

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SOCIALIST** | CHRIS HEDGES  
**CORBYN'S THREAT OF DEMOCRACY** | MARK CURTIS  
**MOCKINGBIRD'S UGLY SISTER** | ANDREW O'HAGAN

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

**ISSUE 104**



Dale Yudelman

## IMAGES OF DEMOCRACY



**Cover Photo:**  
*Sign, prop store, Cape Town.*  
*Dale Yudelman*  
– Pages 36-43

# ColdType

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- 
- |     |  |                                |
|-----|--|--------------------------------|
| 3.  | <b>JEREMY CORBYN'S THREAT OF DEMOCRACY</b>     | MARK CURTIS                    |
| 6.  | <b>LIBERAL MEDIA EXPOSED BY CORBYN VICTORY</b> | JONATHAN COOK                  |
| 9.  | <b>HURWITT'S EYE</b>                           | MARK HURWITT                   |
| 10. | <b>CORBYN'S DILEMMA</b>                        | WILLIAM BOWLES                 |
| 12. | <b>THERE'S US AND THERE'S THEM</b>             | SAM PIZZIGATI                  |
| 14. | <b>MARCHING FOR HUMANITY</b>                   | JOSIE HARGREAVES / IAN BISSELL |
| 18. | <b>ODE TO TOBIAS WOLFF</b>                     | DELL FRANKLIN                  |
| 21. | <b>HIROSHIMA'S LITERARY LEGACY</b>             | DANIEL CORDIE                  |
| 24. | <b>GETTING THE FACTS WRONG</b>                 | GREG PALAST                    |
| 28. | <b>MOCKINGBIRD'S UGLY SISTER</b>               | ANDREW O'HAGAN                 |
| 31. | <b>BUMPKINS AND HICKS</b>                      | PHILIP KRASKE                  |
| 32. | <b>WHEN REPORTERS ARE BRANDED AS SPIES</b>     | DON NORTH                      |
| 36. | <b>IMAGES OF DEMOCRACY</b>                     | DALE YUDELMAN                  |
| 44. | <b>WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SOCIALIST</b>         | CHRIS HEDGES                   |
| 53. | <b>SMOKE AND MIRRORS</b>                       | GEORGE MONBIOT                 |
| 55. | <b>WARMONGERS AND WARRIORS</b>                 | STACEY WARD                    |
| 57. | <b>THEY LIVE. WE SLEEP</b>                     | JOHN W, WHITEHEAD              |
| 60. | <b>WITH CANDIDATES LIKE THESE . . . !</b>      | LAWRENCE HOUGHTELING           |

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On the campaign trail: Jeremy Corbyn campaigns at Margate.

Photo: Chris Beckett

# Jeremy Corbyn's threat of democracy

He's got popular support, but can Labour's new leader fight the neo-liberals in the 'mainstream', asks **Mark Curtis**

It is delightful to see Britain's Labour voters defy the establishment by finally electing a leader on the centre ground of the country's thinking. Opinion polls suggest that Jeremy Corbyn's policies of nationalising the railways, energy companies and Royal Mail, along with opposition to the Iraq war and British intervention in the Middle East are all supported by a majority of the public.

These views stand in marked contrast to the neo-liberal, military policies of the Con-



servative and 'mainstream' Labour parties at home and abroad. These extreme positions, which are contributing to unprecedented domestic inequality, the draining of wealth from the world's poorest countries and terrible military interventions (and not least the rise of Islamic State), have amazingly been allowed to be presented as the centre ground or 'liberal democratic' – an astonishing propaganda achievement for policy planners.

The threat of popular democracy is some-

**Extreme neoliberal positions have been allowed to be presented as the centre ground – an astonishing propaganda achievement**

**What elites have feared, especially during controversial policies such as military interventions, is that public opposition will become so great that they might actually have to change policy**

thing I've tried to document in all my books because it comes through crystal clear in the government planning record, visible in declassified files, thousands of which I've looked at in my research. The threat that policies made by and for the elite could be derailed by popular opposition has long been regarded by British planners as a serious threat; in the Cold War, more serious, for example, than the Soviet threat, which was anyway rarely taken seriously in private after the early 1950s.

During the Vietnam War, Harold Wilson was terrified that public opposition would stop his ongoing private support for the US bombing campaign – something which the mainstream media still refuses to acknowledge. In various wars in the Middle East over the decades, the files are full of examples of how planners have had to resort to propaganda to counter public concerns. What elites have feared, especially during controversial policies such as military interventions, is that public opposition will become so great that they might actually have to change policy.

British elite strategy is at least consistent – abroad, Whitehall is more or less permanently opposed to democracy in regions where it has special interests, especially the Middle East where its allies are dictatorships: witness the striking levels of current support for the repressive rulers of Egypt and Bahrain, not to mention the ongoing special relationships – which are as deep as that with Washington – with the feudal regimes of Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Here, the support of any real democracy – other than the show elections promoted in Iraq and Afghanistan – is off the agenda, since it would likely yield up popular forces even more opposed to Western power. It is a great shame that the British elite opposition to democracy is still not well-understood or explained by academics and journalists. The public is continually fed the message that 'we' support democracy – at home and abroad – just because this is what Cameron, Blair or Brown say.

The fear of Corbyn on the part of the elite

is palpable in the literally hysterical right wing and 'liberal' media coverage, well documented as ever by the media watchdog Medialens – <http://medialens.org> - while the BBC has given up even pretending to be a public service broadcaster in its coverage of Corbyn, with virtually every news piece that I have heard or seen in recent days simply smear and propaganda. BBC Panorama's recent attempt to character-assassinate Corbyn – which received many complaints (presumably from the loony centre) – was merely part of a campaign. Tom Mills, an incisive analyst of the BBC, notes that the Panorama programme 'should be understood as part of a broader pattern in which the BBC's political output has overwhelmingly reflected the interests of a political Establishment in which it is deeply embedded'.

### **'Hardliners'**

Indeed, Corbyn and his supporters are being routinely presented by the BBC as 'hardliners', which, if true, makes the British taxpayers who pay for this nonsense reporting to be hardliners too. In the mainstream media, anyone who does not back the extremists' agenda – of supporting the US, Israel, military intervention, NATO, arms exports or transnational corporations – is regarded as outside the 'centre ground'. So flogging arms to despots, sending young British kids to die in wars and retaining the ability to destroy the entire planet is perfectly OK – anything different is extreme. To a Martian, mainstream British political culture would surely be hilarious.

The *Guardian* is an integral part of this. Former British ambassador Craig Murray has described 'the panic-driven hysterical hate-fest campaign against Corbyn by the *Guardian*' and he is hardly exaggerating. *Guardian* editorials and pieces by Jonathan Freedland, Polly Toynbee, Martin Kettle and some others, are all ridiculing the 'unelectable' Corbyn and helping to position him as a loony lefty. Similarly, *Guardian* news reporter Nadia Khomami, explaining 'what does Jeremy Corbyn

think?', writes that Corbyn has 'said he supports Israel's right to exist but opposes what he describes as the country's "occupation policies"'. The use of 'what he describes as...' and the use of speech marks are revealing, perhaps like writing about Al Qaeda's 'terrorist attack' on 9/11.

Since Corbyn's policies are generally popular, they are a direct threat to the elite consensus, and three stand out in foreign policy. First, the idea of holding Blair to account under international law for invading Iraq will strike terror into the minds of the Foreign Office and Ministry of Offence. These people reserve the right to bomb the gyppos every once in a while and they are not going to accept the idea of being held to account for this. The public have long been bombarded by the notion that we, as opposed to, say, Burkina Faso or Iran, have the sovereign right to intervene in other countries' affairs. It really says something very serious about how primitive Britain is when the idea of holding our leaders to account to the law is regarded as hardline.

The second red line policy is obviously Trident. When Britain first acquired nuclear weapons in the late 1940s, the main goal, shown in the declassified files, was to ensure that Britain was seen to remain a great power, especially in the eyes of the new superpower, the US. The primary goal remains, with various largely fictional threats deployed at various times to justify it. Reducing nuclear weapons would put Britain below France (France!) in the great power league, demeaning to the chaps in Whitehall clinging on to the remnants of imperial power.

Third, Corbyn's questioning of NATO will, along with the other two red lines, be ringing alarm bells in Obama's Washington, which will no doubt be heavily deploying its (many) assets in the British political scene to counter them. The media regularly states that Corbyn wants to withdraw from NATO, but I have not found such a statement, and I assume this is another smear. Corbyn has, however, said that NATO should have been wound up at the end of the Cold War (more loonyism) and

that NATO's expansion eastwards contributed to the Ukraine crisis. The latter idea is surely wacky, as explained by US mainstream academic John Mearsheimer, who recently wrote that 'the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis' due to NATO and EU enlargement, and that 'Putin's pushback should have come as no surprise'.

### **Defending Corbyn's thinking**

Luckily, there are some exceptions to the tirade of abuse being heaped on Corbyn (including some in the mainstream media) and it is from this rational true centre ground that I am optimistic that some kind of response can be made. Along with the unions and social movements, I hope that organisations like NGOs, with whom I regularly work, see the importance of defending Corbyn's lines of thinking, and recognise the urgency of this.

Some development charities have sadly been collaborating with the extremists, partnering with UK-based transnational corporations and participating in Whitehall's privatisation offensives in Africa, thinking this to be normal and that there is no alternative. Britain's 'development' policies under Conservative and Labour have become vehicles for promoting British big business abroad. My view is that Cameron's support for 0.7 per cent is due to recognizing how useful the aid programme is in supporting British commercial and foreign policy objectives. Development policy has played almost no role in the Corbyn surge but this is another area where he must challenge current policies and develop hardline policies in the centre ground, and deserves to be strongly supported.

