

JAILED IN LAS VEGAS | BRIAN TERRELL
WHEN NUCLEAR POWER CAME OF AGE | BRIAN PARKIN
GIMME SHELTER (FROM THE TAX MAN) | NOMI PRINS

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 118

**DONALD
TRUMP**
Breaking
the bottom
of the barrel





Cover illustration:
Anthony Jenkins
www.jenkinsdraws.com

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When nuclear power came of age

Brian Parkin recalls 1986's Chernobyl disaster and explains how a lethal combination of technical arrogance, corporate and state deceit, and human fallibility will forever lie at the heart of the myth of nuclear power

The 1986 Leeds May Day demonstration was a muted affair, coming as it did just 12 months after the historic defeat of Britain's coal miners by the Thatcher government after a year-long strike. But, for me, it was memorable in another respect: It rained. Late in that afternoon a post-graduate friend rang and asked if we had got wet on our outing, "Because if you did you will have got some caesium-137, thanks to the Ukraine nuclear disaster." Earlier, as a routine task of monitoring overnight rainfall at a Leeds University weather station, he had found clear traces of the radioactive isotope.

Within days, as even the secretive Soviet state couldn't suppress the truth, it became clear that a major explosion at a nuclear station in Ukraine had spewed much of the contents of a shattered and burning reactor into the atmosphere. Carried upwards by easterly spring winds, fallout in the form of isotopes of caesium, iodine and xenon had blown across much of Europe.

The international nuclear industry, under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has proved over 50 years to be an effective watchdog and regulator of matters regarding nuclear power. It has also undertaken the role of ensuring a uniformity of secrecy and deceit as far as matters of safety

are concerned – particularly in the immediate aftermath of a major nuclear incident. But with Chernobyl, from April to May 1986, the incident was of such a massive scale that any amount of cover-up was bound to fail.

During the 24 hours preceding the accident at Chernobyl, the operating staff had been engaged in experiments aimed at improving reactor efficiencies. One problem they were trying to deal with was the build-up of a reactor-poisoning isotope – xenon-135 – that tended to slow reactor neutron speeds when the plant was operating at reduced load. The experiment involved trying to maintain reactor stability and preventing xenon formation by varying the time-span of control rod insertion. This was being done manually when the reactor temperature first fell, then suddenly surged. The consequent massive peak in temperature and pace of the runaway reaction overwhelmed both manual and automatic control rod processes.

At 1:23 am, an emergency SCRAM (Safety Control Rod Axe Man) shutdown was automatically tripped as the core temperature soared, with only 28 of the 211 control rods in place. Within 30 seconds, 18 of those 28 had fractured due to the heat, and the first explosion occurred as steam discharging from the broken fuel channels instantly expanded, rip-

Carried upwards by easterly spring winds, fallout in the form of isotopes of caesium, iodine and xenon had blown across much of Europe

DEADLY ANNIVERSARY



WARNING: Gas mask lies in the dust in the ruins of an abandoned school at Pripyat.

Photo: Kvitlauk, via www.flickr.com

As the doomed men tried to cope with the effects of the second explosion, a third explosion occurred, which was effectively the kind of explosion associated with a nuclear weapon

ping the reactor structure apart, blasting the upper containment plate through the roof.

The Russian RBMK reactor, like many designs worldwide, including all of the United Kingdom's reactor fleet in 1986, was based on a graphite core through which the fuel and control rods were passed in channels. However, the problem with graphite, although it can moderate the speed at which reaction neutrons move, is that, like coal, it is about 90 per cent carbon in content. Consequently, when the 10,000 degrees Celsius core was blasted open, the oxygen in the air reacted with the red-hot graphite and burned fiercely. (This led to the joke that Chernobyl was the world's first ever coal-fired nuclear disaster).

The initial steam explosion was followed by a hydrogen explosion with a simultaneous graphite core fire – all within seconds. The power station staff was completely overwhelmed. Then a collective act of the most tremendous heroism took place: Fully aware that they were already fatally irradiated, the 30 reactor workers dosed themselves with potassium iodine tablets, donned respirators and decontamina-

tion suits and entered what remained of the upper reactor level in an effort to suppress the fire. Although rescued from the building, they all died in lead-clad hospital isolation units within the next 24 hours.

As the doomed men tried to cope with the effects of the second explosion, a third explosion occurred, which was effectively the kind of explosion associated with a nuclear weapon. This explosion removed most of Reactor 4's upper building and set fire to Reactor 3 building's roof.

The fires at Chernobyl raged for 14 days, during which teams of miners were drafted in to dig beneath the blazing reactor and put concrete ballast under the foundations to prevent a core meltdown into the water table. It has been estimated that 500,000 workers were rationed to a maximum 40 seconds work near the reactor – during which time they are thought to have received more than 50 lifetimes' of safe lifetime radiation.

Fifty-three thousand people were immediately evacuated – forever – from the town of Pripyat.



NO MORE FUN: Fairground in the abandoned Ukrainian city of Pripyat.

Photo: Kvitlauk, via www.flickr.com

Although the International Journal of Cancer estimated about 4,000 deaths in Ukraine from the accident, another 4,000 cancer deaths were estimated for the neighbouring Belarus region. Greenpeace has estimated more than 200,000 excess cancer deaths in Ukraine and surrounding regions more than 10 years after the reactor explosion.

The reactor type at Chernobyl 4 was a tried-and-tested design, common throughout much of the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the UK, where all the Magnox and AGR stations operating at the time were graphite moderated, albeit gas-cooled.

Many of the problems associated with graphite block constructed cores, particularly radial cracking around the fuel and control rod channel pathways, have manifested themselves on the eight AGR stations in the UK, most of which are licensed to run for at least another 10 years. The second-by-second cooling requirements of a Chernobyl type and size of reactor are formidable. Each reactor core has 1,600 fuel rod channels, each of which requires a constant flow of 28 metric

tonnes of water per hour. It was estimated that a 30-second cooling water failure at Chernobyl would result in a fire. When the cooling water supply began to fail as the pumps were denied power from the reactor, the diesel power took more than 75 seconds to come online, by which time the core was alight.

So, sequentially, every safety system went down, leaving a dying, reactor crew trying to bring the core under control by manhandling control rods into already-blocked control channels. Chernobyl was the first-ever Level-7 nuclear event – only surpassed by the Fukushima meltdown in 2011. The two events, where there were repeated safety system failures in split-second sequence, are the stuff that any future nuclear catastrophe will be made of. When human fallibility becomes a technological hubris that is applied to energy processes hotter than the sun, the worst can – and will – happen.

For the sake of both sanity and humanity, the deadly alchemy of nuclear fission must be struck out for ever from our range of energy options. We have been warned. **CT**

When human fallibility becomes a technological hubris that is applied to energy processes hotter than the sun, the worst can – and will – happen

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Brian Parkin's
commentary first appeared at the web site of the organization Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century
 – www.rs21.org.uk

Trump: Breaking the bottom of the barrel

Danny Katch analyzes the Republican Party's then-there-was-one moment, and wonders how Donald Trump will perform as president

At the top levels of the Republican Party, Cruz was widely detested – but at least he wasn't Trump

The Republican Party's nominee for president of the United States is going to be ... (don't make me write this, don't make me write this) ... Donald John ... (sigh) ... Trump.

Trump's decisive victory in the Indiana primary on May 3 had been widely predicted, based on opinion polls in the previous days – and it was clear enough after equally convincing wins in the Northeast that he was on track toward winning a majority, though a small one, of delegates before the party convention in July.

More unexpected was Trump's closest rival for the nomination, Ted Cruz, dropping out the night of the election, to be followed by the even longer-shot candidate John Kasich.

The big psychic shock, however, is in coming to terms with the reality that Trump – a bigoted, buffoonish blowhard, loathed by 70 per cent of the population – will have his name on the ballot in November as the presidential candidate of one of the two political parties that runs the most powerful nation in the world.

Of course, Trump's victory didn't come out of nowhere. For years, the Republican Party has cultivated white middle class fear and rage – the meat and potatoes of the Trump campaign – to build a rabidly right-wing voting base in support of its traditional ruling class agenda of promoting corporate

power and American empire.

But in this election, the GOP base has refused to heel – despite increasingly desperate pleas from prominent, though not exactly beloved, Republican leaders such as Mitt Romney and Lindsay Graham.

In early April, it looked as if Republican insiders might finally have hit on a strategy for their #NeverTrump campaign. Ted Cruz rode a mobilization of the religious right to several good showings, notably in Wisconsin, while political operatives working for him and others used the Republicans' arcane party rules to get convention delegates selected who would abandon Trump at a contested convention.

At the top levels of the Republican Party, Cruz was widely detested – but at least he wasn't Trump.

But Republican voters rebelled against these underhand manoeuvres, giving Trump a string of crushing victories in the Northeast in April, followed by the death blow in Indiana. Trump spent much of April complaining that the nominating system was rigged against him, which succeeded not only in energizing his supporters, but also in turning an additional layer of Republican primary voters against the party leadership.

Political analyst Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight.com pointed out an April opinion poll showing that, while only 40 per cent of Republican voters had Trump as their first choice, 62

VOTERS' DILEMMA

Illustration:
Anthony Jenkins
www.jenkinsdraws.com



VOTERS' DILEMMA

Ted Cruz actually managed to match Trump in hatefulness – his main strategy in the Indiana campaign was to accuse Trump of not being bigoted enough against transgender people on the question of what bathroom they use

per cent thought the nomination should go to the candidate with the most votes. Before the April 19 New York primary, Trump had never won more than 50 per cent of the total vote. In New York and after, he did, making him the runaway popular favorite. That was enough to demolish the scheme of stopping Trump at a contested convention.

The Republican Party establishment has been discredited and humiliated. Each attempt to respond to the rise of Trump failed dismally – and now, GOP leaders are stuck with a presidential candidate who regularly attacks them. But while Trump is an outsider who won the presidential nomination over the opposition of most, if not all, top party leaders, he's hardly the "anti-establishment" candidate the media describe him as.

Trump is often compared to Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, but Sanders' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination has been based on concrete proposals – from campaign finance reform to free college tuition, and single-payer health care – that would make both the Democratic Party and the country as a whole more just and democratic.

Trump, by contrast, is a billionaire real estate tycoon funding his own campaign – and getting billions of dollars in free advertising from a "news" media desperate to fill airtime with his carnival show.

He has no interest in changing the political or economic system in any major way, and his complaints about the Republican Party delegate selection rules and nomination process are strictly limited to how they affect his campaign.

It's also worth noting another hole in the myth of the "anti-establishment" Trump. While there has been much talk in the media about Trump's support among white working class voters, the median annual household income of his supporters is \$72,000. That's lower than many of his former rivals for the nomination, but well above the national median of \$56,000.



MORE REPULSIVE? Ted Cruz was, if possible, more disliked by conservatives than Trump.

Photo: Gage Skidmore, via www.flickr.com

The biggest weakness with the Republicans' #NeverTrump strategy was the part where voters were expected to vote for one of the other guys.

Ted Cruz actually managed to match Trump in hatefulness – his main strategy in the Indiana campaign was to accuse Trump of not being bigoted enough against transgender people on the question of what bathroom they use. But he coated it with a level of holier-than-thou creepiness that made him, unbelievably enough, more repulsive than Trump.

Kasich, meanwhile, campaigned as an old-fashioned Republican – ready to bust unions and ban abortions with a contented smile. This worked okay with the wealthy – Kasich voters had a median annual household income of \$91,000 – but it didn't appeal to the majority of Republican voters looking for a leader to validate their insecurities and paranoia.

The shortcomings of the other Republican candidates were symptomatic of a deeper problem. The party is able to dominate many states in the South, Midwest and West by combining hard-right social policies with mammoth tax breaks for locally based corporations. But it has no coherent message for national elections because its three central

tenets have been severely weakened over the past decade.

For one, the ongoing disastrous consequences of the Iraq War, supported by most Democrats, but infamously and incompetently led by George W. Bush, has weakened the Republicans' reputation as the party of national security.

Second, the global financial crisis and bailout of the banks that caused it has undermined the dogmas of the free market and capitalism – also shared by most Democrats, but traditionally most associated with the Republicans.

Lastly, the historic victories of the movement for LGBTQ equality, both legally and culturally, while incomplete, have deprived the Republicans of their favourite of the culture wars on anything beyond a regional level.

The Republican Party establishment has a complicated relationship with Donald Trump. They hate him because he isn't one of them, but they also hate him because, in a lot of ways, he actually is.

Trump does challenge Republican orthodoxies on issues such as trade and national defence – attitudes also shared, and I know this is getting repetitive, by the Democratic Party establishment.

Trump has long opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement – “The Mexicans want it, and that doesn't sound good to me,” he said back in 1993 (in case you were wondering whether he was always such an ass).

And while Trump is lying when he says he opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq before it happened, he did turn against the war within a year – faster than a lot of Democrats – and he caused probably his biggest dust-up with the party's elder statesmen when, early in the primaries, he again attacked George W. Bush's handling of the war.

But in a lot of other ways, Trump is a quintessential 21st-century Republican, both in policy and style.

He's a nativist Islamophobe who wants

to cut taxes for the wealthy at a time of the greatest wealth inequality in almost a century. He combines the bullyboy persona of Chris Christie, the billionaire arrogance of Michael Bloomberg, and the endless conspiracy theorizing of Glenn Beck.

Trump is a mirror that proper Republican Party leaders hate to look at because it reminds them of what a national joke the GOP has been for a good long while.

After all, it was a full eight years since Sarah Palin swept the Republicans off their collective feet as John McCain's vice-presidential nominee – even while she blatantly stabbed her running mate in the back to further her own future career, and couldn't answer a basic question about what newspaper she reads.

Then, during the 2012 nomination race, it took Mitt Romney months to overtake Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich, even though both seemed more interested in using the campaign to sell books or land gigs at Fox.

According to many accounts, Trump had similar plans to Cain and Gingrich – a vanity campaign that would also be lucrative in advancing the Trump business brand – until, as the months went by with no party-approved insider capable of beating him, it became apparent that he could actually win the nomination.

Corporate America has historically preferred the Republican Party to represent its interests within the US two-party system, and one part of the shock at Trump's victories is that business interests haven't done more to prevent it.

“But then again,” as Alan Maass wrote last month for SocialistWorker.org, “as the Republicans have lurched into crisis, the Democrats have become a more reliable and responsible pro-corporate party.”

