his administration has not prosecuted Bush, Cheney, et al for torture and other war crimes: “I prefer to look forward rather than backwards”. Picture a defendant before a judge asking to be found innocent on such grounds. It simply makes laws, law enforcement, crime, justice, and facts irrelevant. Picture Chelsea Manning and other whistle blowers using this argument. Picture the reaction to this by Barack Obama, who has become the leading persecutor of whistleblowers in American history.

Is there anyone left who still thinks that Barack Obama is some kind of improvement intellectually over George W. Bush? Probably two types still think so: (1) Those to whom color matters a lot; (2) Those who are very impressed by the ability to put together grammatically correct sentences.

And now we have Mr. Cotton, Senator from Arkansas and graduate of Harvard undergraduate and law schools. He’ll be entertaining us for years to come with gems like his remark on “Face the Nation” (March 15): “Moreover, we have to stand up to Iran’s attempts to drive for regional dominance. They already control Tehran and, increasingly, they control Damascus and Beirut and Baghdad. And now, Sana’a as well.”

Heavens, Iran controls Tehran! Who knew? Next thing we’ll hear is that Russia controls Moscow! Sarah Palin, move over. Our boy Cotton is ready for Saturday Night Live.

Once a nation becomes an Officially Designated Enemy of the empire the methods of torture can be exquisite and endless

William Blum
is the author of
*“Killing Hope:
US Military and
CIA Interventions
Since World War
II”, “Rogue State:
a guide to the
World’s Only Super
Power,” “West-
Bloc Dissident:
a Cold War
Political Memoir,”
and “America’s
Deadliest Export
– Democracy: The
Truth About US
Foreign Policy and
Everything Else”*

CT

Music to their ears

The shift to online music underscores the power of a handful of tech giants, say **Noah Askin, Dean Pierides** and **Joeri Mol**

The internet has shifted economic power to conglomerates such as Google, Amazon, Yahoo!, Apple, and others

Digital music downloads and online streaming sales have now overtaken sales of CDs and records for the first time, underscoring just how fundamentally the internet has changed the way we consume. The UK-based trade group the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry has reported that global market revenue from digital music sales represented 46% of all sales last year, coming to \$US6.85 billion. By contrast, physical sales came to \$US6.82 billion.

While online consumption and dissemination has certainly made things easier for many creators and consumers, the online market place can also yield monopoly rights for owners of sites like YouTube, Google and Amazon.

Many have described the explosion in online marketplaces for the creation and sale of content as democratisation. But the sheer market power concentrated in the hands of such few companies represents a formidable hurdle to fair competition. The internet has shifted economic power to conglomerates such as Google, Amazon, Yahoo!, Apple, and others. This shift was recently put on full display via Google's threat to shun the indie music sector from YouTube, raising the question of whether this new economic might has reached unprecedented and potentially dangerous levels. If it has, what does that mean for the digital markets in which these giants dwell?

The music industry has historically benefit-

ed from its symbiotic relationships with ancillary industries like broadcasting: songs that received a lot of airtime were more likely to achieve commercial success. Likewise, songs that go viral on YouTube today stand a much greater chance of becoming heavily-streamed tracks. And similar to radio stations, more advertising revenue befalls music streaming companies as their audiences increase.

But the comparison stops there. Though the broadcasting landscape has not always been the hallmark of a healthy level of rivalry, it was at least governed and regulated. The economic situation on the internet challenges the very notion of competition altogether.

With digital markets now defined by URL strings (and proprietary app stores), internet addresses have become hot commodities. It is undeniable that "youtube.com" constitutes a market; for budding artists having access is indispensable. This is why the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a not-for-profit group that manages the designation of domain names, provides a cautionary example.

ICANN grants monopoly rights of a single top-level domain (TLD) strings like ".music". Musicians and the music community have traditionally seen a ".music" as theirs to use but tech giants such as Amazon and Google have recently applied to ICANN for the exclusive right to use the ".music" URL string.

Were the ".music" domain to go to a con-

glomerate like Amazon or Google, ICANN's legitimacy as an independent regulatory body might be jeopardised. Because rather than increasing competition online and advocating the rights of communities of online users, it would effectively grant one of these companies yet another market to be appropriated.