**CT**

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**The public have long been bombarded by the notion that we, as opposed to, say, Burkina Faso or Iran, have the sovereign right to intervene in other countries' affairs**

# Liberal media exposed by Corbyn victory

New revelations about Iraq war and coverage of Labour Party's leadership race shock newspapers' core readers, says **Jonathan Cook**

**The supposedly liberal-left Observer was never held accountable for the grave betrayal of its readership and the world community**

In autumn 2002 Ed Vulliamy, a correspondent for Britain's *Sunday Observer* newspaper, stumbled on a terrible truth that many of us already suspected.

In a world-exclusive, he persuaded Mel Goodman, a former senior Central Intelligence Agency official who still had security clearance, to go on record that the CIA knew there were no WMD in Iraq. Everything the US and British governments were telling us to justify the coming attack on Iraq were lies.

Then something even more extraordinary happened. The *Observer* failed to print the story.

In his book *Flat Earth News*, Nick Davies recounts that Vulliamy, one of the *Observer's* most trusted reporters, submitted the piece another six times in different guises over the next half year. Each time the *Observer* spiked the story.

Vulliamy never went public with this monumental crime against real journalism (should there not be a section for media war crimes at the Hague?). The supposedly liberal-left *Observer* was never held accountable for the grave betrayal of its readership and the world community.

But on September 20 the tables turned a little when the *Observer* gave Vulliamy a platform in its comment pages to take issue

with an editorial the previous week savaging Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour Party leader.

In understandably cautious mode, Vulliamy called the paper's stance towards Corbyn "churlish", warning that it had lost the chance to stand apart from the rest of the British media. All had taken vehemently against the new Labour leader from the very beginning of his candidacy.

"[w]e conjoined the chorus with our own – admittedly more progressive – version of this obsession with electoral strategy with little regard to what Corbyn says about the principles of justice, peace and equality (or less inequality)."

What do these two confrontations between Vulliamy and the *Observer* – 13 years apart; one public, one not – indicate about the changing status of the liberal-left media?

To understand what's going on, we also need to consider the coverage of Corbyn in the *Guardian*, the better-known daily sister paper of the *Observer*.

All the *Guardian's* inner circle of commentators, from Jonathan Freedland to Polly Toynbee, made public that they were dead against Corbyn from the moment he looked likely to win. When he served simply to justify claims that the Labour Party was a broad and tolerant church, these commen-





This caricature of Jeremy Corbyn was adapted from a photo from Garry Knight's Flickr photostream.

DoeyHotey

tators were in favour of his standing. But as soon as he began to surge ahead, these same liberal-left pundits poured more scorn on him than they had reserved for any other party leader in living memory.

In a few months Corbyn has endured more contempt from the fearless watchdogs of the left than the current Conservative prime minister, David Cameron, has suffered over many years.

The *Guardian's* news coverage, meanwhile, followed exactly the same antagonistic formula as that of the rightwing press: ignore the policy issues raised by Corbyn, concentrate on trivial or perceived personality flaws, and frame stories about him in establishment-friendly ways.

We have endured in the *Guardian* the same patently ridiculous, manufactured

reports about Corbyn, portraying him as sexist, anti-semitic, unpatriotic, and much more.

We could expect the rightwing media to exploit every opportunity to try to discredit Corbyn, but looking at the talkbacks it was clear *Guardian* readers expected much more from their paper than simple-minded character assassination.

### Red neoliberals

The reality is that Corbyn poses a very serious challenge to supposedly liberal-left media like the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, which is why they hoped to ensure his candidacy was still-born and why, now he is leader, they are caught in a terrible dilemma.

While the *Guardian* and *Observer* mar-

**In a few months Corbyn has endured more contempt from the fearless watchdogs of the left than the current Conservative prime minister, David Cameron, has suffered over many years**

**Corbyn is not just threatening to expose the sham of the PLP as a real alternative to the Conservatives, but the sham of Britain's liberal-left media as a real alternative to the press barons**

ket themselves as committed to justice and equality, but do nothing to bring them about apart from promoting tinkering with the present, hugely unjust, global neoliberal order, Corbyn's rhetoric suggests that the apple cart needs upending.

If it achieves nothing else, Corbyn's campaign has highlighted a truth about the existing British political system: that, at least since the time of Tony Blair, the country's two major parliamentary parties have been equally committed to upholding neoliberalism. The Blue Neoliberal Party (the Conservatives) and the Red Neoliberal Party (Labour) mark the short horizon of current British politics. You can have either hardcore neoliberalism or slightly more softcore neoliberalism.

Corbyn shows that there should be more to politics than this false choice, which is why hundreds of thousands of leftists flocked back to Labour in the hope of getting him elected. In doing so, they overwhelmed the parliamentary Labour party (PLP), which vigorously opposed him becoming leader.

But where does this leave the *Guardian* and *Observer*, both of which have consistently backed "moderate" elements in the PLP? If Corbyn is exposing the PLP as the Red Neoliberal Party, what does that mean for the *Guardian*, the parliamentary party's house paper?

Corbyn is not just threatening to expose the sham of the PLP as a real alternative to the Conservatives, but the sham of Britain's liberal-left media as a real alternative to the press barons. Which is why the Freedlands and Toynbees – keepers of the *Guardian* flame, of its undeserved reputation as the left's moral compass – demonstrated such instant antipathy to his sudden rise to prominence.

They and the paper followed the right-wing media in keeping the focus resolutely on Corbyn rather than recognising the obvious truth: this was about much more than one individual. The sudden outpouring of

support for Corbyn reflected both an embrace of his authenticity and principles and a much more general anger at the injustices, inequalities and debasement of public life brought about by neoliberalism.

Corbyn captured a mood, one that demands real, not illusory change. He is riding a wave, and to discredit Corbyn is to discredit that wave.

### **Character assassination**

The *Guardian* and the *Observer*, complicit for so long with the Red Neoliberals led by Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband, thought they could kill off Corbyn's campaign by joining in the general media bullying. They thought they could continue to police the boundaries of the political left – of what counts as credible on the left – and place Corbyn firmly outside those borders.

But he won even so – and with an enormous lead over his rivals. In truth, the *Guardian*'s character assassination of Corbyn, rather than discrediting him, served only to discredit the paper with its own readers.

Corbyn's victory represented a huge failure not just for the political class in all its narrow neoliberal variations, but also for the media class in all its narrow neoliberal variations. It was a sign that the *Guardian*'s credibility with its own readers is steadily waning.

The talkback sections in the *Guardian* show its kneejerk belittling of Corbyn has inserted a dangerous seed of doubt in the minds of a proportion of its formerly loyal readers. Many of those hundreds of thousands of leftists who joined the Labour party either to get Corbyn elected or to demonstrate their support afterwards are *Guardian* readers or potential readers. And the *Guardian* and *Observer* ridiculed them and their choice.

Belatedly the two papers are starting to sense their core readership feels betrayed. Vulliamy's commentary should be seen in that light. It is not a magnanimous gesture



by the *Observer*, or even an indication of its commitment to pluralism. It is one of the early indications of a desperate damage limitation operation.

We are likely to see more such “reappraisals” in the coming weeks, as the liberal-left media tries to salvage its image with its core readers. This may not prove a fatal blow to the *Guardian* or the *Observer* but it is a sign of an accelerating trend for the old media generally and the liberal-left media more specifically.

Papers like the *Guardian* and the *Observer* no longer understand their readerships both because they no longer have exclusive control of their readers’ perceptions of what is true and because the reality – not least, polarising inequality and climate degradation – is becoming ever more difficult to soft-soap.

Media like the *Guardian* are tied by a commercial and ideological umbilical cord to a neoliberal order a large swath of their readers are growing restless with or feel downright appalled by.

In 2003 the *Observer* knowingly suppressed the truth about Iraq and WMD to advance the case for an illegal, “preventive” war, one defined in international law as the supreme war crime.

At that time – digitally the equivalent of the Dark Ages compared to now – the paper just about managed to get away with its complicity in a crime against humanity. The *Observer* never felt the need to make real amends with Vulliamy or the readers it betrayed.

But in the age of a burgeoning new media, the *Observer* and *Guardian* are discovering that the rules are shifting dangerously under their feet. Corbyn is a loud messenger of that change. **CT**

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*Jonathan Cook won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are “Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East” (Pluto Press) and “Disappearing Palestine: Israel’s Experiments in Human Despair” (Zed Books).*

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**HURWITT’S EYE**

Mark Hurwitt



# Corbyn's dilemma

New leader has to choose between reform and revolution. Will he make the right choice? asks **William Bowles**

**What is actually possible without an active, organised extra-Parliamentary opposition?**

*'The road to hell is paved with good intentions'*

I'm really torn writing this, for Jeremy Corbyn's sudden materialisation in the midst of a rampant, Victorian-style imperialist England makes it difficult not to join in the euphoria currently sweeping through what's left of the left in England and bow down before JC, an almost Christ-like apparition in the midst of the gangster capitalists in Armani suits who rule us.