As Hillary Clinton – having succeeded in establishing herself as the Democratic presidential nominee-in-waiting, despite the continuing successes of Bernie Sanders – works overtime in the coming months to play on people's justifiable fears of a Trump presi-

Corporate America has historically preferred the Republican Party to represent its interests within the US two-party system, and one part of the shock at Trump's victories is that business interests haven't done more to prevent it

VOTERS' DILEMMA

The millions of people who despise Trump and everything he stands will be right to challenge him wherever and however they can

dency, this last point will be one of the most important political arguments for the left.

The rightward-moving, pro-corporate direction of the Democrats over a period of decades is an essential part of the overall conservative shift of US mainstream politics. In that sense, the Democrats have contributed to laying the groundwork for Trump's triumph, just as the Republicans themselves have.

While figures like Trump and Cruz have pulled the Republican Party further toward the right-wing extreme, the Democrats have followed in the same direction with their modus operandi of giving ground to Republicans, decrying them for refusing to compromise, and then giving up more ground.

This has been less apparent during the primary season, as Hillary Clinton paid lip service to progressive issues that appeal to the Democratic base, such as raising the minimum wage and combatting racist policing – both because Democratic leaders always do this during primary season, but also to fend off the left-wing challenge from Sanders.

But once the party convention is over, Clinton will be free to move back to the right, appealing to middle-of-the-road independents and even Republican voters considering supporting her over Trump in November.

What's more, Clinton will be urged to do this by liberal Democrats who have more in common with the agenda that Sanders has put forward. Expect to read a lot of apologies from politicians and pundits with a liberal reputation claiming that this is a necessary evil for Democrats to keep the White House and maybe even win back Congress.

On the contrary, their appeals will contribute – disastrously so – toward making the final months of Election 2016 into a contest between the right and the further right.

Preliminary opinion polls show Trump trailing far behind Clinton in the November election. But that doesn't mean that he isn't a threat. It might seem impossible for Trump to overcome his unpopularity, but he's already proven that he knows how to take advantage of the corporate media's hunger to put



BACK TO THE RIGHT? Hillary Clinton is expected to shift position once Sanders has been eliminated. Photo: Wikipedia.

him on camera. He will appeal to both the vile sexism and well-founded hostility that have given Clinton a likewise high unfavourability rating of 55 per cent. And there's the threat of the unknown – a sharp downturn in an economy that is already weakening or a large-scale terrorist attack.

Whatever the case, though, there will be six more months of Donald Trump spreading his racism, sexism and Islamophobia across the airways, legitimizing those politics and creating a more hateful and potentially violent country for years to come. The millions of people who despise Trump and everything he stands will be right to challenge him wherever and however they can – while also recognizing that they can't trust the "lesser evil" to stop the "greater evil." **CT**

Danny Katch is a Queens, New York, based activist, journalist, and comedian. The author of America's Got Democracy! The Making of the World's Longest Running Reality Show, he is a columnist for Socialist Worker – <http://socialistworker.org> – where this was first published.

Gimme Shelter (from the tax man)

There's a pile of money sitting in offshore bank accounts, but which US presidential contender will pry it loose? asks economist **Nomi Prins**

There's a pile of money hiding offshore. It's true that jobs are also leaving the United States because American companies find it convenient to cut labour costs by moving manufacturing abroad, the economic issue you're hearing most about in this election season. But the stunning amount of money that continues to flow across American borders (and those of other countries), and eventually disappears into the pockets of the corporate and political elite, ultimately causes even more damage to our finances and our lives.

While the two leading candidates for the presidency, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, have indeed suggested cosmetic fixes for a situation that only grows more extreme with the passage of time, they have themselves taken advantage of numerous tax "efficiency" strategies that make money evaporate. Of course, you shouldn't doubt for a second that they'll change their ways once in the Oval Office.

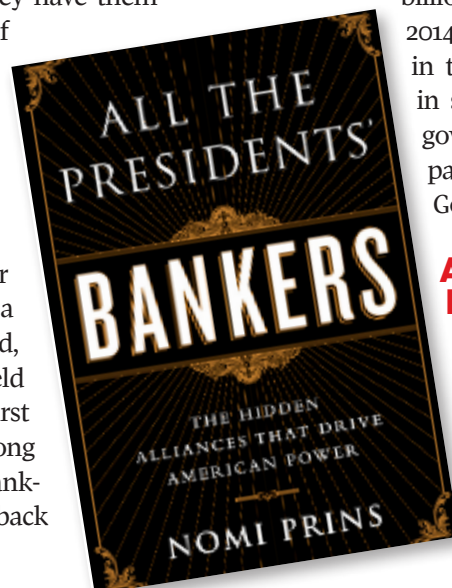
As with so much in our American heritage, there's a history to the "offshore" world, too. Finding places to shield money from tax collection first became commonplace among upper-crust industrialists, bankers, and even public servants back

in the 1920s. Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, a millionaire mogul who served presidents Calvin Coolidge, Warren Harding, and Herbert Hoover (and had a knack for cutting taxes on the wealthy), left office under mounting congressional probes into his tax evasion strategies.

Fast-forward about a century, and tax dodging has been woven into the fabric of the lives of the affluent and corporate worldwide in an extraordinary way. According to an April, 2016, Oxfam report, the top 50 US companies are hoarding more than \$1.4-trillion in cash offshore.

What's more, for every dollar that these firms spent lobbying Congress for "favourable" tax treatment (a collective total of \$2.6-billion between 2008 and 2014), they received \$130 in tax breaks and \$4,000 in subsidies from the US government. These companies, including Pfizer, Goldman Sachs, Dow

Tax dodging has been woven into the fabric of the lives of the affluent and corporate worldwide in an extraordinary way



ALL THE PRESIDENT'S BANKERS

The Hidden Alliances that Drive American Power

Nomi Prins

\$15.27 (Amazon.com)

Fortune 500 companies are now saving \$695-billion in federal income taxes on a total of \$2.4-trillion in offshore holdings

Chemical, Chevron, Walmart, IBM, and Procter & Gamble, created “an opaque and secretive network” of more than 1,600 company subsidiaries located in tax havens that they decided to disclose. (Because of the weak reporting requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission, there could be thousands more.) According to a March 3, 2016, report from the Citizens for Tax Justice, the Fortune 500 companies are now saving \$695-billion in federal income taxes on a total of \$2.4-trillion in offshore holdings.

Americans can’t afford to ignore such tax games, because we’re the ones who, in effect, wind up paying the taxes these firms don’t. For government policymakers, such tax evasion is a grim matter of attrition, because the US (and other countries) plunge ever deeper into debt thanks to such antics, and then find themselves cutting services or raising taxes on us to cover the gap between the money they’re losing and the taxes they’re collecting.

Not only are such firms unpatriotic, they are parasitic, and while they’re at it, they use similar techniques – let’s not call it theft (though it is) – to avoid tax payments in the poorest places on Earth. As Oxfam reports, “the biggest burden” of tax havens “falls on the poorest people.” In the process, they only increase already oppressive levels of inequality globally.

Tax “secrecy” specialists – people working in the money-hiding field – help rich individuals, multinational corporations, political leaders, terrorists, and organized crime groups divert cash and capital, sometimes in staggering amounts, from local economies into an obscure, complex, multi-layered global financial network that operates outside any national or international regulatory or tax system. Given this, isn’t it a little surprising that the top candidates for the presidency barely pay lip service to the impact of such hidden money? What toothless policies they have proposed to deal with the phenomenon will do little or nothing to change it.

The Panama Papers

US trade agreements generally include rosy promises about partnering with regional economies around the world to encourage the flow of goods and services across borders. At the same time, they generally are focused on the obliteration of barriers that in any way restrict money from flowing out of the United States or into the embrace of other nations. The free movement of capital, or financial globalization as it’s called, has been a bedrock Washington policy for a century and, since the 1980s, places like Panama – a renowned tax haven – have abetted this process.

Two months ago, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists released a trove of documents, 2.6-terabytes of them, including “more than 4.8-million emails, three-million database files, and 2.1-million PDFs.” These were turned over by an undisclosed source (“John Doe”), communicating through encrypted channels to avoid repercussions. Now known as “the Panama Papers,” they reveal how elite multinational companies, the super rich, and government figures have engaged in tax-dodging practices engineered by a single Panama City-based law firm, Mossack Fonseca (MF).

In addition to public officials and billionaires, more than 500 global banks, their subsidiaries and branches, have registered at least 15,600 shell companies there using MF’s services. That word “shell” is descriptively accurate because such “companies” rarely have employees, and are commonly no more than a post office box providing a façade through which books can be doctored, taxes dodged, losses concealed, and money-laundering and other criminal actions carried out. And keep in mind that MF, which acts for approximately 300,000 companies, is only the fourth largest provider of such offshore services globally.

One mega-bank that used its services extensively was HSBC, which created an astonishing 2,300 shell companies with that law firm’s help. We’ll return to HSBC.



The most alarming aspect of the Panama Papers revelations was not MF's clientele or even its secretive practices, but that what it does is completely "legal"

SHELL GAME: The giant HSBC bank used 2,300 shell companies with the help of Mossack Fonseca. Photo: freefoto.com

Mossack Fonseca's official mission, it claims, is "to deliver quality, reliable and comprehensive services to our worldwide clients in the legal, trust, investment consultancy, and digital solution fields." That's code for helping select establishment outfits and dubious enterprises to avoid paying taxes on profits, investments, or money made from buying and selling real estate, luxury yachts or planes, oil wells, weapons, or drugs, among other things.

Secrecy is its calling card. Tax havens, or locales amenable to tax dodging, whether in the Caribbean, Central America, Switzerland (still the world's top location for financial secrecy), or, for that matter, the US state of Delaware, exist to circumvent tax laws. Period. And these operations are so shady that even the functionaries working in the shadows to establish such secret accounts are barely aware of exactly who owns them, where the money came from, or where it's going. For regulators, prosecutors, and tax collectors, the opacity is far worse.

You don't necessarily have to be rich or powerful to access the services of such offshore firms and banks, but it helps. Some havens take anyone ready to put up a minimum of \$25,000, while others demand staggering sums. Western Samoa, for instance, requires a cool \$10-million to get started.

The most alarming aspect of the Panama Papers revelations was not MF's clientele or even its secretive practices, but that what it does is completely "legal." Nor was this the first such disclosure. In November, 2014, for instance, the Luxleaks scandal involving a whole "menagerie of Luxembourg-based tax schemes," as the Guardian put it, was disclosed by two whistleblowers from the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. (Luxembourg is a major European tax haven.) Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, Facebook, HSBC, JPMorgan Chase, and Microsoft were on the list of its more than 350 multinational "tax avoiders."

Avoiding vs evading taxes and corporate inversions

Avoiding and evading taxes are technically considered different kinds of acts, the former being legal in the US, the latter not. According to the Internal Revenue Service, "Taxpayers have the right to reduce, avoid, or minimize their taxes by legitimate means." Tax evasion, on the other hand, involves an "act to evade or defeat a tax, or payment of tax" by "deceit, subterfuge, camouflage, concealment, attempts to color or obscure events, or make things seem other than they are."

The line between the two is obviously thin and vague, but both practices result in

Tax havens are, in essence, perfectly “legal” criminal facilities designed to steal money from the rest of us

the same thing: paying fewer taxes or hiding money.

The subject of tax avoidance and evasion has generally gotten little traction on the campaign trail in Election 2016, the exception being corporate inversions. These happen when, for example, an American company merges with a foreign one in a tax haven, and so gets a lower tax rate by re-incorporating (filling out some paperwork) there. This, too, is “legal,” although it represents the purest form of corporate tax evasion. Perhaps you won’t be surprised to learn that the practice began in Panama about 30 years ago.

In 2014, companies with household names, such as Apple, Microsoft, Pfizer, and General Electric, avoided paying a collective \$90-billion in taxes through inversion strategies. Apple led that list, holding \$181.1-billion offshore. That’s a lot of iPhone sales.

Tax havens are, in essence, perfectly “legal” criminal facilities designed to steal money from the rest of us. The two leading candidates in this election season, however, aren’t talking about closing down tax havens for good (which would piss off lots of rich people, banks, drug cartels, and terrorists). They are instead focused on getting companies to voluntarily repatriate profits made abroad for taxation purposes or on closing tax “loopholes” that allow money to disappear. Neither, however, offers much detail as to what that means.

Both do share one thing, however, when it comes to tax havens: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have companies registered at the same address (also “shared” by 285,000 other companies) in Wilmington, Delaware. In other words, they make use of the “Delaware loophole,” which allows the legal shifting of earnings from elsewhere in the country to the ultimate tax haven state in the US. Neither, as Rupert Neate of the Guardian, has written, has been willing to offer any explanation for this. That’s the political

beauty of loopholes: Closing one is different from eradicating an entire practice but suffices as a promise.

Hillary

Hillary has gone after tax havens before. In 2004, as a New York senator, she vowed to close tax loopholes for “people who create a mailbox, or a drop, or send one person to sit on the beach in some island paradise and claim that it is their offshore headquarters.” She introduced no bills to do so, however. She has spoken out against corporate tax inversions, too. She wants Congress to prevent them by imposing what she calls a “commonsense 50 per cent” threshold on them; in other words, as long as a company keeps at least half of its operations in this country, it would be considered a US company for tax purposes, no matter the inversions. She also has favored an “exit tax” to ensure that multinationals pay a “fair” share of US taxes owed on earnings stored overseas. Both of these suggestions would put some modest limits on offshore tax dodging (after the fact), but not come within a country mile of banning it.

On such subjects, she can sound strong indeed at appropriate moments. In February, 2016, for instance, she said, “We need to go after a company like Johnson Controls that is trying to avoid paying taxes, after all of us bailed it out, by pretending to sell itself in a so-called inversion in Europe.” It evidently didn’t matter to her that the same automotive parts company set to merge with Tyco International (based in Ireland to dodge taxes) had donated money to the Clinton Foundation charity as recently as December, 2015. (Johnson Controls denied Hillary’s claims that it had received a bailout during the financial crisis.)

Hillary, lest we forget, joined the board of directors of the Clinton Foundation, the family charity, in 2013. She resigned in April, 2015, to run for president. Now, keeping it in the family, her husband, Bill, and her daughter, Chelsea, remain standing members of the

board. Spawned from the William J. Clinton Foundation, founded in 1997, the charity has raised \$2-billion, has about 2,000 employees (including at times members of Hillary's political team), and boasts an annual budget of \$223-million.

Like many gilt-edged couples, Hillary and Bill Clinton have themselves used onshore and offshore tax loopholes. In 2010, they used a common tax-dodging technique by placing their multi-million-dollar home in Chappaqua, New York, in a "residence trust." After he left office, Bill spent five years as an "adviser" to billionaire (now-ex-pal) Ron Burkle's investment fund, Yucaipa Global, which had funds registered in the Cayman Islands and Dubai. That alliance netted Bill at least \$15-million.