The upshot: if the entire ".music" community would fall into the hands of one of these online giants, artists, indies, record labels, music copyright associations, and other interested parties would become dependent on the management of this domain by one of these powerful corporations. Is this what we want?

Once upon a time, people would discover new songs by listening to the radio. Specialised experts like DJs would curate the content, helping consumers overcome substantial search costs. But that model is now looking antiquated. Consumers now mostly discover new content based on ratings and view counts. This new model looks, to many, like a level playing field, but in reality, consumers are effectively deprived of other social cues that would otherwise help them discover new music.

Without curators like radio DJs, consumers are left facing the tyranny of choice and are increasingly vulnerable to targeted advertising informed by their internet profile. Of course, music discovery has always been susceptible to coercive forces, but it's now nearly impossible to detect and remove such forces.

The social fabric of platforms like YouTube is not created by the companies themselves, but by the users: the views, comments, likes, and shares are critical for the success of a music streaming business. While some scholars will refer to this process as "co-creation," the economic reality is that the creative content of consumers is guided by platforms that are designed to support the bottom line and appropriated by private organisations under lengthy terms of service that no one bothers to read.

These firms are being granted virtually unlimited power to economically exploit the content. Yet this economic value – whilst created and promoted by consumers – is being appropriated entirely by the companies host-

ing it. They profit handsomely from having been granted virtually unlimited power to economically exploit this content.

Take, for example, Google's answer to Spotify, a new streaming service called Music Key. Having already co-opted major record labels to join Music Key, Google was able to virtually dictate the conditions under which the Music Key venture could exploit musical content. It serves as a stark reminder of the market power of the internet elite. Further, the payment structure for musicians and rights holders from music streaming companies is opaque and unilaterally defined.

Though there are more equitable platforms such as Bandcamp and Soundcloud and whilst some rights holders have tried to flex their muscle, the sheer market power concentrated in the hands of such few companies represents a formidable hurdle to fair competition.

Increasingly, and propelled by the digital revolution, markets have moved out of the public domain and into private hands. In this regard, what is happening in the music industry is merely mirroring what is happening in other industries like finance, retail, and travel.

The organisations that control the market medium now also control the market transactions in a way that was previously much more difficult when markets were more public. The consequence is that regulation of these markets has now been delegated to private companies rather than a government or independent agency. Second guessing whether competition is fair or not is getting harder, with algorithms and results that are free to be manipulated by their creators. The ease with which digital marketplaces can be moved from country to country with minimal disruption should be enough to give even the most ardent free market advocate pause.

So it is time to consider net neutrality from an economic perspective and ponder the question: "whose market is it anyway?" Do we want to grant internet conglomerates the monopoly rights to exploit our markets and profit from the time and energy that we spend building and maintaining them? **CT**

Once upon a time, people would discover new songs by listening to the radio. Specialised experts like DJs would curate the content, helping consumers overcome substantial search costs

.....
Noah Askin is assistant professor of Organisational Behaviour at INSEAD; **Dean Pierides** is a lecturer in Organisations and Society at University of Manchester; and **Joeri Mol** is a senior lecturer in Organisation Studies & Co-Director of Cluster for the study of Organisation Society and Markets (COSM) at University of Melbourne. This report was originally published at www.theconversation.com

First the guns, now the law

Israel uses US courts to starve Palestinians of cash in latest attempt to derail war crimes charges, writes **Jonathan Cook**

The intention is to push Palestinian institutions toward collapse, both as a way to weaken efforts to resist Israel's occupation and to destroy any possibility of Palestinian statehood

Right-wing Israeli organisations have been quietly escalating “legal warfare” against the Palestinian leadership in an attempt to dissuade it from bringing war crimes charges against Israel at the International Criminal Court.

The latest case against the Palestinians, filed in the US, threatens lengthy jail sentences and heavy fines against Hamas leaders, including Khaled Mashal, for briefly closing Israel's only international airport during Israel's attack on Gaza last summer.