However, while not wanting to rain on the party, I must echo the thoughts of William Morris, who wrote in *The Commonweal*, Vol 1, No 10, of the *Commonweal* on November 1885, "I cannot conclude without an earnest appeal to those Socialists, of whatever section, who may be drawn towards the vortex of Parliamentarians, to think better of it while there is yet time. If we ally ourselves to any of the present parties they will only use us as a cat's-paw; and on the other hand, if by any chance a Socialist slips through into Parliament, he will do so at the expense of leaving his principles behind him; he will certainly not be returned as a Socialist, but as something else; what else is hard to say... Whatever concessions may be neces-



sary to the progress of the Revolution can be wrung out of them at least as easily by extra-Parliamentary pressure, which can be exercised without losing one particle of those principles which are the treasure and hope of Revolutionary Socialists."

On the other hand, as Morris avers, the road to Parliament is also paved with good intentions and JC has been plodding along that road for 30 or so years with no more impact on the 'democratic process' than the rest of us have had (though a cynic would suggest that the perks and the pension plan might have something to do with it).

So while it's admirable, heart-warming even, to see JC echo at least some of the left's hopes and aspirations and for them to surface in the sea of misery that is a reactionary and backward-looking

Tory Britain, what is actually possible without an active, organised extra-Parliamentary opposition? In fact, things have gone into reverse during JC's 30-year stint in the House of Commons. His has been a lone voice in the wilderness of parliamentary procedure..

## **Reformism versus revolution**

This is JC's dilemma, his 'Syriza' moment if you like: Reformism versus Revolution. JC long ago chose Reform as did the Labour

Movement over 100 years ago when the Labour Party was born at the instigation of the trade union movement to represent their interests in a capitalist Parliament (women still didn't have the vote), their hope being that capitalism could be reformed gradually through the democratic process and finally arrive at socialism (though that bit, the most important bit, hadn't been worked out).

This is JC's reality: he has to work within the 'system', a system created by capitalism, for capitalism. Okay, the capitalist state has been forced to make some accommodation for the rest of us, well at least it did from 1945 to 1975. This is the point: Does Jeremy Corbyn have the Parliamentary Labour Party behind him and what is possible for him as an individual, to do about what is now a transnational ruling class, as events in Greece so tragically demonstrate?

Corbyn's dilemma is revealed first and foremost in the choices he has made for his Shadow Cabinet. Its composition reflects the compromises Corbyn must make in order to accommodate a Parliamentary Party opposed to his views on just about everything.

According to *Labour List*, an 'inside the Labour Party' source, JC commands only 7% support within the Parliamentary Labour Party – that's the one the Labour MPs belong to. (Don't forget, there are two Labour Parties: the Constituency Labour Party that, in theory anyway, anybody can join, and the Parliamentary Labour Party. It's worth noting that the Labour Party has long practiced what my folks called a policy of 'Bans and Proscriptions', whereby not only were lefties who were to the left of the Labour Party banned from joining, but there was to be no connection at all to anything to the left of the Labour Party, as if we had a communicable disease.

I well remember what seemed to be a yearly event: the Labour Party disbanding the Labour Party Young Socialists because



**Jeremy Corbyn's dilemma: Reform versus Revolution.**

it had become too socialist! It had been infected with the disease of socialism – well at least Trotskyism.

#### **Establishment creation**

The Labour Party is, in every sense, a creature born of the Establishment. In that sense, the Labour Party is as imperialist as the Tory Party, with a history of promoting imperialism-colonialism abroad (to the marginal benefit of its organised working class support, ie the trade unions). This is an embarrassing history for the left of today, and the left of my past. To my mind, this issue is central to the paradox that is the Western left generally, but those of the

**Corbyn's dilemma is revealed first and foremost in the choices he has made for his Shadow Cabinet**

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imperialist states in particular. But it does go some way to explaining the following bizarre behaviour by someone who calls himself a socialist:

Tariq Ali, doyen of the intellectual left here, at the very beginning of the (current) imperialist assault on Assad's Syria in 2011, called for "Assad to go", so revealing exactly how the Western left is trapped in an imperialist worldview. We, along with everyone else in British politics, are forever telling the rest of the world what to do and how to it – or else,!

Yet JC has clearly touched a nerve, especially among the young who have better sense than to have anything to do with our corrupt political class and its moribund so-called democratic system. But this is not even the first step on the long road to socialism. While the existing left is quick to exploit every opportunity that comes its way, it either never knows what to do with it or behaves opportunistically. But this is not to say that if JC reached out to the formerly voiceless that something significant couldn't be built in quite a short time.

But not if it develops within the Labour Party. Again, I aver to William Morris on this score. If Jeremy Corbyn is to have any chance at all in mobilising the voiceless, who make up almost 30% of the population, and build an alliance with progressive sections of the "middle class" who are already active through such issues as climate change, consumerism, tax evasion or whatever, as well as the few remaining progressive trade unions, gathers these "issues" together and links them all to their common cause – capitalism.

Can Jeremy Corbyn do this? Is this what he wants to do (or something like it)? Yes, he bypasses the established institutions in favour of 'alternative' media, social networks and so forth – he reaches out to his constituency and speaks their language. But he heads a party whose institutions he has to work with. Can he change the party he now heads that much? **CT**

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*William Bowles has been a political animal for most of his life but writing, mostly on politics, has occupied most of his time for the past fourteen years,*

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## There's Us and there's Them . . .



**Nigel Travis**

Dunkin' Brands CEO Nigel Travis is calling the decision to raise the hourly minimum wage for New York fast food workers from the current \$8.75 to \$15 statewide in 2021 "absolutely outrageous." This "sudden increase," Travis declared last month in a CNN interview, will hurt the small-business people who run Dunkin' franchises. Travis has enjoyed a bit of a "sudden" pay hike himself. He made \$10.2 million last year, over double his take-home the year before. That sudden move upped his personal pay rate, assuming he works 50 hours a week, to \$4,000 an hour. Travis says the minimum wage hike will mean "less hiring" at Dunkin' Donuts. Adds the CEO: "I don't want to sound threatening."

**– Sam Pizzigati**



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Pause for thought: Why is the government allowing in so few refugees?

## Marching for humanity

*ColdType* joins London march in aid of refugees.

Photos: **Josie Hargreaves**

Words: **Ian Bissell**

“**R**efugees let them in, Tory government get them out.” The chants echoed through central London on 12 September as more than 100,000 people marched to show their support for refugees from Syria’s civil war. Similar marches were held in cities throughout the United Kingdom.

The response to the refugee crisis by the Tory government has been pitiful. To date



Listen carefully: Refugees are welcome here.



Message to the prime minister: You're an embarrassment.

**Jeremy Corbyn called on the government 'to open your heart towards supporting desperate people'**

it has committed to taking a mere 20,000 refugees over five years, compared to Germany's commitment to 500,000 each year.

Appalled by this lack of humanity, ordinary people and their families took their message to Number 10 Downing Street that 'Refugees are welcome here'.

The majority of the refugees making their way to Europe in search of a better life are Syrians escaping the civil war raging in their country. A civil war encouraged and tacitly supported by the West, when Syrian president Bashar al-Assad fell out of favour.

Four million Syrian refugees languish in appalling conditions in camps, the majority in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

At the rally in Parliament Square, fresh from his landslide win, the new Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn called on the government 'to open your heart towards supporting desperate people who need somewhere safe to live, want to contribute to our society and are human beings just like all of us'.



Brothers and sisters: Welcome to Britain.





**In it together: Compassion is a family affair.**



**No turning back: refugees are human beings, too.**



**Sharing is caring: Youngsters put their leaders to shame.**

**Josie Hargreaves** is a 17-year-old activist who is studying photography, art and politics in a London school

**Ian Bissell** was a South African journalist and trade unionist during the apartheid regime. He was forced to leave in 1987 and is now a political activist and writer based in London

# Ode to Tobias Wolff

Dell Franklin meets some eager students and a slightly-less eager lover

I explained that with Raymond Carver gone, Tobias Wolff could be our greatest living short story writer

Around 7:30 on a Tuesday evening two girls came out of a bluesy downtown coffee house habituated by the very small set of Bohemian types in San Luis Obispo. Dressed in jeans, sweaters and tennis shoes, they were headed to the Performing Arts Center on the Cal Poly campus where humorist/essayist David Sedaris was performing.

"Sedaris is supposed to be a modern-day Mark Twain," I said, as they settled in back. "He writes a lot for the *New Yorker*. Are you English majors?"

"Absolutely," they said in unison, proudly.

"Are you interested in writing?"

"Absolutely." They informed me they were in a writing class. I asked did they study and write short stories. They said they were just starting

out on the short story. So I asked if they'd read Raymond Carver. They'd heard all about him, but had not yet read him. I could not believe this.

"Raymond Carver is the American Chekhov," I told them. "He's passed away, you know. He was a very good friend of Tobias Wolff. Surely you've heard of Tobias Wolff?"

No, they had not. I explained that with Raymond Carver gone, Tobias Wolff could

be our greatest living short story writer.

"Really?"

"Yes. Who the hell teaches you? Every short story Wolff writes is a lesson, a moral, and a disturbing truth alien to most of us, unless you decide to really put on your thinking cap and enter into the darkness of our situations, and our souls."

"My God, are YOU a writer?"

"Maybe."

I dropped them off at the Performing Arts Center, which was mobbed, and urged them to secure a book of short stories by Wolff - "The Night In Question". They thanked me and said they enjoyed talking about writers because they loved writing and hoped I picked them up another time in my cab.