Hillary's bedrock thinking on money flowing out of the US and into the offshore world can best be seen in her support for the 2012 US-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement when she was secretary of state. The agreement removed "barriers to US services, including financial services," which actually simplified the process of squirreling money away in or through Panama by allowing it to flow freely into that country.

The Clinton Foundation inhales donations from people using tax havens (including Panama). Although Hillary denounced Mossack Fonseca's dealings on cue after the Panama Papers story broke, a number of individuals and multinationals that have contributed to the foundation used MF to establish offshore accounts, according to McClatchy news service. These include Canadian mining billionaire Frank Giustra, who features in the foundation's \$25-million top-tier donor bracket, and two firms tied to Ng Lap Seng, the Chinese billionaire implicated in a major donor scandal involving the Clintons and the Democratic National Committee.

Similarly, in a speech she gave at the New School in July, 2015, Hillary highlighted the "criminal behaviour" of global bank HSBC. In 2012, the behemoth financial institution agreed to a record \$1.92-billion settle-

ment with the Department of Justice and the Treasury Department for enabling drug cartel money laundering and violating US sanctions by conducting transactions for customers in Iran, Libya, Sudan, and Burma. She vowed, "On my watch, it will change."

But, in 2014, the Clinton Foundation accepted between \$500,000 and \$1-million from that bank.

The Panama Papers are but one conflicted instance in which Hillary's stated beliefs, her actions, and the generosity of her friends and acquaintances came together in a contradictory fashion. The evidence suggests that tax-dodgers will, in fact, be able to breathe a sigh of relief if she becomes president. Her actions are likely to – if you'll excuse the expression – trump her words when it comes to curtailing the behavior of offshore scofflaws in significant ways. And speaking of Trump . . .

The Donald

Consider the fact that The Donald won't even disclose his tax returns. His indignantly delivered explanation is that they are "under audit." Under the circumstances, don't hold your breath. Perhaps he doesn't make nearly as much money as he claims – or maybe he has an embarrassing tax haven habit. Who knows?

Ironically, Mossack Fonseca's Panama City headquarters is located a mere seven-minute drive from the Trump International Hotel and Towers in Panama City. (If you're interested, its website is pitching a bargain on rooms at "15 per cent off our currently available Best Unrestricted Rate.") That decadent complex is one of many sketchy enterprises to which Trump lent his name for licensing purposes. According to his (unaudited) personal financial disclosure report filed with the Federal Election Commission, the deal earned him \$5-million. In true Trumpian style, lawsuits and battles surround the endeavor.

Under the tax plan he's touting in his presidential campaign, US businesses would

The Panama Papers are but one conflicted instance in which Hillary's stated beliefs, her actions, and the generosity of her friends and acquaintances came together in a contradictory fashion

Last April, Bernie Sanders introduced the Corporate Tax Dodging Prevention Act of 2015 in the Senate. Among other things, it aspires to “prevent corporations from sheltering profits in tax havens like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands

see a reduction in their maximum tax rate from 35 per cent to 15 per cent. This lower rate (“one of the best in the world”) would, he claims, render corporate inversions unnecessary. The Donald apparently hopes that corporate America will be so eternally grateful to him that they’ll move their money back onshore and pay taxes on it voluntarily (though most of them already don’t pay the top tax rate here anyway).

Trump’s views on a “repatriation tax holiday” that would let companies bring home their overseas stashes on a one-time basis for little or nothing have shifted over the course of his candidacy. Last year, he proposed the repatriation of hidden funds without penalty or taxation of any kind. Now he’s advocating a more populist one-time 10 per cent tax on them.

Although a key promise of his tax reform plan is to end the practice of stockpiling money in offshore accounts by American companies, he has personally invested in many of the companies that do so. As CBS News noted, in October, 2015, Trump owned stock in 22 of the top 30 Fortune 500 companies ranked by their number of offshore subsidiaries. It’s a group that has engineered 1,225 tax-haven subsidiaries holding \$1.4-trillion. Of course, Trump has a keen understanding of the practices that disguise or shelter money from taxes. As he explained to supporters in Iowa this January, when it comes to his own business enterprises, “I pay as little as possible. I use every single thing in the book.”

Bernie

As far as we know, Bernie Sanders has no personal experience with tax havens and has a far more structured plan than either of the leading candidates to combat their money-sucking, tax-dodging prowess. His policies would prevent American companies from avoiding US taxes through inversions, block them from escaping taxes by establishing a post office box in a tax haven site, and end the practice of letting corporations

defer paying taxes on profits from offshore subsidiaries.

In the real world, financial speculation, crime, and tax evasion – sorry for this word again – trump the highly touted goal of “free trade” when it comes to tax havens. Bernie understood this when he voted against the Panama “free trade” agreement of 2011. In a Senate speech on the subject, he presciently noted that, “Panama is a world leader when it comes to allowing large corporations and wealthy Americans to evade US taxes by stashing their cash in offshore tax havens. And the Panama free trade agreement would make this bad situation much worse.”

He was right then, and he remains right today. Unfortunately, no one was listening or interested in acting on his warning – certainly not Hillary, who, as secretary of state, characterized the agreement as “an example of the Obama Administration’s commitment to economic statecraft and deepening our economic engagement throughout the world.”

In practical terms, Sanders went significantly further than Hillary by formulating actual legislation on the subject. Last April, he introduced the Corporate Tax Dodging Prevention Act of 2015 in the Senate. Among other things, it aspires to “prevent corporations from sheltering profits in tax havens like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands and would stop rewarding companies that ship jobs and factories overseas with tax breaks.”

Regarding inversions, he would treat companies as American for tax purposes if they were majority-owned by US interests and operating in this country. Even his plan, however, would fall short unless it made inversions illegal – and too many companies are invested in not letting that happen.

Missing money costs

As of 2014, according to Gabriel Zucman, University of California economist and author of *The Hidden Wealth of Nations*, at least \$7.6-trillion, or approximately eight per cent of global financial wealth, was “missing” some-

where offshore. His analysis demonstrates that the sorts of tax-dodging practices we've been discussing put governments across the planet in the red by approximately \$200-billion annually. Tax avoidance by major US companies costs governments an additional \$130-billion per year since nearly a third of their profits are hidden offshore.

The UN estimates that tax dodging by multinational companies costs developing countries \$100-billion a year, an amount "equivalent to what it would cost to provide basic life-saving health services or safe water and sanitation to more than 2.2-billion people."

There are, in other words, harrowing costs to tax dodging. When the wealthy and powerful hide money from governments or speculate with it in sneaky ways, it destabilizes economies and enables the commission of crimes that place a further burden on

ordinary people. When money flows from the economic necessities needed by the less privileged to the top fraction of a per cent of the world's population and is then hidden offshore, essentially "disappeared," it's a net drain on and a blow to the world economy. This impacts jobs and the quality of our future. Unfortunately, the leading candidates in this election year aren't championing a major change for the better. **CT**

Nomi Prins is the author of six books, a speaker, and a distinguished senior fellow at the non-partisan public policy institute Demos. Her most recent book is All the Presidents' Bankers: The Hidden Alliances That Drive American Power (Nation Books). She is a former Wall Street executive. Special thanks go to researcher Craig Wilson for his work on this essay, which was originally published at www.tomdispatch.com

The UN estimates that tax dodging by multinational companies costs developing countries \$100-billion a year

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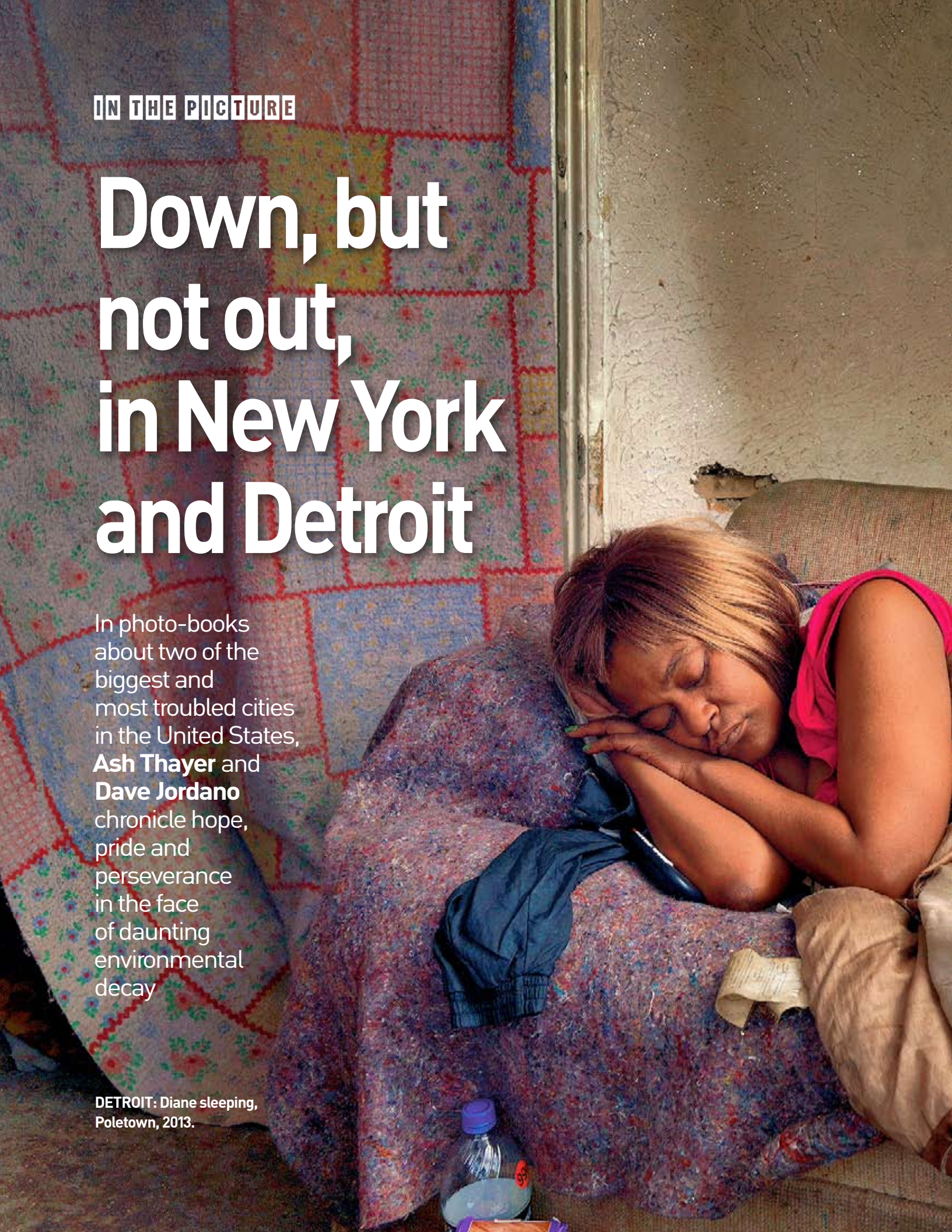


IN THE PICTURE

Down, but not out, in New York and Detroit

In photo-books about two of the biggest and most troubled cities in the United States, **Ash Thayer** and **Dave Jordano** chronicle hope, pride and perseverance in the face of daunting environmental decay

DETROIT: Diane sleeping, Poletown, 2013.





IN THE PICTURE



DETROIT: Glemie plays the blues, Westside, 2011.

Thayer saw residents training each other in building crafts, finding much of their material in New York City's refuse and trash

After being kicked out of her apartment in Brooklyn in 1992, and unable to afford rent anywhere near her school, art student Ash Thayer found herself with no option but to move into a squat in an abandoned house on New York's rapidly-degenerating Lower East Side.

At that time, the area's streets were notable for their derelict buildings, with junkies huddled in dark corners, and gun-toting drug dealers. People in desperate need of housing, worn down from waiting years on the low-income housing lists, had been moving in and fixing up abandoned buildings since the mid-70s, when President Ford refused to provide federal funds to bail the city out of its near-bankruptcy.

Squatters occupied barely habitable buildings that were overrun with vermin, lacking plumbing and electricity, and sometimes even walls, floors and roofs. Because of their poor legal standing, the squatters were secretive and defensive, so few outsiders, especially photographers and journalists, were welcomed.

However, Ash Thayer was an insider, living and working in the squats, and her camera accompanied her everywhere. She saw residents training each other in building crafts, finding much of their working material in New York's refuse and trash. In her book, **Kill City**, Thayer's images illustrate the precarious living arrangements of an assortment of young squatters, social outcasts who were

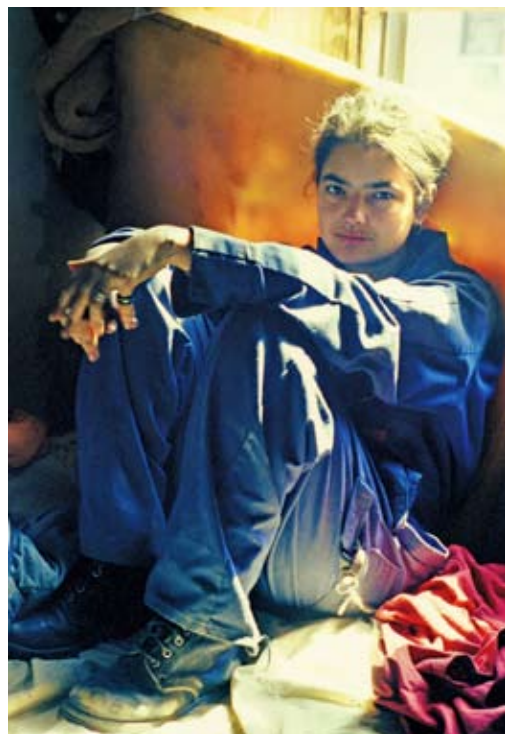
IN THE PICTURE



NEW YORK: Famous, pregnant and building windows, Seventh Street squat, 1994.



DETROIT: Micah, Eastside, 2013.



NEW YORK: Jen (on bed), Fifth Street squat, 1995.

IN THE PICTURE



DETROIT: Tammy, Goldengate Street, 2012.

“If you were young, white, not covered in piss-stained clothes or drooling on yourself, and observed digging in the garbage, it really seemed to disturb passers-by”

scorned by one of the most affluent societies in the world.

“When we couldn’t afford to buy food, we would dumpster dive and emerge with barely-expired produce, bags of stale bagels, anything we could get our hands on. You just had to not give a shit when regular people gave you strange looks. If you were young, white, not covered in piss-stained clothes or drooling on yourself, and observed digging in the garbage, it really seemed to disturb passers-by,” writes Thayer.