It follows a decision by a New York jury in February to impose \$218m damages on the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian government-in-waiting in the occupied territories. The compensation relates to six attacks more than a decade ago, at the start of the second intifada, in which US citizens were killed or injured.

The legal campaign, which exploits loosely defined anti-terrorism laws in the US, appears designed to exhaust the Palestinian authority's existing financial reserves and isolate it from funding sources in the region.

Comments from Shurat HaDin, a legal group that initiated the action against the PA, indicate that the intention is to push Palestinian institutions toward collapse, both as a way to weaken efforts to resist Israel's occupation and to destroy any pos-

sibility of Palestinian statehood.

Last December, as the PA case opened, Shurat HaDin's director, Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, warned that the goal was to create “financial instability” for the Palestinians. She added that harsh financial penalties would be a test of the PA's readiness for statehood: “If they want to become a state, they have to show that they can meet their obligations.”

The \$218m award and similar ones that may be approved by US juries in the future could potentially bankrupt the PA.

Palestinian officials have already warned that the PA is in dire financial trouble after Israel recently withheld millions in tax revenues it collects on the Authority's behalf.

Palestinian institutions also risk finding themselves financially marooned after Israeli legal groups scored a success in the US last month against a leading Middle East bank.

Twenty four attacks

In a precedent-setting case last September, a US jury found the Jordan-based Arab Bank liable for 24 attacks, blamed on Hamas, in which US citizens were hurt or killed. The bank was shown to have made transactions to accounts belonging to Hamas members.

A federal judge in Brooklyn upheld that verdict last week, even though the bank had demonstrated it followed standard

industry practices. The door is now open to some 300 victims and their relatives to claim damages, likely to run into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The ruling's wider significance is that it is likely to make most banks wary of operating in the occupied Palestinian territories for fear of handling accounts that may later be shown to belong to Palestinians involved in attacks against Israel.

Similar cases are pending against other banks, including the Bank of China, Credit Lyonnais and a unit of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The raft of recent cases in the US launched by Israeli organisations has been largely overlooked as world attention has focused instead on Palestinian efforts to use legal action against Israel.

This month the Palestinian Authority became an official member of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Palestinians are expected to request that the Hague court investigate Israeli officials for war crimes, both those committed last summer during Israel's attack on Gaza and those associated with decades of settlement-building in the occupied territories.

Israeli leaders, led by Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister, have accused the PA of pursuing what they call "lawfare" instead of peace negotiations.

In January Netanyahu convened legal advisers to help devise a strategy to discredit the ICC, saying war crimes investigations against Israel were "absurd" and a "perversion of justice".

He is fearful that such investigations will "delegitimise" Israel and make it increasingly difficult for Israeli officials to travel overseas, where they might be arrested.

Gilead Sher, a lawyer and former government adviser, recently observed that "the emerging legal front [by the Palestinians] is nothing less than an extension of the battlefield... The Palestinian approach is based on a theory of total warfare that

includes legal efforts combined with mass media manipulation, active diplomacy, incitement, boycotts and sanctions."

But in truth, Israeli organisations have so far proved much more effective at lawfare than the Palestinians.

The message of Sher and others that Israel cannot afford to be passive has been taken especially to heart by Shurat HaDin, which has close ties to the Israeli right.

In 2012 its director, Darshan-Leitner, won the Moskowitz Prize for Zionism, an award funded by US casino magnate Irving Moskowitz, who has invested millions of dollars in helping illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

As well as its recent civil actions against the PA and Hamas in the US, Shurat HaDin has also turned directly to the ICC.

Last September its lawyers filed a war crimes suit against Mashal, implicating him in Hamas executions of suspected collaborators with Israel during its attack last year.

Two months later the Israeli group brought a second suit, this time against Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, for attacks allegedly carried out by Fatah loyalists from Gaza.

In January it filed further suits: against the Palestinian prime minister, Rami Hamdallah; Jibril Rajoub, former head of the Palestinian security services; and the PA's intelligence chief, Majed Faraj.

In an interview in December Darshan-Leitner said Shurat HaDin's actions at the ICC were intended as a warning to the Palestinian leadership to "tell them they're playing with fire... The moment they join [the ICC], it's game over. It will be like sniper fire."