Things were slow after I dropped off the two students,

so I drove to the Wells Fargo bank downtown, which provided decent lighting to read, and worked a crossword puzzle from the *LA Times* and read the *New Yorker*. Across the street at the 7/11 a gaggle of kids imitating freaks and the homeless, hauling around mangy dogs, hung out in the shadows, their body English and movements indicating life was a drag, perhaps a joke, as were the squares and stiffs coming and going in this predominately white, affluent

and conservative town known for its safe streets, great shopping and ideal climate.

I grew bored and decided to cruise the main drag, Higuera Street, and much to my surprise was flagged down from the sidewalk by Jason, a chef at a new local bistro that was busy every night, drawing San Luis Obispo's high-end gourmands by storm. I usually picked Jason up around one o' clock in nearby bars when he was very drunk, and drove him to an apartment complex a couple of miles away, where he lived with two other cooks. But tonight was different.

"It's my first night off in two months," he told me, settling in the front seat. "I've worked six, seven days a week, thirteen hours a day, for five months, I'm exhausted. Man, I finally got laid last night. This forty-six year old woman. I'm thirty. I was so horny, we did it six times! So what happens? This thirty two year old, a stone fox, wants me tonight. I'm supposed to meet her at a motel here in town. But man, my libido is way down." He yawned mountainously, drooling on himself, laying his head back on the seat. "Damn, bro', why does it always come in bunches? When I'm on a drought, the women smell it on me, and run from me like I'm a disease. But when I'm getting it, they're all over me. What am I supposed to do, bro'? I need your advice?"

"Get it while you can, even if it kills you, Jason. Believe me, I've been where you are."

"Pull over at the 7/11, please. I'm gonna find me a good porno magazine. Maybe that'll help."

I did so. On Jason's way in, a couple of the homeless simulators hit him up, and he gave them cash. Coming out, another kid hit him up, and he got cash, too. Then Jason settled beside me.

"I need to go home and take a shower," he announced. I started out in that direction. "So bro', what am I gonna do about this stone fox who wants to rock and roll?"

"Well, a thirty two year old woman is at the very peak of her sexual drive. A horny thirty two year old has no business with anybody but a twenty year old, preferably a GI who hasn't been laid in months."

"This woman, she's got fire in her eyes, she could kill me. Pull over at that liquor store. I'm gonna get me some tequila. You want anything?"

"Nah, Jason, I'm fine."

"A sandwich or something?"

"I'm fine. But thanks anyway."

He went in and returned with a fifth of tequila in a brown bag, sipping from it, a troubled man with big problems. Then he handed me a hundred dollar bill and told me to keep the change after I dropped him off for good, though he wasn't sure where and when that would be. I dropped him off at his apartment and waited for him in my cab, wondering what kind of advice I could give him, for he along with several unstable cooks, students and various misfits felt for some reason I was a fountain of wisdom when it came to affairs of the heart, among other things, much as it had been for me when I tended bar for around 20 years

Over the years, after the sexual frenzy wore out, I felt what most men needed was a companionable woman to go to a movie with, share a quiet dinner, just hang together and do nothing. It had always seemed, as an American male, I was early on indoctrinated into this frenzied obsession to get laid as much as possible, like my compatriots haunting body exchange bars. It was all crazy. Sometimes long periods of celibacy were more peaceful, though waking up in the morning alone could be a misery. Was there ever a balance? Currently I had a sedate, stable relationship with a woman whose major complaint was that I didn't love her near as much as I did my Labrador dog.

Anyway, when Jason was back in my cab yawning and nipping from his bottle as we headed across town to motel row, he said, "Man, I am beat.

**He went in and returned with a fifth of tequila in a brown bag, sipping from it, a troubled man with big problems. Then he handed me a hundred dollar bill and told me to keep the change after I dropped him off**

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## ON THE ROAD

**He browsed through some magazines, talked a little to the young gal behind the counter, purchased a six-pack of beer, one of those giant hot dogs and nachos with cheese that somehow smelled like petroleum**

That woman had me up all night. She had some good cocaine. I got no sleep. Then I worked the books and prepped all morning and had a meeting with my staff, and then I started boozing. This woman, she wants me bad. So I got tequila, I got the porno magazine, I got plenty of cash, but I got the libido of a ninety year old... “He nipped. “How about that porno shop in Atascadero? Maybe I can give this woman some action with a sex toy until my libido comes back.”

“That’s a round trip of nearly a hundred bucks, Jason. You’ll have to dish out another big bill for that, and those state-of-the-art sex toys are at least fifty bucks.”

“I don’t care, man. Right now, if I go with that woman, she might kill me. My dick’s all chewed up from that forty six year old, I’m in pain, bro” He gazed at me with his bloodshot eyes, a desperate man. “Bro’, if I can’t perform, she’ll get rid of me, and this is a chick I wanna hold onto for the long haul. I like her.”

“Well, as a last resort, why don’t you try talking to her. I know a motel room isn’t the ideal place for it, but why don’t you try and get to know this woman as a real, live human, and maybe let her get to know you the same way. Level with her. Tell her the truth of your predicament. Maybe she’ll have mercy and you can build a nice relationship instead of a one-night stand.”

“Pull over at that gas station, please,” Jason said, looking more confused than ever. We were near the end of motel row on Monterey Street.

“I’ve got to eat something. This tequila’s going straight to my head. I haven’t eaten all day, except a bag of Fritos. I won’t be able to do anything if I don’t get some food in me.”

“Right. Fuel for the grind.”

Jason seemed to be delaying the tryst in the gas station mini-mart. He browsed through some magazines, talked a little

to the young gal behind the counter, purchased a six-pack of beer, one of those giant hot dogs and nachos with cheese that somehow smelled like petroleum. He finally brought all these purchases to the cab.

He asked me what kind of motel he should go to. A fancy one, like the Holiday Inn? I shook my head. He mentioned a couple cheap ones. I discouraged both. I recommended a motel that was not too expensive, and had decent amenities. It was a place I might take a girl. He accepted my expert advice. I took him to the motel.

So Jason toted his porno magazine, a paper bag with a change of clothes, 6 pack of Lite Beer, bottle of tequila, cell phone, gizzard-curdling grub, and stood outside the motel office looking like a lost soul while I counted my tip--\$75.60. He was still standing outside the office, cell phone at his ear, when I drove off.

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I was reading outside the Wells Fargo when my phone rang and the dispatcher sent me across town to the Performing Arts Center on campus. When I arrived there a mob was spilling out of the plush auditorium. I spotted the two English major girls looking around, on cell phones. I beeped my horn and they saw me and came right over and got in.

“It’s YOU!” they cheered in unison.

“So how was David Sedaris?”

“Fab-u-lous! And guess what?” said the chunkier of the two, who sat up and leaned over the seat to tell me the good news. “David Sedaris was talking about how he gets depressed once in a while, and even considers suicide, and he said one of the reasons he’ll never commit suicide is because he might miss out on the next short story by Tobias Wolff! He loves Tobias Wolff. He must be really good.”

“So now you gotta read him, honey.

You got two people recommending him – David Sedaris, world famous author and lecturer, and your local cabbie.” **CT**

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*Dell Franklin is a long-time journalist and founder of the Rogue Voice literary magazine and currently has his own blog at <http://dellfranklin.com>.*

# Hiroshima's literary legacy

**Daniel Cordie** discusses the 'blinding flash' that changed the world forever



The first nuclear bomb exploded almost directly above Hiroshima's Genbaku Dome, which was originally scheduled to be demolished with the rest of the ruins, but was retained as a memorial to the dead.

In the year after the atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945, the events were rarely considered or discussed in the West beyond their strategic or scientific relevance. The experience of individuals on the

ground and the confusion that arose at the appearance of radiation sickness were little known.

This was to change on August 31 1946, when the *New Yorker* devoted an entire issue to an extraordinary feature piece by

**Perhaps Hersey's greatest achievement is to render the Japanese bomb victims human to his American audience.**

John Hersey, simply titled "Hiroshima". It sold out within hours and was subsequently published in book form.

Hiroshima was not the most devastating air raid of World War II, but the extreme vulnerability of cities to a single device was a new horror. As such it challenged established ways of thinking and demanded that writers find forms adequate to this new nuclear consciousness. Writing so early in the atomic age and with few precedents on which to draw, Hersey's achievement is all the more remarkable.

Hersey was a war correspondent, but his prose is notable for its novelistic qualities. Drawing on extensive interviews, his telling of the stories of six survivors is seminal in both historical and literary terms.

Perhaps Hersey's greatest achievement is to render the Japanese bomb victims human to his American audience. After years of war, after the brutality of the Pacific campaigns, this is an aspect of the attack that had been neglected. By revealing the experience of some of World War II's final victims Hersey stressed the devastating personal effects of this new and horrifying weapon.

His article does this by coolly confronting us with the physical and psychological traumas of war. When Mr Tanimoto grasps a woman's hand her skin "slips off in huge, glove-like pieces". The grotesque results of the bomb become clear; the human body revealed as meat. When Dr Sasaki, overwhelmed in his hospital, becomes "an automaton, mechanically wiping, daubing, winding, wiping, daubing, winding", we see how the mind's capacity to empathise closes down in the face of trauma.

As one of the earliest examples of nuclear writing, Hersey's "Hiroshima" also pioneers several motifs that shape literary responses to the bomb and through which we still talk about and understand nuclear threat.

Miss Toshiko Sasaki, "a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works", experiences the explosion as a "blinding flash". This idea of the atomic

flash was itself to become a staple of nuclear literature. The flash is the image with which Hersey begins "Hiroshima" and it is what connects his protagonists as they look up from different locations in the city and simultaneously become hibakusha, explosion-affected people. The flash is what fixes 8:15am on August 6 1945 as the instant the city turns into an atomic city.