Gradually, however, life improved. “In my last year of school, I moved into Serenity House. The apartment had some running water, electricity, and even a phone. There were more families in this building, including four little girls, all about three- to four-years-old.”





NEW YORK: Jill, K.D., and the World Trade towers, Fifth Street squat, 1995.

IN THE PICTURE

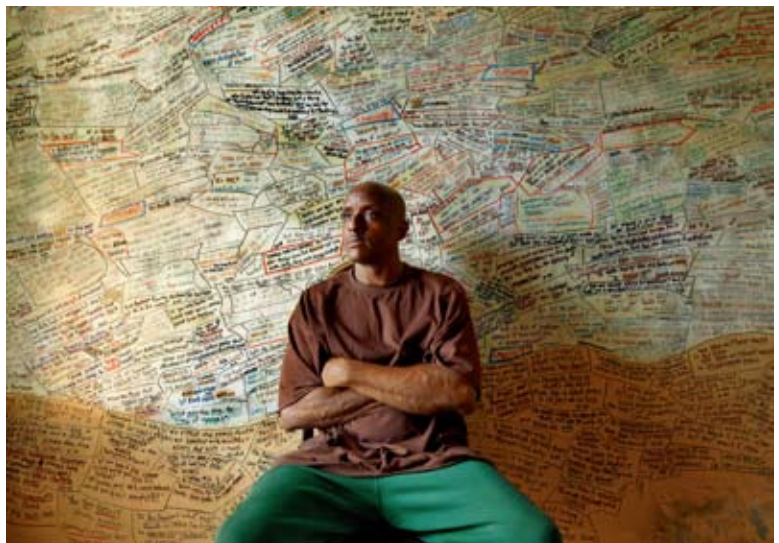


NEW YORK: Jason, Fifth Street squat, 1994.

By 2,000, as the 20th-century drew to a close, times were changing, and the remaining squats were soon converted to co-ops as the city's gentrification got under way. It was clearly the end of an era.

Dave Jordano's book, **Detroit Unbroken Down**, offers a different take on urban collapse. While Thayer's New York was a city in transition, Detroit has been visited by the acute turmoil normally reserved for the Third World – mass abandonment through years of white flight, unemployment hovering at three times the national average, city services cut to the bone, a massive real estate collapse, and the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history.

Deliberately avoiding the photo-porn of



DETROIT: Hakeem in his room, Eastside, 2012.



DETROIT: Semira sleeping, Eastside, 2012.



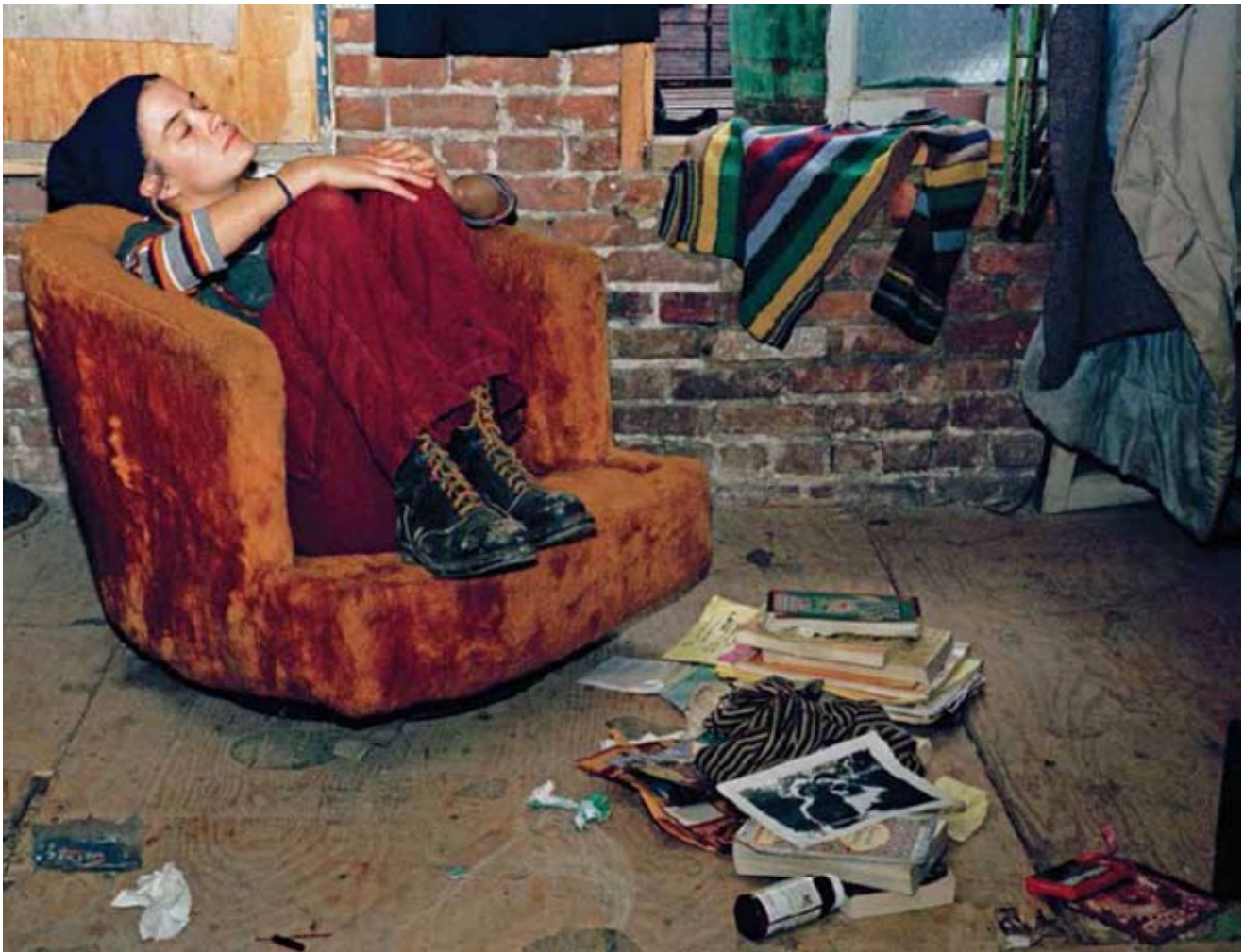
NEW YORK: April's room, See Skwat, 1996.

dereliction and squalor that feature in most photo-books of his home town, Jordano has focussed on the hope and perseverance of those who remain after Detroit's economic collapse. He writes, "These photographs are my reaction to all the negative press that Detroit has had to endure over the years.

"I've found that most Detroiters wear their pride for the city they live in like a badge of courage, defying all odds, openly admitting that if you can survive here, you can survive just about anywhere.

"My hope is that this work will convey in many ways that Detroit is a city made up of resilient, strong individuals who have withstood many harsh realities, all the while clinging to the vanished ideals of an urban oasis

IN THE PICTURE



NEW YORK: Meggin in orange chair, Fifth Street squat, 1995.

.....
Ash Thayer is a photographer and multimedia visual artist based in Los Angeles.
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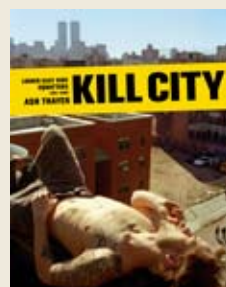
Dave Jordano was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1948. He received a degree in photography from the College for Creative Studies in 1974.

that once prided itself as one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in America, at one time a model for all others to follow, but one which has now fallen from grace.

“This project bears witness to the fact that Detroit is not a story about what’s been destroyed, but more importantly about what’s been left behind and those who are coping with it.”

Both of these important books bring light to a dark side of life, and show the remarkable spirit of people, young and old, who fight against the odds to create a better life for themselves and others.

– **Tony Sutton**



KILL CITY

Lower East Side Squatters 1992-2000
By **Ash Thayer**
Published by powerHouse Books
\$37.49 (Amazon)



DETROIT UNBROKEN DOWN

By **Dave Jordano**
Published by powerHouse Books
\$32.72 (Amazon)



DETROIT: Lynn, Heidelberg Street, Eastside, 2010.

Jailed in Las Vegas

“What happened to us was a shakedown by gangsters wearing police uniforms and judges’ robes, writes **Brian Terrell**”

I was kept in jail for four days, not for my part in the day’s protest, but on a bench warrant due to an unpaid traffic fine

“The degree of civilization in a society . . . can be judged by entering its prisons.”

– Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky,

As a frequent visitor to Nevada in recent years, I have often been surprised by the cultural diversity and spiritual richness that can be found in Las Vegas. Still, I think that Dostoevsky was right. A more accurate assessment of the degree of civilization in Las Vegas, and for the broader society that the city claims to be “the Entertainment Capital” of, can be made by entering the cells of the Clark County Correctional Center than by going to the top of the Stratosphere, cruising the Strip or even by taking in a Cirque du Soleil show.

I was one of 25 people arrested by Las Vegas Metropolitan Police at Creech Air Force Base, the centre of drone assassination by the US Air Force and the CIA, situated 40 miles northwest of the city, on March 31 and April 1.

“Shut Down Creech” was a week-long convergence of activists from around the country. Most of us were staying in tents at a makeshift Camp Justice in the desert across the highway from the base. Our days of discussion, study, song, reflection and strategizing built up to a dramatic series of coordinated actions, including street theatre and blockades that disrupted the le-

thal business of Creech. While we expected to be arrested, this was not our desire or our goal. Once again, the police arrested the wrong people, taking those who acted to stop a crime-in-progress downtown to be booked.

Since 2009, I have had at least two other trips from the police from Creech to the county jail at 330 S Casino Center Blvd in Las Vegas, to undergo the tedious process of booking, fingerprinting, mugshot-taking, and other indignities before being kicked out onto the sidewalk a few, long, hours later. This time, however, after my friends and comrades were released one by one, I was kept in jail for the next four days, not for my part in the day’s protest, but on a bench warrant due to an unpaid traffic fine.

I had been arrested a year before at another protest at Creech, cited for the misdemeanor crime of impeding traffic, and released with 30 others on our promise to return for trial. Some weeks later, the charges for 10 of us were reduced to the traffic offence of “pedestrian soliciting a ride or business on a roadway,” and we were assessed a \$98 fine with no apparent way to plead not guilty.

While those who eventually went to trial on the original charges were found not guilty, or had their charges dismissed,



A search of my case on the court's website showed that I had been charged to pay for my own warrant and another "compliance fee," apparently to pay for my account getting referred to a collection agency, bringing my bill to \$348

ARRESTED: Brian Terrell and a fellow protester meet the Crech police.

those of us in the "hitchhikers' club" all failed in our various attempts to have our cases heard.

"How can I contest this ticket?" I asked the clerk at the Justice (sic) Court in Las Vegas. "You don't contest it," was the answer, "you PAY it." In Las Vegas, it seems, it is easier to plead not guilty to a violent felony than it is to contest a traffic ticket.

In due course, I got a glossy postcard in the mail with a colour photo of a perp being handcuffed against a Metropolitan Police squad car, with the clever warning, "Pay the Ticket, Avoid the Click-it." This image, that can also be found on the court's website, came with this threat:

"The Las Vegas Township Justice Court will issue arrest warrants for all unpaid traffic tickets. An additional warrant fee of \$150 and a late fee of \$100 will be added to all tickets that proceed into warrant status. In addition to warrant fees and penalties, all unpaid traffic tickets will be reported to national credit reporting agencies." A search of my case on the court's website showed that I had been charged to pay for my own warrant and another "compliance fee," apparently to pay for my account getting referred to a collection agency, bringing my bill to \$348.

These mounting fines and lack of access



PAY THE TICKET: Postcard from the Las Vegas court.

The deplorable conditions and cruelties of this jail defy exaggeration, and are as extravagant as the floor-shows at the city's casinos and hotels

to the courts, and the calls that started to come from a collection agency, were a small annoyance, but are an indication of a larger systemic problem. The Las Vegas Justice Court Mission Statement (“The vision of the Las Vegas Justice Court is to maximize access to Justice, in order to achieve the highest possible level of Public Trust and Confidence”) notwithstanding, these practices and those like them in courts around the country are illegal.

A March 16, 2016, “Dear Colleague” letter from the Office for Access to Justice of the US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, addressed to state and local courts lays it out: “Recent years have seen increased attention on the illegal enforcement of fines and fees in certain jurisdictions around the country – often with respect to individuals accused of misdemeanors, quasi-criminal ordinance violations, or civil infractions. Typically, courts do not sentence defendants to incarceration in these cases; monetary fines are the norm. Yet the harm caused by unlawful practices in these jurisdictions can be profound. Individuals may confront escalating debt; face repeated, unnecessary incarceration for non-payment, despite posing no danger to the community; lose their

jobs; and become trapped in cycles of poverty that can be nearly impossible to escape. Furthermore, in addition to being unlawful, to the extent that these practices are geared not toward addressing public safety, but rather toward raising revenue, they can cast doubt on the impartiality of the tribunal and erode trust between local governments and their constituents.”

This letter cites a Supreme Court ruling that the due process and equal protection principles of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibit “punishing a person for his poverty,” and further insists that “the use of arrest warrants as a means of debt collection, rather than in response to public safety needs, creates unnecessary risk that individuals’ constitutional rights will be violated. Warrants must not be issued for failure to pay without providing adequate notice to a defendant, a hearing where the defendant’s ability to pay is assessed, and other basic procedural protections. . . . When people are arrested and detained on these warrants, the result is an unconstitutional deprivation of liberty.”

Somehow, the memo did not make it to Las Vegas. While the statistics are not available, during that long weekend I was not the only inmate in the Clark County jail locked up solely for not paying fines on minor offences.

The deplorable conditions and cruelties of this jail defy exaggeration, and are as extravagant as the floor-shows at the city’s casinos and hotels. It was more than eight hours after getting arrested that I was finally taken out of shackles. We were packed standing room only, more than 40 people in a small cell during those first hours in chains.

Not long after I arrived, as a guard opened the door to push in yet another prisoner, a slight young man edged his way to the front and tried desperately to explain that he was suffering an anxiety

attack and needed air. Not listening, the guard tried to slam the door on this young man, who stepped forward into the door jamb. The guard grabbed the man and threw him down onto the hallway floor, where, his hands already shackled at his waist so he could not defend himself, he was jumped by at least five guards, all larger than him, their knees on his body, hitting him with their fists.

The last I saw, his face was bloodied and he was being wheeled away, his wrists and ankles chained to a restraint chair. This was the jailers' response to a normal human reaction to an inhuman situation.