Civil suits in US

However, the wheels of the ICC are expected to move slowly. Most observers believe that both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships are years away from facing a serious investigation.

Israeli leaders, led by Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister, have accused the PA of pursuing what they call "lawfare" instead of peace negotiations

CRUSHING OPPOSITION

The advantage for Israeli legal groups in turning to US courts is that they can make their case according to the relatively low standards of proof required in civil cases

Shurat HaDin has therefore forged ahead with simpler and faster civil actions in the US, exploiting the fact that a proportion of Israeli Jews also hold US citizenship and can claim redress in US courts.

There, it has taken advantage of the growing body of US anti-terror laws, especially since 9/11, to target Palestinian officials.

In the case over Ben Gurion airport's closure for a little more than 24 hours last July, Shurat HaDin has made use of a law that provides for 20-year jail terms and heavy fines for anyone endangering American citizens at an international airport.

The complaint, filed with the Justice Department, claims that 26 US citizens were forced to flee to bomb shelters after a rocket from Gaza landed near the airport. As a result, US federal aviation authorities barred US carriers from taking off at Ben Gurion and several US flights heading to Israel had to be diverted to other countries.

The advantage for Israeli legal groups in turning to US courts is that they can make their case according to the relatively low standards of proof required in civil cases, avoiding the stringent standards at the Hague in international law.

Their lawyers can also rely on the easy sympathies of US juries and judges that have come to equate Arabs and Islam with terror, backed by a media and political culture that highlights suffering by Israeli Jews while downplaying the experiences of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli soldiers and settlers.

Targeting finances

In the case against the Arab Bank, Judge Brian Cogan of Brooklyn district court ignored the bank's defence that it had screened customer accounts according to the relevant watch lists, including that of the US Treasury Department.

Only one customer, Ahmed Yassin, had been designated a terrorist, and the bank's lawyers argued that his account had slipped

through because of a spelling error.

Cogan has warned that other banks are in the crosshairs: "We have not finished our work by a long shot."

In May 2011 Shurat HaDin, working with the Israeli government, foiled an international aid flotilla to Gaza by sending letters to insurance and satellite companies threatening them with lawsuits under US law for offering services to the ships.

Shurat HaDin has also pursued cases in the US against Middle East states that are seen as close allies of Palestinian organisations.

In 2012, a US court awarded a Florida family \$332 million in damages after it was alleged Syria and Iran assisted the Palestinian movement Islamic Jihad in organising a suicide attack in Tel Aviv.

Darshan-Leitner has observed that her organisation's work is related to Netanyahu's concerns about the battering Israel's image is taking in the international community. "Really, we're fighting back against the delegitimization of Israel," she said.

Jonathan Cook is a Nazareth-based journalist and winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism - See more at: <http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2015-04-16/lawfare-israels-continuation-of-war-by-other-means/#sthash.4Q6ipKR9.dpuf>

Jonathan Cook is a Nazareth-based journalist and winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism - See more at: <http://www.jonathan-cook.net/2015-04-16/lawfare-israels-continuation-of-war-by-other-means/#sthash.4Q6ipKR9.dpuf>

Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist based in Nazareth, Israel, since 2001. - See more at: <http://www.jonathan-cook.net/about/#sthash.23BzjyvP.dpuf>

.....
Jonathan Cook is an award-winning British journalist based in Nazareth, Israel, since 2001 - <http://www.jonathan-cook.net>

Another world!

Britain's big four banks have 1,629 subsidiaries in foreign tax havens, writes **Michael Meacher**

The more that comes to light about the nefarious activities of the Big 4 banks, the more extraordinary it is that these banks (a) demand a return to business as usual (which of course caused the financial crash in the first place), (b) continue to fight back against any reforms of a dysfunctional finance sector, feeble though these measures are, (c) show not a scintilla of remorse or apology for the decade of disaster they've imposed on ordinary people and the economy as a whole (remember Bob Diamond's infamous comment "It's time to move on" as though nothing had happened), and (d) have never been held to account by prosecutions of the chief executives, finance directors and other executives responsible.