The bomb's capacity to transfix, to illuminate but simultaneously to blind is a pre-occupation of nuclear literature. Hersey's achievement is to find a neutral, unemotional prose that lessens the glare so we see the human stories.

That fear of sudden transformation of the world into something entirely new later came to haunt the Cold War. Douglas Coupland's retrospective, seemingly autobiographical short story, "The Wrong Sun" (1994) astutely captures this acute nuclear consciousness. The narrator's everyday life stutters in constant expectation of "The Flash". He carries on with the mundane routines of life, but sirens or sudden noises induce traumatic moments when briefly, incongruously, he thinks nuclear war imminent.

### **One titanic instant**

Hersey mentions tales of blast shadows, imprints on walls or roofs thrown by the bomb's heat in which people's final moments are preserved. He notes that fanciful stories accumulate around them. They have continued to, becoming important nuclear motifs.

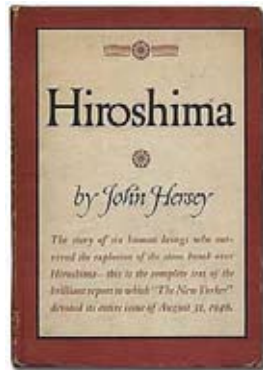
In Ray Bradbury's short story "There Will Come Soft Rains" (1950), all that remains of a family are their silhouettes, thrown onto a wall in "one titanic instant". Most poignantly, the shadow of a young boy, "hands flung into the air", is cast upon the wall. Higher up is a tossed ball and opposite the boy is a girl, "hands raised to catch a ball which never came down". More recently, Kamila Shamsie's beautiful novel "Burnt Shadows" (2009) takes as its central image the

birds, cranes, seared into the flesh of her protagonist Hiroko as her patterned kimono is incinerated by the atomic flash at Nagasaki.

The sense of time being frozen is a repeated nuclear motif. Hersey describes Father Kleinsorge returning to Hiroshima and finding “bicycles, shells of streetcars and automobiles, all halted in mid-motion”. The cusp at which the city “becomes” atomic is briefly preserved and for a few days after the bombing Father Kleinsorge can traverse both its pre-nuclear and nuclear states. Hiroshima is, in this description, the symbolic gateway through which humans enter the nuclear age.

Perhaps most interestingly Hersey also broaches the unsettling radioactive legacy of the bombing in his piece. When Miss Sasaki returns to the city just three weeks after the attack she finds an extraordinary profusion of plant life growing in the ruins. It seems so unlikely, so overly abundant, that it “gave her the creeps”. With dubious scientific legitimacy Hersey writes that the bomb “had stimulated” the roots of plants.

The unspoken implication is that some “unnatural” quality of the bomb – radiation presumably – has induced this unsettling abundance. Miss Sasaki’s uneasiness and Hersey’s ambiguous phrasing introduce an important cultural trope through which



nuclear technology and materials are experienced and perhaps misunderstood. It is an example of what the anthropologist Joseph Masco calls the “nuclear uncanny”: a psychological phenomenon by which the world is experienced as unsettlingly different when thought of as “nuclear”.

In the moving additional chapter to “Hiroshima”, published on the 40th anniversary of the bombing in 1985, Hersey wrote that the world’s memory was getting “spotty”. Perhaps our cultural memory of atomic attack is spottier still, another 30 years on. So if you haven’t read it before, take some time to read Hiroshima this anniversary weekend. It remains one of the rawest, but most humane, accounts of this world-changing event.

By giving us a glimpse of the human consequences of atomic attack, Hiroshima warns us of our capacity for inhumanity. It remains largely silent on the military and political decisions behind the attack, but is perhaps all the more powerful for that. It asks of us only one terrible thing: that we bear witness to the event; that we remember.

**CT**

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*Daniel Cordie is Reader in English and American Literature at Nottingham Trent University. This essay was originally published at <http://theconversation.com>*



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# Getting the facts wrong

Greg Palast tells how the *Los Angeles Times* fired cartoonist Ted Rall, but then the evidence blows up in newspaper's face

**The police source said the recording and other info proved that the cartoonist was lying**

Cartoonist Ted Rall is a lying, fantasist scumbag. Or maybe, just maybe, the *LA Times*, complicit with the Los Angeles police, has slandered and slimed America's toughest critic of police violence.

The story: On July 27, the *LA Times* fired their long-time columnist and cartoonist Ted Rall for fabricating a story of police misconduct. The *LA Times's* evidence? A tape recording provided by the LAPD. Problem was, the tape was muffled – possibly tampered with. When audio experts cleaned the garbage interference on the tape – uh, oh! – the LAPD and *LA Times* accusations fell to pieces.

The details: On May 11, Ted Rall wrote his umpteenth column in the *LA Times*, “LAPD’s Crosswalk Crackdown: Don’t Police Have Something Better to do?” about gang violence: the gang is the LAPD. This was Rall’s lightest jab of all, a satirical remembrance of when, 14 years earlier, a cop put him in handcuffs for a simple jaywalking ticket.

Unbeknown to Rall, the jaywalker-stalker cop had recorded this big bust. The LAPD dropped the tape on the *Times*. The police source said the recording and other info proved Rall was lying. That the tape proved that Rall had never been handcuffed – nor, as Rall wrote in his column, was there a group of onlookers complaining about the cop’s overkill.

In other words, ‘they’ said, and the *Times* accepted, that Rall had just made up the whole handcuff-and-crowd thing to smear the LAPD. On that basis, *LA Times* editor Nick Goldberg printed and signed a big-splash editorial saying, in effect, Rall had committed the unpardonable sin of fabricating a story – and Rall was fired.

This, of course, could end Rall’s career as a syndicated newspaper columnist and cartoonist. And I was going to have to fire Rall too, for he is a journalism fellow of the Palast Investigative Fund, the not-for-profit foundation that backs our work. If the charges were true, I wouldn’t hesitate to

THE LAPD IS DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THREE VIDEOTAPED INCIDENTS THAT RECORD POLICE ALLEGEDLY USING EXCESSIVE FORCE TO SUBDUDE PEOPLE. SO IT'S HOSTING COMMUNITY MEETINGS. WILL THESE QUESTIONS BE ON THE AGENDA?







fire Rall's lying ass – but only after I break his pen and cut off his fingers.

I demanded a copy of the recording for our audio experts to review – and asked Rall to do the same. Oh, mama! To my surprise – and Rall's glee – the crowd that he had allegedly fantasized about suddenly came alive – with three women shouting, "Why'd you handcuff him?" and "Take off his handcuffs!" – the handcuffs that were supposedly fabricated by Rall. (One woman helpfully suggested to the officer, "Don't forget to ride his ---hole!")

As an investigative reporter, I was astonished that the *LA Times* did not even bother to do an independent analysis of the tape. Rall told me that a *Times* reporter, Paul Pringle, told him the *Times* simply accepted the recording transcript as truthful because

it came from the LAPD.

And the LAPD hates hates hates Rall.

I can't blame them, given Rall's reports and caustic drawings, the truth hurts. The LA police union wrote that it "applauds [the] *LA Times* firing of cartoonist Rall," whose drawings drew blood from the police force infamous for its gang-style beating of the handcuffed Rodney King.

Rall said that reporter Pringle told him that, to bolster their case against Rall, the LAPD source said that the arresting cop, Will Durr, never used handcuffs in petty violation stops. However, by coincidence, a news report about that very same cop, Durr, handcuffing a driver on a routine traffic stop appeared in... *The LA Times*.

Oops!

My calls to the *Times*' "investigative

**I was astonished that the *LA Times* did not even bother to do an independent analysis of the tape**



**Would the LAPD conduct an internal affairs investigation of the theft or misuse of confidential police files?**

reporter” Pringle went unanswered. *LA Times* opinion editor Nicolas Goldberg, whom I know and have long respected, said he was not authorized not to go on record to defend his paper. The smell of panic in the *Times*’ executive suite is getting stronger.

So I called the LAPD. Did they drop the garbled tape and false transcript on their critic? Oddly, spokesman Officer Mike Lopez, who knew the story well, could not confirm the LAPD was the source. Then, was it stolen from official police files?

Would the LAPD conduct an internal affairs investigation of the theft or misuse of confidential police files?

Ironically, the *LA Times* is the biggest metropolitan daily in the USA with the guts to print Rall – and even pick up a Palast sto-

ry or two. Clearly, the heat from *The Heat* is on. I really do hope that, in light of this new information, the paper will do the right thing and retract their statement.

Whatever the original justification for the *Times*’ printed attack, to let it stand uncorrected now, in light of the new uncontroverted evidence, would violate core standards of journalistic ethics.

As for the Palast Fund, with the evidence now in hand, we will fight this attack on our journalist.

Why am I supporting Rall? Because this is not about jaywalking. This is about killing. Police killings. And the ability of journalists to report just the facts, ma’am, free of fear of retribution by the police or media executives.

Rall’s career was gunned down by a pho-

ny transcript of a recording of a bust.

This follows close on the shooting death of an unarmed 29-year-old homeless veteran by an LAPD officer on the Venice Beach boardwalk. Brendon Glenn was known as a sometimes surly, but ultimately harmless, alcoholic. Near midnight on May 6, after he appeared to accost a local resident, two cops wrestled Glenn to the ground.