Like some bizarre board game, we prisoners were inexplicably moved from cell to crowded cell at all hours. Sometimes a prisoner would only just arrive before being called for another move. Sometimes the guards went from cell to cell, shouting a name of someone they had somehow misplaced. Some of our cell mates insisted that they had been in the same place for many days and worried that they had been lost as well. Guards were constantly giving contradictory and erroneous information, such as when we would get to court or be moved to more spacious and comfortable quarters upstairs. Some of the guards, unrestrained by their own lack of credentials, were generously distributing legal advice to those preparing to see a judge. I found out later that my friends outside were likewise misled by jail employees as they tried to keep track of me.

I had arrived at the jail early on a Friday and was kept in these holding cells until 3 am Monday. Meals were unsatisfactory both nutritionally and aesthetically, but also, served as they were at 3 am, 9 am and 3 pm, did not even serve to mark the passage of time in this dungeon without windows, where the lights never dimmed.

The cells varied in size and body count from hour-to-hour. There were narrow benches around the walls where a few

could lie down and nap, but most of us were lucky when there was room to stretch out, without a blanket, on the cold, filthy concrete floor.

There was one open toilet in each cell – to use toilet paper, one had to find and wake the prisoner who had appropriated the roll for use as a pillow.

In the wee hours after my third night on concrete, I was finally taken upstairs, given a change of clothes and a blanket, and shown a cot in a fairly quiet and almost-clean dormitory of around 80 men.

At about 10 am on Monday, I was chained again and led through a series of tunnels and elevators to traffic court. There were about 30 of us in that batch, by no means everyone who had been jailed over the weekend for unpaid traffic charges. Each case was decided by the judge in seconds, no defendant allowed to say anything beyond affirming their identity. The fines and added fees assessed against these men and women amounted to many thousands of dollars.

Based on an informal formula of dollars per days in lock up, the judge shaved off some of the fines owed and let most of the prisoners out with the threat that if the remainder was not paid in 30 days, more costs would be added, a new warrant issued and the cycle repeated.

None of us in traffic court that morning had been granted a “hearing where the defendant’s ability to pay is assessed” that the law demands before putting us in jail. Few of us, if any, had been found guilty by any judicial process before being fined in the first place. Debt collection, not guilt or innocence, was the only concern of this court.

What happened in court that morning could be called criminal justice, only in that what was done to us by the court was criminal. What happened to us was a shakedown by gangsters wearing police uniforms and judges’ robes, not for the

What happened to us was a shakedown by gangsters wearing police uniforms and judges’ robes, not for the sake of justice, but to maintain the civic infrastructure

WILD WEEKEND

It should not be surprising that a government that executes suspects, sometimes even its own citizens, without trial in places far way will also imprison its poorest people at home without due process

sake of justice, but to maintain the civic infrastructure behind the glittering façade of Las Vegas with dollars being squeezed out of its poorest citizens.

Through this experience, I met many interesting people, mostly young black and brown men. A few of them were locked up for alleged criminal offences, but many seemed to be caught up in the same collections racket as me. The calls made from the phones in the cells were mostly frantic appeals to family and friends for money to pay the fines or the bail that would get them released. Unless they were wearing badges and carrying keys, there was no one I met at the Clark County jail that I feared as a threat to myself or to the public safety.

If the machinations of the Las Vegas Justice Court are not about justice, neither are the drones controlled from Creech Air Force Base 40 miles away about defence. By remote control and often under the shadiest of orders by the CIA, military personnel at Creech assassinate suspected enemies far from fields of battle, based on unproven allegations or on “patterns of behavior,” often incinerating their families or the strangers unfortunate enough to be close by. It should not be surprising that a government that executes suspects, sometimes even its own citizens, without trial in places far way will also imprison its poorest people at home without due process.

Among those who stood with me in traffic court that morning, my own debt of \$348 was one of the smallest, and the judge summarily sentenced me to time served, crediting my four days in jail to wipe away my fines and added costs.

However, I was not even allowed to explain that I had never solicited a ride on a roadway in the first place. Although the judge said I was free to go, the bureaucracy of the jail took another 12-hours to get me released. It was after 10:30 pm Monday

that I was finally given back my clothes and sent out the long tunnel that leads from the jail to the bright lights of downtown Las Vegas, onto the sidewalk and into the embrace of faithful friends who had been keeping vigil for me the whole time of my incarceration.

I left the Clark County jail exhausted and happy to be out, but grateful, too, for the hospitality and patient endurance of those who shared their harsh, constricted, space with me for a few days. It is a hard but precious privilege for this middle-aged white man to visit such places that other good people have no choice but to inhabit. The same drama is being played out in jails and courtrooms around the United States, the country that imprisons more of its people than any other. With more than 95 per cent of criminal charges now settled with plea bargains instead of going to trial, many defendants are convicted and put away for years with not much more in the way of due process than I was afforded with my little trumped-up hitchhiking ticket.

It is unclear if what happened to me in Las Vegas Justice Court on April 4 was a conviction in the strictly legal sense, but what happened there has certainly deepened my conviction that the so-called war on terror is just one front of the vicious war on the poor and on people with black and brown skin here at home as well as abroad.

This conviction will lead me back to Creech and other drone bases, to the places targeted by their Hellfire missiles when I can and, if need be, to back to the Clark County Correctional Center. **CT**

***Brian Terrell** lives in Iowa and is a co-coordinator for Voices for Creative Nonviolence. In recent years he has visited Afghanistan three times and has spent more than six months in prison for protesting at drone bases. For more information email info@vcnv.org*

The good lawyer

Dell Franklin listens to the victim of a rape attempt as he takes her home from the courthouse. She thinks her macho husband will blame her

I'm sent downtown to wait for a lawyer to bring someone to my cab from the courthouse opposite the old art deco Fremont Theater. There's plenty of activity: lawyers in double-breasted suits carrying briefcases, talking on their cellphones; secretaries in fetching outfits, also talking on cellphones; and a constant flow of people in and out of the coffee house beside the Fremont and the Italian eatery and rib joint on the corner – San Luis Obispo's beehive.

I keep my eyes on the city hall building. I wait five minutes. I don't like to wait. I don't like lawyers. I get out and pace about, malevolently eyeing the beehive. Finally, a short man, about 35, who fills out a beautiful suit like a weight lifter, scampers from the courthouse and signals me.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he says, taking in my sneakers, thrift store shorts and faded Harvard Business School T-shirt. He introduces himself as Larry. "It's just that I have a hysterical client. Somebody tried to rape her. I'm her family lawyer. She's still in the courthouse. Be patient, please. I'll take good care of you."

I say okay, and he hustles back across the street. Five minutes later, he leads her across the street. She's an attractive, but ragged-looking thirty-something woman

with long mussed honey-coloured hair, dressed in work shorts and a man's baggy T-shirt. The lawyer introduces her as Gail. She is still agitated, and does not look at me as the lawyer helps her into the shotgun seat. When he has finished comforting her, he hands me his card. He asks me to drive her to Los Osos.

"I don't have any cash right now. Can you come to my office up the street when you get back to town?"

Los Osos is 12-miles away, and I'm a bit concerned. "We're not supposed to go out of town without collecting first. And I don't like coming across town when I can be at the airport. But I also don't like conducting myself like an asshole, so I guess I have to trust you. If I can't, maybe I can hire you to sue yourself."

He chuckles, but he's not quite sure of me. He says, "I can go down the street to the ATM if you want."

"Nah, I've decided you're a good lawyer, a very extinct breed."

"Thanks, pal. Please be kind to this lady, hey? She's been through hell. Right now, the police are trying to find the bastard who attacked her. She's in a lot of distress. She's very fragile."

"I'll take good care of her. That's a promise."

"I have a hysterical client. Somebody tried to rape her. I'm her family lawyer. She's still in the courthouse. Be patient, please"



"I fought him. I fought for my life. I kicked him. I bit him. I scratched his face. I fought and fought. He ripped my clothes off. I punched and scratched at him and I screamed . . . I didn't care if he killed me"

"Thanks."

We shake hands. I get back in the cab., and plough through the beginning-of-rush-hour traffic, heading for the highway to Los Osos. I decide not to start a conversation with the sniffling figure beside me, who is curled into the side of the door, as if trying to make herself smaller. I fiddle with the radio. Once on the highway, we ease into a 50 miles-per-hour flow of traffic. I glance at her, offering a reassuring smile.

"Thanks for taking me home," she says in a tiny voice. "I don't know what I would've done without my lawyer. He's such a great guy."

She sits up a trifle.

"So, you live in Los Osos . . . you like it?" I ask.

"Well, I've lived there a while. I guess I like it, but after today, I don't know."

"You look familiar. I used to tend bar at Happy Jack's in Morro Bay. You ever in there?"

"Uh-huh. I used to go there to dance before I met my husband. I don't go to bars anymore. My husband doesn't like them."

"That's probably where I saw you."

She sits up a little and replaces her handkerchief in her purse. "Somebody tried to rape me," she says. "I was out in the backyard tending my garden. I grow tomatoes and peppers and squash, and we have an avocado tree and a lemon tree. I love working in the yard. I was watering my plants when this guy jumped the fence, threw me down, put his hand over my mouth and tried to rape me! He slapped me and punched me, and said he'd kill me if I screamed. Oh God..."

"What did you do?"

Her voice cracks with a slight sob. "I fought him. I fought for my life. I kicked him. I bit him. I scratched his face. I fought and fought. He ripped my clothes off. I punched and scratched at him and I screamed . . . I didn't care if he killed me. There was nobody around, everybody at work. I was crying so hard, and fighting so hard, and screaming so

loud, he just took off."

I glance at the scratches and bruises on her face and the discoloring from bruises on her arms and legs. She starts to cry again, quietly, holding her face.

We are cutting through the bucolic serenity of green farm and ranch land with shadowed foothills on either side, homes and barns nestled into crevices under trees.

"I'm so worried about my husband." She sobs louder, looking out the window away from me.

"Why?"

"What if he doesn't believe me?" She's looking at me, near hysterical.

"What do you mean - doesn't believe you? There's a police report, right? You went to the hospital. Look at your bruises and scratches."

"I know, but maybe he'll think, well, that I . . . invited it."

"Why would he think that?"

"I don't know. He might, though, think I ASKED for it."

"No way. What kind of man is he?"

"He's real macho. He's a contractor. I'm just so ashamed, so worried he won't believe me."

"Look, what you do is you don't try and convince him of anything. You direct him straight to your lawyer and the police."

"He's already talked to my lawyer by phone."

"Have you talked to your husband?"

She nods, snuffles. "On the phone. I don't think he believes me. I don't know what to do."

We approach Los Osos, a swale adjoining Morro Bay estuary. Big generic shopping centre on our right. No main drag. A notoriously scrumptious bakery emitting hellacious aromas every morning to counter the miasma of a thousand septic tanks and sumps. At one time, Los Osos was a low-rent encampment of biker types and plenty of meth, but since real estate went crazy in the '90s it's become gentrified, with a scattering of holdouts, intimidating

CalPoly professors and suburban retirees tooling its rutted curbless side-streets, and driving to San Luis Obispo for trendy shops, Trader Joe's and Costco.

"What you need is a drink," I say.

"Yes, I think so. I'm not much of a drinker these days."

"Just get a half-pint, enough to take off the edge, and relax you a little. What do you usually drink when you do drink?"

"Bourbon, I guess."

"What do you like to mix with it?"

"Seven-Up, or Coke."

"Okay, we'll find a liquor store. You get a half-pint of bourbon and a Seven-Up. Lock up the house, go into your living room, turn on the TV, and have a quiet drink or two, and wait for your husband."

"If he doesn't believe me, I don't know what I'll do," she wails.

"If he doesn't believe you, leave him," I say. "I know it's none of my business, but how the hell can you have a relationship if your husband doesn't trust you and he's not even here after what you've been through?"

"I'm so screwed up," she admits, as we pull into a liquor store parking lot. She sniffls. "I just wanna die."

"Listen," I say. "You've just been through a traumatic ordeal and you're not thinking clearly. You've been violated and humiliated and made to feel dirty by some animal. It is NOT your fault. You fought for your life, and you're here, and you won. It took a lot of guts to fight that guy off. You're a victim. Your husband will understand."

Still shaky, she enters the liquor store. A few minutes later, she returns with a package. I drive to her modest house. The front yard is tidy with rows of flowers in full bloom and hedges edged sharp as razors.

"I wish I had money to tip you," she says.

"You owe me nothing. Go on in there and relax. You didn't invite this. You're a nice gal. Have faith in yourself. It's been a bad, nasty day, and things'll be rough for a week or two, but then you'll be thankful to be alive and have good days. Hang in there.

Good luck. Now go in there, and make your first drink the biggest one."

She starts to leave. "Look at my yard . . . isn't it beautiful?"

She looks at me, her red-rimmed eyes well up and register utter despair, almost terror. "I won't be able to go out there anymore! My back yard, it's my favorite place in all the world . . . and I'm afraid to go out there now!"

She faces me, trembling, leans toward me, ever so slightly, and I take both her hands, give them a squeeze. Her knees are grass-stained and scratched raw. "Hang tough, kid - sometimes that's all we can do. It's not the end of the world. That's what my mother always tells me, and it's true."

I let go of her hands. She gets out of the cab and opens the gate of the white picket fence, walks past a cat and up a porch to the front door, opens it, shivers, turns and waves, then disappears into the house, the cat right behind her. The door slams shut.

When I get back into town, I pull up to her lawyer's office and get out of my cab. I hear somebody shout, and see the lawyer, encased in a white baggy outfit of the kind of plastic a vermin exterminator or astronaut might wear. He is heading towards me on a skateboard, his Oxfords replaced by sneakers, his knotted tie the only trace of his former attire. He pulls up in a sideways skid and grins. He hands me three twenties for a \$36 fare and tells me to keep the change.

"This is therapy, man," he explains. "How'd it go?"

"I got her to do some talking. She's still in a panicky state."

He nods. "Thanks for your trouble. I appreciate it."

"Well, I hope she'll be okay."

He shrugs, rolling his eyes in a helpless manner. "We do the best we can, man." Then he smiles, and we shake hands, and he zooms off on his skateboard, expertly gauging traffic on the street, like a teenager.

I see the lawyer, encased in a white baggy outfit of the kind of plastic a vermin exterminator or astronaut might wear. He is heading towards me on a skateboard, his Oxfords replaced by sneakers, his knotted tie the only trace of his former attire

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CT

Uber's union could be a Faustian bargain

Sarah Kaine and **Emmanuel Josserand** consider the implications of a recent court case involving the ridesharing company and some of its drivers

The status of Independent Driving Guild is ambiguous. It is funded by Uber but purportedly fighting for Uber drivers

Two class actions brought by drivers against ride-sharing company Uber in California and Massachusetts have been settled, with the drivers agreeing to remain 'independent contractors,' while Uber will make US\$100-million in payments to those involved in the case.