This is all the more staggering when what has now been revealed is the enormous extent to which all 4 banks not only indulged in, but actively promoted, tax evasion/avoidance on an industrial scale. Barclays has 385 subsidiary companies in tax havens (36% of all its subsidiaries), HSBC has 550, Lloyds has 290, and RBS has 404!

If that were their only wrongdoing, it would be bad enough, but these huge financial conglomerates are utterly shameless. The charge-sheet is a long one. For Libor-rigging, which has contaminated pricing of £36 trillion worth of financial transactions across the world, Barclays has been fined \$453m in the US, HSBC \$1.9bn, Lloyds \$370m, and RBS \$612m. For rigging the foreign exchange market Barclays has been fined £500m, HSBC £236m, and RBS £400m. For the product protection insurance scam on which they all fed themselves at the trough, Barclays has now been forced to set aside £2.6bn in compensation, HSBC £1.5bn, Lloyds £6.7bn, and RBS

£2.2bn. For the small business interest rate swap agreement/swindle they perpetrated, Barclays is now being forced to pay redress to 2,900 businesses, Lloyds to 3,130 businesses, Lloyds to 1,630 businesses, and RBS to no less than 7,330 businesses.

In addition, they've all been indicted for malfeasance in the US, with Barclays fined \$300m for sanctions busting on behalf of Iran, Burma and Sudan, HSBC fined \$1.9bn for money laundering for drug cartels and financing for terrorism, and Lloyds fined \$350m for sanctions busting on behalf of Libya, Sudan and Iran. This is a stunning record of evil-doing, yet not a single top banker has been prosecuted because the political-financial elites are in cahoots – what a contrast to those struggling to survive at subsistence level, and then sanctioned by this same government often for the most trivial infringements, leaving them penniless.

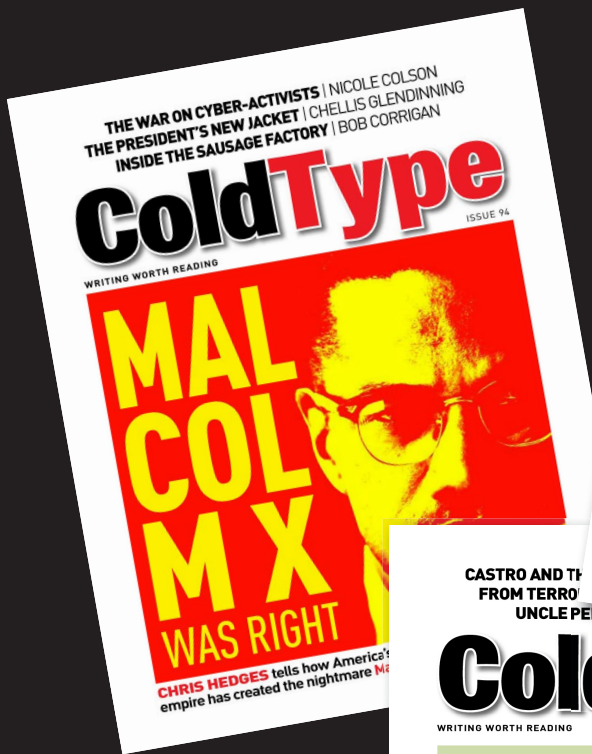
To cap it all, there are still 428 bankers at Barclays paid more than £1 million a year, 204 at HSBC, 25 at Lloyds, and 95 at RBS.

Adding insult to injury, bankers at Barclays still get a total bonus package of £2.5bn, at HSBC it's £2.4bn, at Lloyds it's £370m, and at RBS it's £590m. What all this reveals is that the Big 4 banks are corrupt, greedy, self-centred, and in terms of Britain's needs utterly dysfunctional – they are at the heart of everything that is wrong with Britain at this time.

CT

.....
Michael Meacher is the Labour Party candidate for Oldham West and Royton in this month's British Parliamentary elections. He is the author of "The State We Need", one of the Guardian newspaper's political books of 2013.

WRITING WORTH READING



ColdType

www.coldtype.net