The original statement by the LA chief of police, Charlie Beck, stated that, “an altercation occurred between the two officers and the suspect. During that physical altercation, an officer-involved shooting occurred.” But security camera tape would later reveal that just wasn’t true.

In fact, film from a local store camera revealed that, for reasons unknown, one cop stepped away from his partner, who had Glenn on the ground, then turned and fired two mortal shots into the homeless man.

An associate of the Palast investigations team, investigative reporter and former CBS news anchor Bree Walker, has been reviewing the case.

What Walker and every other newspaper person has to worry about now is, will reporting the full story of police violence result in a slander and smear campaign against the investigating reporter?

The police believe they have silenced Rall, that his public pillorying by the *Times* “serves as an example” – a warning to troublesome journalists. Rall, to their dismay, is proving more of an example of undeterred courage.

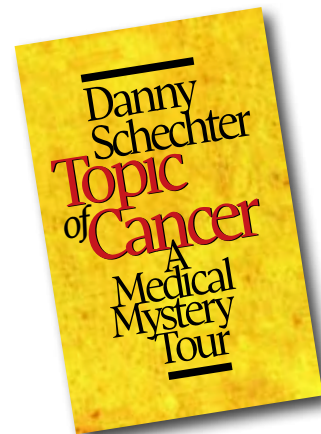
We can only hope that, given the new evidence, the *Times* restores not just Rall’s reputation, but its own. **CT**

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*Ted Rall’s new book-length comic, Snowden, was released on August 25. Greg Palast’s web site is <http://gregpalasy.com>*

**The police believe they have silenced Rall, that his public pillorying by the *Times* “serves as an example”**

## **DANNY SCHECHTER’S FINAL BOOK: FREE TO ALL COLDTYPE READERS**

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# Mockingbird's ugly sister

Andrew O'Hagan on the manuscript that Harper Lee buried for 50 years

**It's a children's story, really, not unlike "The Railway Children" and other daddy-obsessed narratives**

I find it hard to believe that Harper Lee was actually in favour of publishing "Go Set a Watchman", a rejected manuscript that lay among her papers for more than fifty years. Yet the book is now here and doing exactly the kind of damage that its wily author always felt it would.

For a novelist, it's one thing not to destroy a book and another thing to publish it, and the work they are calling the 'publishing sensation of the year' is merely a pre-hash of something that came to be known for its polished good nature. One could argue that every interesting book has an ugly sister – she lies buried beneath the puffed skirts of the drafts – and the publication of "Go Set a Watchman" could be considered a nice moment for the editor's art. When it comes to it, the drafts won't always shame you, but they're likely to scotch the myth of effortless achievement, making it clear that talent isn't always its own best judge.

Truman Capote's childhood friend – Harper Lee and Capote grew up in the same small town in Alabama – may have come to

know, at last, that success breeds its own vices, not least of which is the market's determination to sell imperfection in place of perfection when the stock is running low.

I've always had a soft spot for the famous novel. I like its prose and am easily persuaded by its gently nostalgic tone, its depiction of a sleepy Southern town and its nightly routines, neighbours who know one another,

a parent who can make a richness of a child's moral sense.

The novel glows with soft light – too soft, some would say – but it yields a hard lesson. Time passes and bad things happen but decency and empathy draw you back. It's a children's story, really, not unlike "The Railway Children" and other daddy-obsessed narratives, but *Mockingbird* gains power by seeming so deeply hitched, as it might or might not have been, to a social upheaval and a time of change.

Atticus Finch was the right everyman for the right time and Gregory Peck was his ideal embodiment.



**Right: Harper Lee on the set of "To Kill A Mockingbird," with director Alan Pakula.** (Wikipedia)  
**Below: Lee's hometown pal, Truman Capote.** (Wikipedia)



A week after Labor Day in 1988, when I was twenty years old, I was with some fellow students in a Drive-Away car that we were supposed to be delivering to Los Angeles from Washington. We ignored the prescribed route, and instead drove south, entering Alabama just as Hurricane Florence was making landfall. We were on the 65 from Montgomery when the wind-screen wipers started to fail and the radio was telling people in mobile homes to go to the community centres.

I remember having a bad idea and a good idea in quick succession. The bad idea was that we stop at the next town for a drink – it turned out to be a dry county – but I made up for it by pointing the car in the direction of Monroeville, some distance away, feeling that Harper Lee's original small town was sure to be a haven for the destitute and the generally luckless denizens of the earth.

The town was sleepy like the movie and I felt there must be a Boo Radley behind every peeling porch. We found beers and a place that sold things like gumbo and dishes of stew with black beans. And in the morning I went out looking for the mockingbirds and chinaberry trees and Aunt Sooks of legend, but nobody in the gas stations or the 7/11 knew much about writers.

When I asked a man in the town square where a person would go if he wanted to call on Harper Lee, he smiled, and said she might be up around the golf club.

There was still a lot of dust in the town, and, looking at the courthouse where Lee's father had plied his trade, it occurred to me that the best characters in fiction are states of mind as much as human beings, and At-

ticus Finch was a small-town notion of democracy.

I bought a hardback copy from a local store and asked the owner if there was anybody left in Monroeville who was like the man in the book. I can still see the bookseller handing me the package and looking out of the storefront window at the sky. 'It's like fine weather,' he said. 'Just when you think it's gone you see it's fixin' to come back.'

With this new book, the character is now a man so crippled with arthritis that he can't hold a razor. He can't keep a conversa-

tion going with Jean Louise, alias Scout, the daughter beloved by him in our memory, without it involving slights about the life she now lives in New York.

But what Atticus can hold – and does, rather extravagantly – is a set of views about black people that might put him on a par with George Wallace, a circumstance requiring you to suddenly un-imagine the noble lawyer, now no longer the decency machine who has long lived in your head as segregation's mythic antidote. To some commentators, he is the same man, a Southern agrarian fighting against know-nothing diktats from the North. But that doesn't square with the seeming decay of his tolerance into hate speech.

The lawyer in *Mockingbird* wasn't doing a job: he was living out an idea of how to live. Atticus doesn't just stand up for a black man in the novel: he comes to see how the white supremacist mentality operates against a man on the basis of the man's colour. And such a lawyer, after such an experience, would not be able to say the crude things we must now imagine him saying twenty years later. We were right to detect

**The town was sleepy like the movie and I felt there must be a Boo Radley behind every peeling porch**

**We can now see him as he was before rewriting turned him holy, before the magic happened, and it's a shock**

a lifelong disgustedness within Atticus, a sense of the animal cruelty in man that has to be opposed at all costs.

That is what he has meant to several generations of schoolchildren, all fans of Harper Lee. She created a character who overcame the bullying traditions of local prejudice in order to support what is right. It's something we all might do, and it's the reason the book is a set text all over the world. Yet we now have to think of Atticus as a director of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council, a not entirely hooded collective dedicated to the rights of white people.

'Citizens' council? In Maycomb?' Jean Louise heard herself repeating fatuously. 'Atticus?'

Alexandra said: 'Jean Louise, I don't think you fully realise what's been going on down here.'

Atticus still represents a black man in a rape case, and he gets him off, but 'after the verdict, [Finch] ... walked home, and took a steaming bath.' And now he stands at the table in the courtroom next to a legal colleague who 'spewed [racist] filth from his mouth'. Later on, the decency machine grinds to a complete halt as Atticus unpicks his inner Peck. 'Do you want negroes by the carload,' he asks, 'in our schools and churches and theatres?'

In this version – created a few years before he became the mainstay of what Oprah Winfrey, on America's behalf, calls 'our national novel' – Atticus is a more lifelike Southern lawyer of the period, a divided figure and a dark gothic construction out of Flannery O'Connor.

We can now see him as he was before rewriting turned him holy, before the magic happened, and it's a shock because the author's later conception of his purity seems suddenly manufactured and false. Atticus is now less convincing as a good man than as a character in moral black-face.

Scout is no longer Scout: no longer a sweet child flowering into percipience, but

a liberal New Yorker returning to find the politics of her home town mired in hatred. It's a different, under-developed, book to make the pretty prose of the better one seem hollow. Literary enchantment is a fragile bird, and Harper Lee's account of human fairness will not easily endure the information that she once wrote: 'I don't care what it is, Uncle Jack, if you'll only tell me what's turned my father into a nigger-hater.'

Imagine waking up to learn that Hamlet killed his own father, that Pip had been scheming for money all along. Imagine discovering that Sherlock Holmes, in a previous version, was a bit of a thicko, a bit humourless, or that Molly Bloom had no interest in sex. We're quite used to that sort of thing in the movies, where an adaptation might not only lose characters, but lose a character's central meaning.

In the film of "Breakfast at Tiffany's", a straight writer played by George Peppard is on a mission to gain Holly Golightly (Audrey Hepburn). In the original novella, a gay writer enjoys a friendship with a kooky girl while knowing she is likely soon to vanish. But a bad adaptation won't tarnish a book and won't in any case be blamed on the author.

Published nearly a decade before Harper Lee with some trepidation sent "Go Set a Watchman" to her editor, Capote's first novel, "Other Voices, Other Rooms," tells the story of a boy's return home in search of his father.

It turns out Lee and Capote had more or less written the same first book, and, haunted by their childhoods and hoping fame and fortune would set them free, each had put the other into their story. **CT**

.....  
*Andrew O'Hagan's novel The Illuminations has just been longlisted for the Man Booker Prize and is published in Canada by McLelland and Stuart. This article was originally published by the London Review of Books – <http://lrb.co.uk>*

# Bumpkins and Hicks

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

The world consists of bumpkins and hicks.  
Some have iPhones, some just have sticks.  
Some bust up statues from 50 B.C.  
Some lynch black men from yonder beech tree.