The question of whether the Uber drivers were contractors or employees was at the heart of the legal action, which is significant because employee status brings job security, legal protections and other benefits not applicable to contractors.

Uber had been fiercely fighting the action on the basis that it merely provides an 'app' and as such does not have an employment relationship with drivers. So, despite the settlement costing up to \$100-million, the outcome could be characterized as a win for Uber, particularly when you consider the agreement potentially saved it more than \$700-million.

This 'win' will not come as a surprise for Uber watchers because the company has tenaciously prosecuted its growth strategy, led by the take-no-prisoners swagger of CEO Travis Kalanick. What is surprising is that, as part of the settlement, Uber agreed to help create and fund a drivers' association.

The status of that association (the Independent Driving Guild) is ambiguous. It is funded by Uber, but purportedly fights for Uber drivers. The guild states that its purpose

is to "protect, support and connect workers in the sharing economy."

That the guild is company sponsored evokes parallels with yellow or company unions that sprang up in the US in the 1930s as an attempt to circumvent the labour provisions of Roosevelt's New Deal.

An article published in the Michigan Law Review in 1940 investigating the incidence of company unions during the New Deal era noted that such company unions tend to form at a time when "an outside union is making headway."

Company unions were subsequently restricted under US federal labour law (the National Labor Relations Act), with specific prohibitions on company attempts to "dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labour organization or contribute financial or other support to it," and may not "establish and control a "company union." That suggests that such business-sponsored unions were seen as an active obstruction of authentic worker representation.

This is further reflected in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) convention 98, Article 2 (1949) that expressly addresses the issue of company unions and deems as inappropriate any "...acts which are designed to promote the establishment of workers' organizations under the domination of employers or employers' organizations, or to sup-



The collective voice of Uber drivers is starting to have an impact.

Photo: Noel Tock

New forms of collectivism are to be expected as circumstances change and it may be that the ephemeral nature of relations between participants in the "sharing economy" does not sit comfortably with traditional representative structures

port workers' organizations by financial or other means, with the object of placing such organizations under the control of employers or employers' organizations."

The parallel with Uber's approach to the emerging groups of drivers across the world is obvious. With class actions active in all states in the US except for the two that have settled, the collective voice of drivers was starting to pose a threat to the company's business model. In such a situation, a quasi-union funded by the company with a guarantee that the status of drivers will not be changed is an adroit manoeuvre – even if there is a marginal cost to sweeten the deal.

Is such a circumscribed voice serving the best interests of drivers? The history of company unions suggests not, as does the lack of consensus between the Guild and the rival Uber Drivers Network, which claims 5,000 members.

Dealing with market disruption in a balanced way certainly requires rethinking how workers are represented in a fragmented economy. In that sense, it is important to look beyond corporate manoeuvring. The emergence of the Guild could represent a number of things to unions, Uber and the ac-

tors in a fragmented economy:

- the adaptation of unions to new forms of representation in the sharing economy and among workers who fall outside the traditional protections of labour law and union coverage;
- a Faustian bargain by unions in which they trade off authentic representative power in order to maintain a vestige of relevance in the new economy;
- a genuine attempt by Uber to engage with its drivers;
- a back-to-the-1930s moment in which a company facing a threat from discontented workers on the cusp of organizing, initiates a 'company' union.

New forms of collectivism are to be expected as circumstances change, and it may be that the ephemeral nature of relations between participants in the sharing economy does not sit comfortably with traditional representative structures. What history has taught us, though, is that ensuring fairness when dealing with multinational corporations requires long-term institutionalization and independence. While the guild has gained some form of institutionalization, its independence is certainly compromised. **CT**

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THE BIG GAME

Local heroes

Tony Sutton watches the derby match between Lincoln City and Grimsby Town, the rival English football teams that he followed as a child

If you're expecting to see pampered stars on multi-million pound salaries, you're in the wrong place. Lincoln City don't play in the English Premier League; they're five divisions down, in a league named after its motor distributor sponsor – the Vanarama National League.

But league status is not important tonight – it's the biggest football match of the year. Lincoln, who play in the ancient East Midlands cathedral city, are facing their biggest rivals, Grimsby Town (aka the Mariners), who have travelled from what was once Britain's biggest fishing port, 80 km away on the North Lincolnshire coast.

These teams have met more than 100 times in various contests, with Grimsby (aka the Mariners) being the most successful, since they won the first tussle 1-0 way, way, back in 1884.

My home town, Horncastle, lies midway between the two. I spent my pre- and early-teen years watching Lincoln, while supporting the Mariners. Why didn't I watch Grimsby? Two reasons: Ease of transport – there were regular bus services to Lincoln every half-hour, while the



TROUBLE BREWING: Grimsby fans set off fireworks in the stand at Sincil Bank, the Lincoln ground.



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WATCHING AND WAITING:

The ball flies into the air as Lincoln (striped shirts) and Grimsby players track its flight.





GETAWAY: A Grimsby player dashes away with the ball after evading a tackle from a sprawling Lincoln City player.

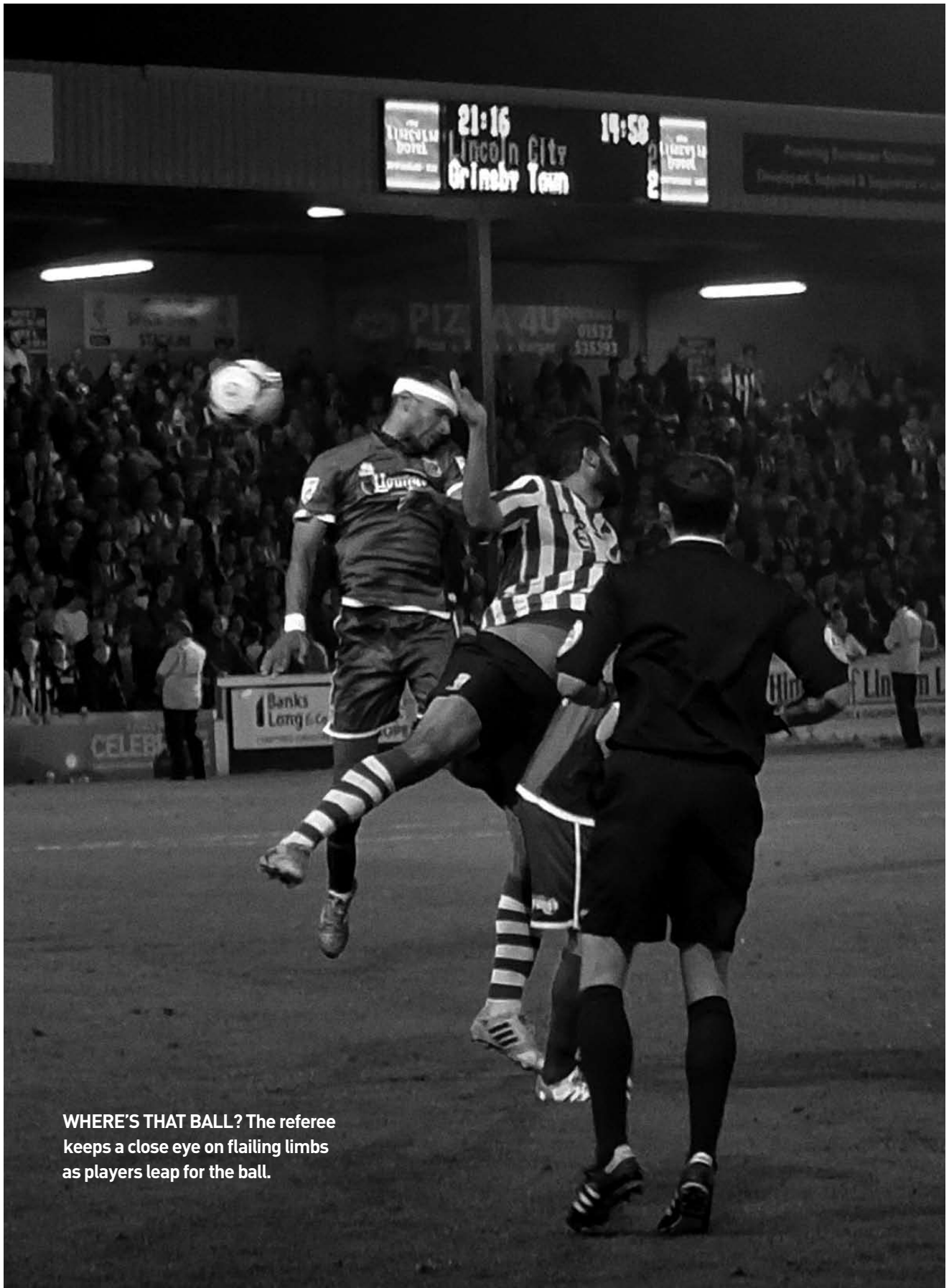


EATING OUT: Lincoln City fan waits in line for a half-time snack.

trip to Grimsby was irregular, circuitous, and expensive. More important, though: Dad was a diehard City fan.

Grimsby's history is more impressive. They spent 117 years in the Football League before being relegated into non-league football six years ago, and played in the top division during the 1930s. They also played in front of the biggest crowd ever seen at Manchester United's Old Trafford ground – 76,962, when they met Wolverhampton Wanderers in an FA Cup semi final in 1939 (they lost!). On the other hand, Lincoln's biggest claim to fame(!) is that the 2006–07 season marked their 100th in the Football League, when they became the first club to hit that milestone without ever playing in the top division!

But history is unimportant tonight as the teams run out beneath the Sincil Bank floodlights in front of the biggest crowd



WHERE'S THAT BALL? The referee keeps a close eye on flailing limbs as players leap for the ball.

THE BIG GAME



G000AAALLL: Lincoln City supporters celebrate the winning goal.

of the season. The rivalry is intense and several Grimsby fans are ejected from the stadium when a steward is stretched away after being assaulted on the touchline, and a couple of smoke bombs are thrown onto the pitch by visiting fans. On the field, there are fireworks as well, as lowly City beat the title-chasing visitors 3-2 with a goal two minutes from time.

I'm heartbroken. My first visit to a Lincoln City football match for 50 years – and my favourite team lost . . . I need a drink! **CT**

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FOOTNOTE: Two days before publication of this issue, Grimsby Town won promotion back into the Football League, with a 3-1 win against Forest Green Rovers at London's Wembley Stadium. Another drink, please!



BEST OF ENEMIES: Their fans were fighting earlier, but the players shake hands after the game, which City won 3-2.

Anatomy of a propaganda blitz

Is the media in the business of giving its readers news or feeding it propaganda? **David Edwards** of Media Lens, suggests the latter

The original intelligence said nothing about whether Iraq possessed the chemical or biological weapons to use in WMD. Tony Blair's government had turned a purely hypothetical danger into an immediate and deadly threat

We live in a time when state-corporate interests are cooperating to produce propaganda blitzes intended to raise public support for the demonization and destruction of establishment enemies.

In the first part of this two-part series, I will examine five key components of an effective propaganda campaign of this kind.

1: Dramatic new evidence

A propaganda blitz is often launched on the back of “dramatic new evidence,” signifying that an establishment enemy should be viewed as uniquely despicable and targeted with action.

- The Blair government’s infamous September 2002 dossier on Iraqi WMD contained four mentions of the claim that Iraq was able to deploy WMD against British citizens within 45 minutes of an order being given. But senior intelligence officials revealed that the original 45-minute claim referred to the length of time it might have taken the Iraqis to fuel and fire a Scud missile or rocket launcher. The original intelligence said nothing about whether Iraq possessed the chemical or biological weapons to use in these weapons. The government had turned a purely hypothetical danger into an immediate and deadly threat.

- In 2011, it was claimed that the Libyan government was planning a massacre in Benghazi, exactly the kind of action that Gad-

dafi knew could trigger Western intervention. Investigative journalist Gareth Porter commented: “When the Obama administration began its effort to overthrow Gaddafi, it did not call publicly for regime change, and instead asserted that it was merely seeking to avert mass killings that administration officials had suggested might approach genocidal levels. But the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), which had been given the lead role in assessing the situation in Libya, found no evidence to support such fears, and concluded that it was based on nothing more than speculative arguments.”

In 2013, the Syrian government was said to have launched a chemical weapons attack in Ghouta, Damascus, just as UN chemical weapons experts were visiting the city. It was claimed that Assad had ordered the crossing of Obama’s very clear red line for intervention – a war that would have destroyed the Syrian government, and quite possibly resulted in Assad’s violent death. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported on the Ghouta attack: “The quick announcement that Bashar al-Assad did it is simply not true.”

Western dissidents are subject to continuous smears, and also full-on propaganda blitzes of this kind.

- In 2012, after WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange requested asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, the corporate media denounced him as a vile narcissist and buffoon.



Always ‘controversial,’ journalists now presented Assange as a fully-fledged hate figure.

- In 2013, a single comment in an interview caused large numbers of journalists to conclude that Russell Brand – then promoting a vocal form of anti-corporate dissent – was a vicious sexist, narcissist, and idiot. The intensity of the attacks on him, which are ongoing, eventually resulted in Brand withdrawing from the public eye.

It is hardly in doubt that Assange, Brand and others are being targeted by state-corporate propagandists because they are challenging state-corporate power. How else can we explain the fact that criticism of the many hundreds of journalists and MPs who have repeatedly agitated and voted for wars that have wrecked whole countries is off the agenda? It is not even that criticism of Assange, Brand and co is disproportionate – there is very often no criticism at all of people who have brought death, injury and displacement to literally millions of human beings. But when Brand joked about his then girlfriend: “When I was asked to edit an issue of the New Statesman I said yes because it was a beautiful woman asking me,” these words were viewed as infinitely more deserving of vicious attack right across the media spectrum than political actions that destroyed whole countries.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has also been subject to a relentless, almost surreal, year-long propaganda campaign. As we will

see in Part 2, this has most recently taken the form of accusations, such as one at the Jewish Chronicle website, under the heading, Labour’s Shame, that claimed, “Labour now seems to be a party that attracts anti-Semites like flies to a cesspit.”

Propaganda blitzes are fast-moving attacks intended to inflict maximum damage. State-corporate propagandists know that media attention will quickly move on from the claim of ‘dramatic new evidence’, so the durability of the claim is not a key concern. Marginalized media blogs and rare mainstream articles may quickly expose the hype, but most corporate media will not notice and will not learn the lesson that similar claims should be received with extreme caution in future. A prime example was the campaign justifying war on Libya in 2011, which faced minimal corporate media scepticism just eight years after the obvious deception on Iraq.

2: Emotional tone and intensity

A crucial component of the propaganda blitz is the tone of political and corporate commentary, which is always vehement, even hysterical. High emotion is used to suggest a level of deep conviction fuelling intense moral outrage.

The rationale is clear enough: Insanity aside, in ordinary life outrage of this kind is usually a sign that someone has good reason to be angry. People generally do not get

It is hardly in doubt that Assange, Brand and others are being targeted by state-corporate propagandists because they are challenging state-corporate power

The public is not, for one moment, fooled by a hard-right consensus. Agreement must appear to have been reached among “all right-thinking people,” including the lefties at the Guardian

extremely angry in the presence of significant doubt. So the message to the public is that there is no doubt. Thus the eruptions of moral outrage, demanding that “something must be done’ to ‘save’ Libya and Syria from impending massacre (delivered by journalists blithely indifferent to the consequences of their earlier moral outrages, for example in Iraq). Thus talk, such as that by the Daily Mail’s Richard Littlejohn, of “The fascists at the poisoned heart of Labour,” with their “chilling’ race hatred.”

3: Manufacturing ‘Consensus’

A third component of a propaganda blitz is the appearance of informed consensus. The dramatic claim, delivered with certainty and outrage, is typically repeated right across the political and media spectrum. This cross-spectrum consensus generates the impression that everyone knows that the propaganda claim is rooted in reality. This is why the myth of a diverse media spectrum is so vital.

While a demonizing propaganda blitz may arise from rightist politics and media, the propaganda coup de grace with the power to end public doubt comes from the supposedly left-liberal journalists at the Guardian, the Independent, the BBC and Channel 4. Again, the logic is clear: If even celebrity progressive journalists – people famous for their principled stands and colourful socks – join the denunciations, then there must be something to the claims. At this point, it actually becomes difficult to doubt it.

Thus, in 2002, it was declared “a given” by the Guardian’s Martin Woollacott, that Iraq still retained WMD that might be a threat, although the claim was easily refutable.

In 2007, George Monbiot wrote in the Guardian: “I believe that Iran is trying to acquire the bomb.” In October, 2011, Monbiot wrote of NATO’s war on Libya: “I feel the right thing has been happening for all the wrong reasons.” At a crucial time, in August, 2013, Monbiot affirmed: “Strong evidence that Assad used CWs [chemical weapons] on civilians.” He subsequently wrote in the Guardian

of the Assad government’s “long series of hideous crimes, including the use of chemical weapons.”

News of the killings of Syrian ministers in a bomb explosion were greeted by the Guardian’s Owen Jones with: “Adios, Assad (I hope).” Jones tweeted that “This is a popular uprising, not arriving on the back of Western cruise missiles, tanks and bullets.” As was clear then, and indisputable now, Jones was wrong – the West, directly and via regional allies, has played a massive role in the violence. As if reading from the NATO playbook, Jones added: “I’m promoting the overthrow of illegitimate and brutal dictatorships by their own people to establish democracies.”

This is why the mythology of the liberal-left Guardian and Independent, with their handful of noisy, tub-thumping progressives is so important and why we work so hard to challenge it. It is why expressions of progressive support for the Guardian – with occasional articles appearing by Noam Chomsky and others, and with Russell Brand, for example becoming a “Guardian partner” – are so important.

The public is not, for one moment, fooled by a hard-right consensus. Agreement must appear to have been reached among “all right-thinking people,” including the lefties at the Guardian.

4: Demonizing dissent

To challenge a propaganda blitz is to risk becoming a target of the blitz. Dissidents can be smeared as useful idiots, apologists, genocide deniers. Anyone who even questioned the campaigns targeting Julian Assange and Russell Brand risked being labelled a sexist, a misogynist and, in the case of Assange, a rape apologist. Even as this article was being written, Oliver Kamm of the Times once again tweeted that my organization, Media Lens has “long espoused genocide denial, misogyny & xenophobia.”

In fact, we have been accused of supporting, or apologizing for, everyone from Stalin to Milosevic, from the Iranian Ayatollahs to

the North Korean dictatorship, Assad, Gaddafi, Saddam and so on. It seems Media Lens is so deranged that we support completely contradictory political and religious movements and beliefs, even enemies who despise each other. This may be a function of our swivel-eyed hatred of the West, or perhaps because we are challenging state-corporate media bias.

When moral outrage is directed at people challenging a propaganda blitz, reputations can be irreparably damaged. The public can be left with a vague sense that the target is dodgy, almost morally unhygienic. The smear can last for the rest of a person's career and life.

5: Timing and strange coincidences

The “dramatic new evidence” fuelling a propaganda blitz often seems to surface at the worst possible time for the establishment target. On one level, this might seem absurdly coincidental – why, time after time, would the Official Enemy do the one thing most likely to trigger invasion, bombing, electoral disaster, and so on, at exactly the wrong time?

But remember, we are talking about bad guys who, as everyone knows, are famously perverse. It is part of the Dr. Evil mind-set to strut provocatively and laugh in the face of disaster. Idiotic, blindly self-destructive behaviour is what being a bad guy is all about. So the implausibly perfect timing may actually help persuade the public to think: “This guy really is a nutcase. He's absolutely asking for it!” Much journalism covering Official Enemies is about suggesting they are comically, in fact cartoonishly, foolish in exactly this way.

We have no doubt that, with sufficient resources, media analysts could easily prove that propaganda blitzes consistently arise with impeccable timing just ahead of key votes at the UN, in parliament and in elections.

In November, 2002, before the UN vote on Resolution 1441, which set the clock ticking for war, the Blair regime began issuing almost daily warnings of imminent terror threats against UK ferries, the Underground, and ma-

lor public events. In 2003, Blair surrounded Heathrow airport with tanks - an action said to be in response to increased terrorist chatter warning of a missile threat, of which nothing more was subsequently heard. Even the Guardian editors expressed scepticism about this sudden flood of ‘threats’: “It cannot be ruled out that Mr Blair may have political reasons for talking up the sense of unease, in order to help make the case for a war against Iraq that is only backed by one voter in three.” (Leading article, Gloom in Guildhall, The Guardian, November 12, 2002)

John Pilger cited a former intelligence officer who described the government's terror warnings as “a softening up process” ahead of the Iraq war and “a lying game on a huge scale.” (Pilger, Lies, Damned Lies and Government Terror Warnings, Daily Mirror, December 3, 2002). In fact, Blair was perpetrating a form of psychological terrorism on his own people.

Likewise, atrocity claims from Syria clearly peaked as the US drew closer to war in the summer of 2013. After Obama chose not to bomb, it was extraordinary to see the BBC's daily front page atrocity claims suddenly dry up.

In 2012, the pro-Assad shabiha militia became globally infamous when they were blamed for the May, 2012, Houla massacre in Syria. In September, 2014, Lexis found that in the preceding three years, the shabiha had been mentioned in 933 UK national newspaper articles. But in the 12 months from September, 2013, to September, 2014 – a time when Western crosshairs shifted away from Assad towards Islamic State — there were just 28 mentions of shabiha (Media Lens search, September 15, 2014). In the last year, Nexis finds just 12 articles mentioning the terms “Syria” and “shabiha” in the entire UK national press.

Similarly, in Part 2, we will see how a propaganda blitz targetting Jeremy Corbyn coincided perfectly to damage his chances ahead of local elections in the UK.

In combination, the “dramatic new evi-

Media analysts could easily prove that propaganda blitzes consistently arise with impeccable timing just ahead of key votes at the UN, in parliament and in elections

MEDIA BIAS PART ONE

Corporations, notably advertisers, hate to be linked to any kind of unsavoury controversy. It is notable how celebrities with potentially wide public outreach very often stay silent

dence,” moral outrage and apparently wide consensus, generate several important impacts.

Most people have little idea about the status of WMD in Iraq, about Gaddafi’s intentions and actions in Libya, or what Corbyn thinks about anti-Semitism. Given this uncertainty, it is hardly surprising that the public is impressed by an explosion of moral outrage from so many political and media experts.

Expressions of intense hatred targeting bad guys and their apologists persuade members of the public to keep their heads down. They know that even declaring mild scepticism, even requesting clarification, can cause the giant state-corporate finger of blame to be turned in their direction. Perhaps they, too, will be declared supporters of tyranny, apologists for genocide denial, sexists, and racists. The possibility of denunciation is highly intimidating and potentially disastrous for anyone dependent on corporate employment or sponsorship. Corporations, notably advertisers, hate to be linked to any kind of unsavoury controversy. It is notable how celebrities with potentially wide public outreach very often stay silent.

It is easy to imagine that people will often prefer to decide that the issue is not that important to them, that they don’t know that much about it – not enough to risk getting into trouble. And, as discussed, they naturally imagine that professional journalists have access to a wealth of information and expertise – best to just keep quiet. This is the powerful and disastrous chilling effect of a fast-moving propaganda blitz.

Propaganda and climate change

The most devastating impact, however, is on the public perception of threats.

A series of propaganda blitzes have taught the public to associate an alarming situation with a unified eruption of concern and outrage right across party politics and media. This is a problem because genuine threats that do not trigger a propaganda blitz naturally appear to be far less urgent and threat-

ening than they really are. And this is exactly what has happened with climate change.

Despite the endlessly and ominously tumbling records for temperature and extreme weather events, despite increasingly urgent attempts to warn the public of a very real climate emergency, scientists are not close to being able to match the kind of alarm generated by a propaganda blitz.

These campaigns are rooted in vast power and resources defending establishment greed. They are motivated by the need to remove obstacles to power and profit, to control natural resources, to justify bloated arms budgets (socialism for the rich). Naturally, then, a propaganda blitz is not triggered by a threat requiring action that will harm these same elite interests.

As the state-corporate response to climate change makes very clear, propaganda blitzes are not really about averting threats. It is tragicomic indeed to see high state officials and corporate media commentators endlessly emphasizing security concerns, while doing little or nothing to address the truly existential threat of climate change.

The result is that the climate emergency is felt by the public to be a medium-sized, manageable problem surrounded by uncertainty. A YouGov survey in January found that the “British public is far more concerned about the threat posed by population growth than it is about climate change.” The case for dramatic new evidence has been made, but the emotional intensity, consensus and denunciation of climate denier dissidents – for once, all justifiable - are lacking.

This is an awesome price to pay for corporate domination of politics and media. It seems the ultimate victims of propaganda will be the propagandists themselves and the public deceived by them. **CT**

In Part 2, in the next issue of ColdType, we will see how a recent propaganda blitz aimed at Corbyn fits the pattern outlined above.

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Breaking the silence

Norman G. Finkelstein, the American-Jewish scholar behind the British Labour party's anti-Semitism controversy, talks to **Jamie Stern-Weiner**

Norman Finkelstein is no stranger to controversy. The American Jewish scholar is one of the world's leading experts on the Israel-Palestine conflict and the political legacy of the Nazi holocaust.

Apart from his parents, every member of Finkelstein's family, on both sides, was exterminated in the Nazi holocaust. His book, *The Holocaust Industry*, became an international best-seller and touched off a firestorm of debate. But Finkelstein's most recent political intervention came about by accident.

Last month, British MP Naz Shah became one of the most high-profile cases to date in the 'anti-Semitism' scandal still shaking the Labour leadership.

Shah was suspended from the Labour party for, among other things, reposting an image on Facebook that was alleged to be anti-Semitic. The image depicted a map of the United States with Israel superimposed, and suggested resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict by relocating Israel into the United States. It has been reported that Shah got the image from Finkelstein's website.

I spoke with Finkelstein about why he posted the image, and what he thinks of allegations that the Labour party has a 'Jewish problem.'

Did you create the controversial image that Naz Shah reposted?

I'm not adept enough with computers to compose any image. But I did post the map on my website in 2014. An email correspondent must have sent it. It was, and still is, funny. Were it not for the current political context, nobody would have noticed Shah's reposting of it either. Otherwise, you'd have to be humourless. These sorts of jokes are a commonplace in the U.S. So, we have this joke: Why doesn't Israel become the 51st state? Answer: Because then, it would only have two senators. As crazy as the discourse on Israel is in America, at least we still have a sense of humour. It's inconceivable that any politician in the US would be crucified for posting such a map.

Shah's posting of that image has been presented as an endorsement by her of a 'chilling transportation policy,' while Labour MP John Mann has compared her to Eichmann.

Frankly, I find that obscene. It's doubtful these Holocaust-mongers have a clue what the deportations were, or of the horrors that attended them. I remember my late mother describing her deportation. She was in the Warsaw Ghetto. The survivors of the ghetto uprising, about 30,000 Jews, were deported to Majdanek concentration camp. They were herded

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POLITICAL HYSTERIA

For my mother, the Nazi holocaust was a chapter in the long history of the horror of war. It was not itself a war – she was emphatic that it was an extermination, not a war – but it was a unique chapter within the war



Norman Finkelstein: "It's doubtful these holocaust-mongers have a clue what the deportations were, or of the horrors that attended them."

Photo: Wikipedia

into railroad cars. My mother was sitting next to a woman who had her child. And the woman – I know it will shock you – the woman suffocated her infant child to death in front of my mother. She suffocated her child, rather than take her to where they were going. That's what it meant to be deported. To compare that to someone posting a light-hearted, innocuous cartoon making a little joke about how Israel is in thrall to the US, or vice versa . . . it's sick. What are they doing? Don't they have any respect for the dead? All these desiccated Labour apparatchiks, dragging the Nazi holocaust through the mud for the sake of their petty jostling for power and position. Have they no shame?

What about when people use Nazi analogies to criticize the policies of the state of Israel? Isn't that also a political abuse of the Nazi holocaust?

It's not a simple question. First, if you're Jewish, the instinctive analogy to reach for, when it comes to hate or hunger, war or genocide, is the Nazi holocaust, because we see it as the ultimate horror. In my home growing up, whenever an incident involving racial discrimination or bigotry was in the news, my mother would compare it to her experience before or during the holocaust.

My mother had been enrolled in the mathematics faculty of Warsaw University, I guess in 1937-38. Jews were forced to stand in a segregated section of the lecture hall, and the anti-Semites would physically attack them. (You might recall the scene in *Julia*, when Vanessa Redgrave loses her leg trying to defend Jews under assault in the university.) I remember once asking my mother, "How did you do in your studies?" She replied, "What are you talking about? How could you study under those conditions?"

When she saw the segregation of African-Americans, whether at a lunch counter or in the school system, that was, for her, like the prologue to the Nazi holocaust. Whereas many Jews now say, never compare (Elie Wiesel's refrain, "It's bad, but it's not The Holocaust"), my mother's credo was, always compare. She gladly and generously made the imaginative leap to those who were suffering, wrapping and shielding them in the embrace of her own suffering.