Some wear grass skirts and eat bowls of petal.  
Others wear leather and dance heavy metal.  
Some move mountains to get certain shoes,  
Others think troubles all come from the Jews.

A touch of world, the grace of perspective,  
Largely does lack in the human collective.  
When we yoked folks to the harness of global  
We forgot to re-make them broader and noble.

Take that stock broker hard at the game,  
And African farmer of green plantain.  
Jack bores you rotten with e-tech and trend,  
Mengala knows everything blue ants portend.

But ask the first gent to find Cameroon,  
All he can tell you is "west of the moon?"  
Ask the other to name Hollywood stars.  
All he can answer is "Venus and Mars?"

Or take the sports writer hot on his beat,  
Looking for scoops to report and compete,  
With all of the others dying to tell,  
Who'll be next coach at Tex' A and L?  
But query his views on our First Amend,  
So much the Supremes do twist and offend:  
"What's the trouble? My sources are cool:

"A def back, a tight end, the dean of law school."

Now ask Talib grunt in one of those Stans,  
Why blow up lives like Al's and Dan's?  
"They changed our laws and droned our town,  
"Who are these bastards to kick us around?"

Now give those G.I.s the right of rebuttle:  
"Osama bin Laden – he started this muddle.  
"He made Nine-Eleven as you served him tea."  
The grunt only squints and asks them "Who's he?"

And each and every, though far or near,  
Asked of their countries, will tell you quite clear:  
"Like mine, no sir, they're ain't nothin' like."  
Since to tribes people cling, as tire to bike.

It's not for nothing that pol'tics are local.  
And woe to the rep who opines to a yokel,  
That maybe our interest includes many others',  
For sinkin' or swimin' we'll all do as brothers.

That rep won't defeat the shyster who says,  
"Not us, we're exception (and vote me for prez)."  
What a great, soaring phrase that makes for the hicks,  
Who love a good ad and make all the wrong picks.

.....  
*Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His four novels, of varied plots but centering on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009. His web site is <http://philipkraske.com>*

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# When reporters are branded as spies

The Pentagon's new "Law of War" manual puts some journalists in the category of "unprivileged belligerents," writes **Don North**

**Allowing this manual to stand as guidance for commanders, government lawyers and leaders of foreign nations would severely damage press freedoms**

**H**onest war correspondents and photographers who try to cover wars effectively are about to become suspect spies if a new Pentagon manual, "Law of War," is accepted by US military commanders. I can confirm from personal experience that reporting on wars is hard enough without being considered a suspicious character secretly working for the other side.

The 1,176-page manual, published on June 24, is the first comprehensive revision made to the Defense Department's law of war policy since 1956. One change in terminology directly targets journalists, saying "in general, journalists are civilians," but under some circumstances, journalists may be regarded as "unprivileged belligerents." [p. 173] That places reporters in the same ranks as Al Qaeda, since the term "unprivileged belligerents" replaces the Bush-era phrase "unlawful combatants."

"Reporting on military operations can be very similar to collecting intelligence or even spying," the manual says, calling on journalists to "act openly and with the permission of relevant authorities." The manual notes that governments "may need to censor journalists' work or take other security measures so that journalists do not reveal sensitive information to the enemy."

The manual's new language reflects a long-term growing hostility within the US military toward unencumbered reporting about battlefield operations as well as a deepening interest

in "information warfare," the idea that control over what the public gets to hear and see is an important way of ensuring continued popular support for a conflict at home and undermining the enemy abroad.

But allowing this manual to stand as guidance for commanders, government lawyers and leaders of foreign nations would severely damage press freedoms, not only for Americans but internationally. It would drastically inhibit the news media ability to cover future wars honestly and keep the public informed, which is after all what both US government officials and journalists say they want.

## **Bitter Vietnam memories**

The new manual also reflects an historical trend. During the Vietnam War, a majority of US military officers believed the press should have been under more restraint. By the early years of the Reagan administration, it had become an article of faith among many conservatives that the press had helped lose that war by behaving more as disloyal fifth columnists than a respectable Fourth Estate.

So, the Pentagon began to strike back. During the short-lived Grenada invasion of 1983, press coverage was banned in the early phases of the conflict. Soon, the Pentagon began a more formal process of both constraining and co-opting journalists. In the first Gulf War, journalists were forced to work in restrictive



“pools.” In the Iraq War, reporters were “embedded” with military units while facing multiple limitations on what they could say and write.

Now, the Pentagon appears to be engaging in an attempt at intimidation or “prior restraint,” essentially warning journalists that if they are deemed to have reported something that undermines the war effort, they could be deemed “unprivileged belligerents,” presumably opening them to trial by military tribunals or to indefinite detention.

And, while that might seem to be an extreme interpretation, the manual’s ominous wording comes at a time when the US government has escalated its denunciations of what it regards as “propaganda” from journalists at RT, a Russian network, and earlier of Al-Jazeera, an Arab-based network, both of which broadcast internationally, including inside the United States offering alternative perspectives and contrasting information from what is often reported in the mainstream US media.

This rhetoric labeling unwelcome journalism as “propaganda” hostile to US national security goals also comes at a time of global political turmoil that has seen a shocking number of journalists jailed, intimidated and murdered with impunity simply for doing their jobs.

Reporters Without Borders reported 61 journalists killed last year, with 59 percent dying while covering wars. The same study found media freedom in retreat across the globe, including in the United States, which ranked 49th among the 180 nations examined regarding the environment for press activities, the lowest standing since President Barack Obama took office. The Reporters Without Borders report suggests that the Pentagon’s new manual may be part of a worldwide trend in which governments see shaping the presentation of information as an important national security goal and skeptical journalism as an impediment.

“Many governments used control and manipulation of media coverage as a weapon of war in 2014, ranging from over-coverage to complete news blackout,” the report stated. “It

creates a hostile climate for journalists and has disastrous consequences for media pluralism.”

In the United States, the hostility toward unwanted or unapproved reporting – whether from RT, Al-Jazeera or WikiLeaks – has merged with more classification of information and greater delays in releasing material sought through Freedom of Information channels.

Despite President Obama’s pledge to make his administration one of the most transparent in history, press freedom watchdogs have continually slammed his administration as one of the least transparent and criticized its aggressive prosecution of leakers, including Army Pvt. Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning for releasing evidence of apparent war crimes in the Iraq and Afghan wars. Manning received a 35-year prison sentence and is currently facing possible solitary confinement for alleged prison infractions.

The Obama administration’s obsession with secrecy even extended to the status of the new manual’s views about war reporting. A spokesman for the National Security Council has declined to say whether the White House contributed to or signed off on the manual.

The manual was issued by the office of Stephen W. Preston, general counsel for the Pentagon and former chief attorney for the CIA. After six years overseeing the Obama administration’s legal policy with respect to lethal drone attacks as well as the raid that killed Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and the current war against the Islamic State, Preston resigned from the Pentagon in June following publication of the manual and has not been available for comment.

### **Media pushback**

The manual has even drawn some criticism from the mainstream US media. On Aug. 10, a *New York Times* editorial declared: “Allowing this document to stand as guidance for commanders, government lawyers and officials of other nations would do severe damage to press freedoms.”

The *Times* also dismissed the value of the manual’s disclaimer about not necessarily re-

**The Reporters Without Borders report suggests that the Pentagon’s new manual may be part of a worldwide trend in which governments see shaping the presentation of information as an important national security goal**

**The US military has often taken questionable action against journalists, particularly Arab journalists working for US or third country agencies**

flecting the views of the US government: “That inane disclaimer won’t stop commanders pointing to the manual when they find it convenient to silence the press. The White House should call on Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter to revise this section, which so clearly runs contrary to American law and principles.”

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists in a critique of the manual writes, “By giving approval for the military to detain journalists on vague national security grounds, the manual is sending a disturbing message to dictatorships and democracies alike. The same accusations and threats to national security are routinely used to put journalists behind bars in nations like China, Ethiopia, Vietnam and Russia to name just a few.”

Public attention to the new Pentagon manual came at an awkward time for US government officials. Secretary of State John Kerry was recently in Hanoi lecturing the Vietnamese to let up on oppressed journalists and release bloggers from jail. In Iran, the US government has protested the trial of *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian on spying charges and has marshaled international support behind demands for his release. United Nations human rights advocates called on Tehran to release Rezaian, declaring: “Journalists must be protected, not harassed, detained or prosecuted.”

So, the new “law of war” manual suggests that we are seeing another case of American double standards, lecturing the world about principles that the US government chooses to ignore when its own perceived interests are seen as endangered.

The reality is that the US military has often taken questionable action against journalists, particularly Arab journalists working for US or third country agencies. AP photographer, Bilal Hussein, whose photo of insurgents firing on Marines in Fallujah in 2004 earned him a Pulitzer Prize, was detained by the US Marines and held two years without charges, evidence or explanation.

Al-Jazeera cameraman Sami al-Haj was detained in 2001 while covering a US offensive against the Taliban in Afghanistan. US mili-

tary forces accused the Sudanese cameraman of being a financial courier for armed groups but never produced evidence to support the claims. Al-Haj was held for six years at the Guantanamo Bay prison. Prior to releasing him, according to his lawyer, US military officials tried to compel al-Haj to spy on Al-Jazeera as a condition of his release.