For my mother, the Nazi holocaust was a chapter in the long history of the horror of war. It was not itself a war – she was emphatic that it was an extermination, not a war – but it was a unique chapter within the war. So for her, war was the ultimate horror. When she saw Vietnamese being bombed during the Vietnam War, it was the Nazi holocaust. It was the bombing, the death, the horror, the terror, that she herself had passed through. When she saw the distended bellies of starving children in Biafra, it was also the Nazi holocaust, because she remembered

her own pangs of hunger in the Warsaw Ghetto.

If you're Jewish, it's just normal that the Nazi holocaust is an ubiquitous, instinctual touchstone. Some Jews say this or that horror is not the Nazi holocaust, others say it is. But the reference point of the Nazi holocaust is a constant.

What about when people who aren't Jewish invoke the analogy?

Once the Nazi holocaust became the cultural referent, then, if you wanted to touch a nerve regarding Palestinian suffering, you had to make the analogy with the Nazis, because that was the only thing that resonated for Jews. If you compared the Palestinians to Native Americans, nobody would give a darn. In 1982, when I and a handful of other Jews took to the streets of New York to protest Israel's invasion of Lebanon (up to 18,000 Lebanese and Palestinians were killed, overwhelmingly civilians), I held a sign saying, "This son of survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Auschwitz, Majdenek will not be silent: Israeli Nazis – Stop the Holocaust in Lebanon!." (After my mother died, I found a picture of me holding that sign in a drawer among her keepsakes). I remember, as the cars drove past, one of the guys protesting with me kept saying, "Hold the sign higher!" (And I kept replying, "Easy for you to say!")

If you invoked that analogy, it shook Jews, it jolted them enough, that at least you got their attention. I don't think it's necessary anymore, because Israel's crimes against the Palestinians now have an integrity of their own. They no longer have to be juxtaposed to, or against, the Nazi holocaust. Today, the Nazi analogy is gratuitous and a distraction.

Is it antisemitic?

No, it's just a weak historical analogy – but, if coming from a Jew, a generous moral one.

Ken Livingstone took to the airwaves to defend Naz Shah, but what he said wound up getting him suspended from the Labour Party. His most incendiary remark contended that Hitler at one point supported Zionism. This was condemned as anti-Semitic, and Labour MP John Mann accused Livingstone of being a "Nazi apologist." What do you make of these accusations?

Livingstone maybe wasn't precise enough, and lacked nuance. But he does know something about that dark chapter in history. It has been speculated that Hitler's thinking on how to solve the "Jewish Question" (as it was called back then) evolved, as circumstances changed and new possibilities opened up. Hitler wasn't wholly hostile to the Zionist project at the outset. That's why so many German Jews managed to survive after Hitler came to power by emigrating to Palestine. But, then, Hitler came to fear that a Jewish state might strengthen the hand of "international Jewry," so he suspended contact with the Zionists. Later, Hitler perhaps contemplated a "territorial solution" for the Jews. The Nazis considered many resettlement schemes – the Jews wouldn't have physically survived most of them in the long run – before they embarked on an outright exterminatory process. Livingstone is more or less accurate about this – or, as accurate as might be expected from a politician speaking off the cuff.

He's also accurate that a degree of ideological affinity existed between the Nazis and Zionists. On one critical question, which raged in the UK during the period when the Balfour Declaration (1917) was being cobbled together, anti-Semites and Zionists agreed: Could a Jew be an Englishman? Ironically, in light of the current hysteria in the UK, the most vociferous and vehement opponents of the Balfour Declaration were not the Arabs, about whom almost nobody gave a darn, but the upper reaches of British Jewry.

Eminent British Jews published open letters to newspapers such as the Times op-

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posing British backing for a Jewish home in Palestine. They understood such a declaration – and Zionism – as implying that a Jew belonged to a distinct nation, and that the Jewish nation should have its own separate state, which they feared would effectively disqualify Jews from bona fide membership in the British nation. What distinguished the Zionists from the liberal Jewish aristocracy was their point of departure: As Theodor Herzl put it at the beginning of *The Jewish State*, “the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one . . . It is a national question.” Whereas the Anglo-Jewish aristocracy insisted Judaism was merely a religion, the Zionists were emphatic that the Jews constituted a nation. And on this – back then, salient – point, the Zionists and Nazis agreed.

John Mann, when he accosted Livingstone in front of the cameras, asked rhetorically whether Livingstone had read *Mein Kampf*. If you do read *Mein Kampf*, which I suspect none of the interlocutors in this debate has done (I used to teach it, before the Zionists drove me out of academia – joke!), you see that Hitler is emphatic that Jews are not a religion, but a nation. He says that the big Jewish lie is that they claim to be a religion, whereas in fact, he says, they're a race (at that time, “race” was used interchangeably with “nation”). And on Page 56 of the standard English edition of *Mein Kampf*, he says that the only Jews honest enough to acknowledge this reality are the Zionists. Now, to be clear, Hitler didn't just think that Jews were a distinct race. He also thought that they were a Satanic race, and, ultimately, that they were a Satanic race that had to be exterminated. Still, on the first, not trivial, premise, he and the Zionists were in agreement.

As a practical matter, the Zionists and Nazis could, therefore, find a degree of common ground around the emigration/expulsion of Jews to Palestine. It was a paradox that, against the emphatic protestations of liberal Jews, including sections

of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, anti-Semites and Zionists back then effectively shared the same slogan: Jews to Palestine. It was why, for example, the Nazis forbade German Jews to raise the swastika flag, but expressly permitted them to hoist the Zionist flag. It was as if to say, the Zionists are right: Jews can't be Germans, they belong in Palestine. Hannah Arendt wrote scathingly about this in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which is one of the reasons she caught hell from the Jewish/Zionist establishment.

Even if there was a factual basis for Livingstone's remarks, to bring the issue up at that moment – wasn't he just baiting Jews?

I can understand his motivation, because I'm of roughly his generation. If he was baiting, it was a reflexive throwback to the factional polemics in the 1970s-'80s. Israel marketed Zionists as the only Jews who had resisted the Nazis. The propaganda image projected back then was, the only resistance to the Nazis came from the Zionists, and the natural corollary was, the only force protecting Jews now is Israel. Every other Jew was either a coward, “going like sheep to slaughter,” or a collaborator. Those who dissented from Israeli policy back then, in order to undercut this Zionist propaganda, and to strike a nerve with them, would recall this unsavoury chapter in Zionism's history. Some pamphlets and books appeared – such as Lenni Brenner's *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (1983) – to document this “perfidious Zionist-Nazi collaboration.” Livingstone's recent comments were born of the same reflex that motivated us back then. These certifiable creeps who went after Naz Shah got under his skin, and so he wanted to get under their skin. That's how we used to fight this political battle – by dredging up those sordid chapters in Zionist history.

Livingstone based himself on Brenner's book. Let's say, for argument's sake, that perhaps Brenner's book contains factual errors, it's more of a party pamphlet than a

scholarly tome, and it's not exactly weighed down with copious documentation. Still, the fact of the matter is, when Brenner's book was published, it garnered positive reviews in the respectable British press. The Times, which is today leading the charge against Livingstone and the elected Labour leadership, back then published a review praising Brenner's book as "crisp and carefully documented." The reviewer, the eminent editorialist Edward Mortimer, observed that "Brenner is able to cite numerous cases where Zionists collaborated with anti-Semitic regimes, including Hitler's." So, it's a tribute to Ken Livingstone that, at age 70, he remembered a book he read more than 30 years ago, that got a good review in the Times when it first appeared. If the Times is upset at Livingstone's remarks, it has only itself to blame. I myself only read Brenner's book after the Times review.

Let's zoom out a bit. You've written a great deal about how anti-Semitism accusations have been used to discredit and distract from criticism of Israel. Should we see the current campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Left more generally as the latest episode in that history?

These campaigns occur at regular intervals, correlating with Israel's periodic massacres and consequent political isolation. If you search your nearest library catalogue for "new anti-Semitism," you'll come up with titles from the 1970s proclaiming a "new anti-Semitism," titles from the 1980s proclaiming a "new anti-Semitism," titles from the 1990s proclaiming a "new anti-Semitism," and then a huge uptick, including from British writers, during the so-called Second Intifada from 2001. Let's not forget, just last year there was a hysteria in the UK over anti-Semitism. A couple of ridiculous polls purported to find that nearly half of Britons held an anti-Semitic belief and that most British Jews feared for their future in the UK. Although these polls were dismissed by specialists, they

triggered the usual media feeding frenzy, as the Telegraph, the Guardian and the Independent hyperventilated about this rampant "new anti-Semitism." It was exposed as complete nonsense when, in April 2015, a reputable poll by Pew found that the level of anti-Semitism in the UK had remained stable, at an underwhelming seven per cent.

This farce happened only last year. One would have imagined that its mongers would be hiding in shame, and that we would enjoy at least a brief respite from the theatrics. But lo and behold, in the blink of an eye, right in the wake of the Pew poll showing that anti-Semitism in the UK is marginal, the hysteria has started all over again. The reality is, there is probably more prejudice in the UK against fat people than there is prejudice against Jews.

Ask yourself a simple, but serious, question. You go for a job interview. Which trait is most likely to work against you: If you're ugly, if you're fat, if you're short, or if you're Jewish? It's perhaps a sad commentary on our society's values, but the trait most likely to elicit a rejection letter is if you're ugly, then fat, then short. The factor least likely to work against you is, if you're Jewish. On the contrary, aren't Jews smart and ambitious? Pew found anti-Semitism levels at seven per cent. Is that grounds for a national hysteria? A May 2015 YouGov poll found that 40 per cent of UK adults don't like Muslims and nearly 60 per cent don't like Roma. Imagine what it's like to apply for a job if you're a Roma! So where is your order of moral priorities?

Many of those involved in last year's anti-Semitism hysterics are also participants in the current campaign against Corbyn.

The question you have to ask yourself is, why? Why has this issue been resurrected with a vengeance, so soon after its previous outing was disposed of as a farce? Is it because of a handful of allegedly anti-Semitic social media postings from Labour

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POLITICAL HYSTERIA

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members? Is it because of the tongue-in-cheek map posted by Naz Shah? That's not believable. The only plausible answer is, it's political. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the factual situation; instead, a few suspect cases of anti-Semitism – some real, some contrived – are being exploited for an ulterior political motive. As one senior Labour MP said the other day, it's transparently a smear campaign.

The anti-Semitism accusations are being driven by the Conservatives ahead of the local and mayoral elections. But they're also being exploited by the Labour Right to undermine Corbyn's leadership, and by pro-Israel groups to discredit the Palestine solidarity movement. You can see this overlap between the Labour Right and pro-Israel groups personified in individuals such as Jonathan Freedland, a Blairite hack who also regularly plays the anti-Semitism card. He's combined these two hobbies to attack Corbyn. Incidentally, when my book, *The Holocaust Industry*, came out in 2000, Freedland wrote that I was "closer to the people who created the Holocaust than to those who suffered in it." Although he appears to be, oh, so politically correct now, he didn't find it inappropriate to suggest that I resembled the Nazis who gassed my family.

We appeared on a television program together. Before the program, he approached me to shake my hand. When I refused, he reacted in stunned silence. Why wouldn't I shake his hand? He couldn't comprehend it. It tells you something about these dull-witted creeps. The smears, the slanders – for them, it's all in a day's work. Why should anyone get agitated? Later, on the program, it was pointed out that the Guardian, where he worked, had serialized *The Holocaust Industry* across two issues. He was asked by the presenter, if my book was the equivalent of *Mein Kampf*, would he resign from the paper? Of course not. Didn't the presenter get that it's all a game?

Compare the American scene. Our Corbyn is Bernie Sanders. In all the primaries in the US, Bernie has been sweeping the Arab and Muslim vote. It's been a wondrous moment: The first Jewish presidential candidate in American history has forged a principled alliance with Arabs and Muslims. Meanwhile, what are the Blairite-Israel lobby creeps up to in the UK? They're fanning the embers of hate and creating new discord between Jews and Muslims by going after Naz Shah, a Muslim woman who has attained public office. They're making her pass through these rituals of public self-degradation, as she is forced to apologize once, twice, three times over for a tongue-in-cheek cartoon reposted from my website. And it's not yet over! Because now they say she's on a "journey." Of course, what they mean is, "She's on a journey of self-revelation, and epiphany, to understanding the inner anti-Semite at the core of her being." But do you know on what journey she's really on? She's on a journey to becoming an anti-Semite. Because of these people, because they fill any sane, normal person with revulsion.

Here is this Muslim woman MP who is trying to integrate Muslims into British political life, and to set by her own person an example both to British society at large and to the Muslim community writ small. She is, by all accounts from her constituents, a respected and honourable person. You can only imagine how proud her parents, her siblings, must be. How proud the Muslim community must be. We're always told how Muslim women are oppressed, repressed and depressed, and now you have this Muslim woman who has attained office. But now she's being crucified, her career wrecked, her life ruined, her future in tatters, branded an anti-Semite and a closet Nazi, and inflicted with these rituals of self-abasement. It's not hard to imagine what her Muslim constituents must think now about Jews. These power hungry creeps are creating new hate by their petty machina-

tions. As Donald Trump likes to say – it’s disgusting.

Labour has now set up an inquiry that is supposed to produce a workable definition of anti-Semitism – which is to say, to achieve the impossible. It’s been tried countless times before, and it’s always proven futile. The only beneficiaries of such a mandate will be academic specialists on anti-Semitism, who will receive hefty consultancy fees (I can already see Richard Evans at the head of the queue), and Israel, which will no longer be in the spotlight. I understand the short-term political rationale. But at some point, you have to say, “Enough already.” Jews are prospering as never before in the UK. The polls show that the number of, so to speak, hard-core anti-Semites is miniscule. It’s time to put a stop to this periodic charade, because it ends up besmirching the victims of the Nazi holocaust, diverting from the real suffering of the Palestinian people, and poisoning relations between the Jewish and Muslim communities. You just had an anti-Semitism hysteria last year, and it was a farce. And now again? Another in-

quiry? Another investigation? No.

In order to put an end to this, there has to be a decisive repudiation of this political blackmail. Bernie Sanders was brutally pressured to back down on his claim that Israel had used disproportionate force during its 2014 assault on Gaza. He wouldn’t budge, he wouldn’t retreat. He showed real backbone. Corbyn should take heart and inspiration from Bernie’s example. He has to say: No more reports, no more investigations, we’re not going there any more. The game is up. It’s long past time that these anti-Semitism-mongers crawled back into their sewer – but not before humbly apologizing to Naz Shah, and begging her forgiveness.

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