In its 6,000-plus footnotes, the manual ignores these two cases. Instead it suggests its own perspective on how journalists covering conflicts should operate: “To avoid being mistaken for spies, journalists should act openly and with the permission of relevant authorities” – advice that is both impractical and problematic.

For instance, how would the US military respond if “the permission of relevant authorities” came from a battlefield adversary? Would that be taken as prime facie evidence that the reporter was collaborating with the enemy? In any war that I’ve covered, from Vietnam to Iraq, I have never gone looking for “relevant authorities” in the fog of battle, as finding one would be as unlikely as it would be risky. Indeed, the more likely result if such a person was found would be for the reporter to be detained and prevented from doing his or her job rather than receiving some permission slip.

Such naïve advice suggests the editors of this manual have had little experience in combat situations.

### **A false comparison**

When asked to give an example of when a reporter would be an “unprivileged belligerent,” a senior Pentagon official pointed to the assassination of the Afghan rebel military commander Ahmad Shah Massoud in September 2001, but the two assassins were not real journalists; they were simply using that as a cover. I was at Massoud’s headquarters at the time and can confirm that the two assassins were Al Qaeda agents from Algeria posing as television journalists with explosives hidden in their camera. They could just as easily have posed as United Nations envoys or as

mail couriers. They were not journalists.

Significantly, the manual does not list any current or former American war correspondents as consultants. Military legal experts from Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia are listed as having an input, as well as unspecified “distinguished scholars.”

Whatever their vast knowledge, the manual’s author – as well as those scholars and other military legal experts – apparently had little familiarity with, or regard for, the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which is supposed to guarantee freedom of the press.

Andrew Pearson, who was one of my colleagues at ABC News in Vietnam, observed: “When the Pentagon gets squeezed between stupid presidents and truth-telling journalists, the answer isn’t jail for the journalist,” though that seems to be the answer that the new manual favors.

“The Pentagon types don’t learn that much out on the firing range about the Constitution, so somewhere along the way in our complicated ‘democratic system,’ there has to be protection for journalists against a Pentagon that thinks they’re a dictatorship,” Pearson added.

### **A history of distrust**

It may be true that the tension between the military and the press will never cease, because both need each other but cannot grant the other what it really wants. The reporters want absolute freedom to print or film everything on the battlefield, while the military’s mission is to fight and to win.

The generals would prefer the journalists to perform as organs of state propaganda to ensure popular support for the war or to undermine the enemy. But the journalist’s purpose is to find and report the truth to the public, a mission not always compatible with successful warfare, which also relies on secrecy and deception.

As one World War II military censor in Washington described his view of appropriate media relations, “I wouldn’t tell the press anything until the war is over, and then I’d tell them who won.”

The US military’s mistrust of the press goes back even further. As General William Tecumseh Sherman – one of the Civil War’s most aggressive and outspoken commanders – declared: “I hate newspaper men. I regard them as spies, which in truth they are. If I killed them all, there would be news from hell before breakfast.”

So, war correspondents struggle with the constant conflict between the public’s right to know and the military zeal to keep things secret. One side fights for information and the other fights to deny or control it. The US military’s legacy of suspicion and even hostility toward the media has been passed down through generations within military institutions like a family heirloom.

It is unlikely we will ever again find ourselves with the unfettered access to war that we had in Vietnam, my first experience as a war correspondent. At that time, the US government recognized the importance of journalists being allowed to do our jobs at our own risk. We were considered a necessary evil that had to be tolerated.

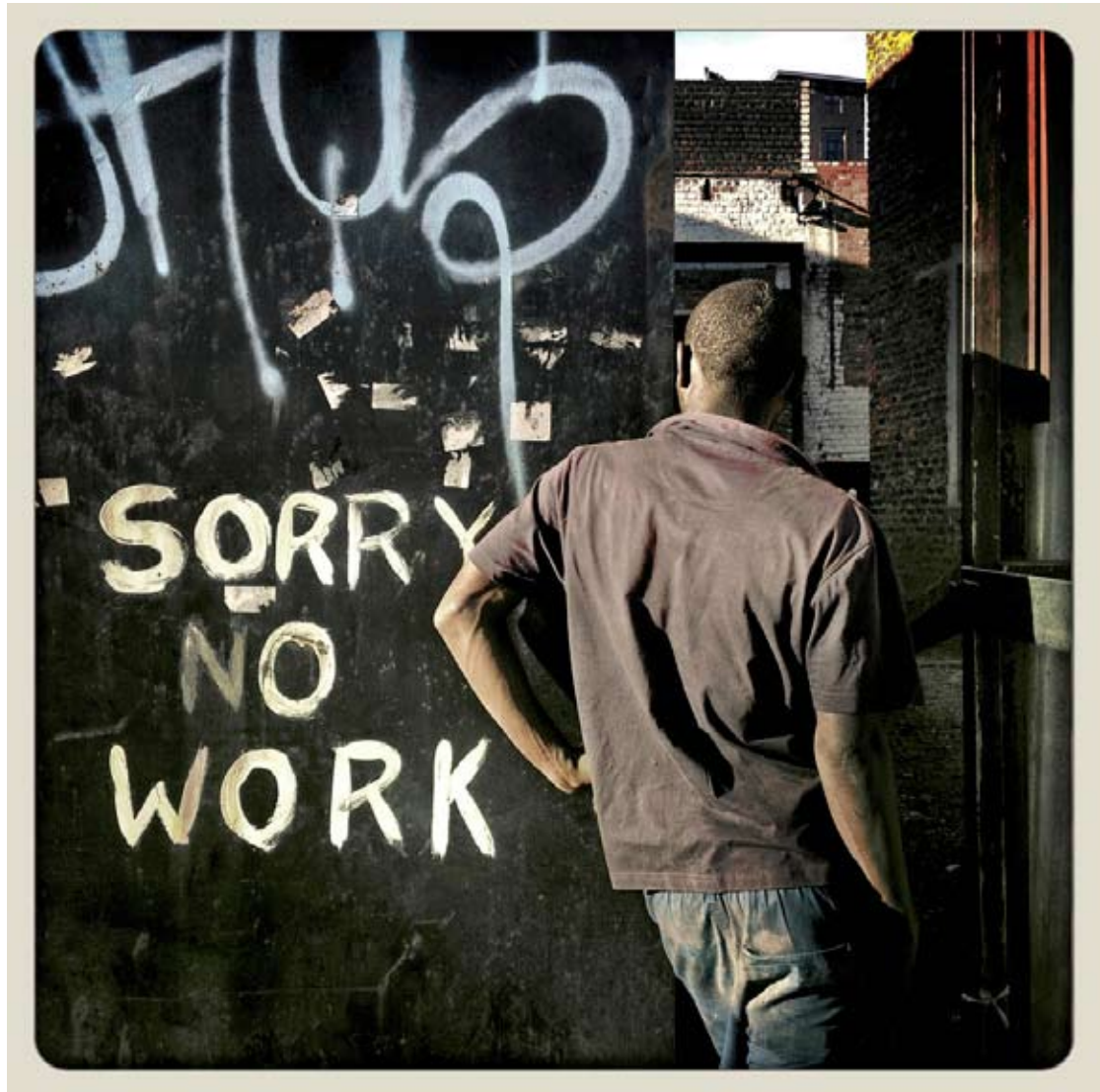
However, the Vietnam lesson for the US military was that images and the written word can inform the public with devastating effect and can lead to demands for accountability for war crimes as well as an erosion of popular support for the war. In other words, a well-informed public in a democracy might decide that the war was a bad idea and that it should be brought to an end short of victory.

The news media should establish a working council of news representatives to meet with government and military officials to negotiate acceptable ground rules for the future. Number one on the agenda should be a rewrite of the Pentagon’s “Law of War.” **CT**

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*Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of a new book, *Inappropriate Conduct, the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.**

**The generals would prefer the journalists to perform as organs of state propaganda to ensure popular support for the war or to undermine the enemy**

Right:  
Simon Nhlapo,  
Newtown,  
Johannesburg



# Images of democracy

The new South Africa, documented by **Dale Yudelman**

**D**ale Yudelman worked as a photographer for Johannesburg's *Star* newspaper until the South African apartheid regime's 1986 State of Emergency made his work subject to political censorship and his life subject to police harassment. These indignities combined to drive him into self-imposed exile, first to London, then to Los Angeles, where

he worked as a freelance photographer, before returning to the newly-democratic South Africa in 1996.

Long a fan of the work of former *Drum* magazine photographer Ernest Cole, whose 1967 book, "House of Bondage", has been acclaimed as possibly the finest documentary exposés of the evils of apartheid, the 57-year-old Yudelman

Left:  
Minstrel  
Carnival  
2012,  
Cape Town



was honoured to win the inaugural award dedicated to the memory of Cole, who was driven into exile in the mid-60s.

The Ernest Cole Award, the most prestigious prize for documentary photography in the country, requires entrants to submit an ongoing body of work of creative and social significance.

Yudelman says his winning entry, titled *Life Under Democracy*, “Opened up an opportunity to explore and question what democracy means to me. It was also in part a dedication to Ernest Cole ... to tell him, if he were alive today, that this is how I’m seeing South Africa after 20 years of freedom”

Part of the prize included the publication of

a 230 - page book, “Life Under Democracy” – a reference to an exhibition of work from Cole’s “House of Bondage, titled “Life Under Apartheid, at Johannesburg’s Apartheid Museum”. The idea behind the book’s more than 300 images, says Yudelman, “was to create an accurate, vivid and balanced documentary of contemporary life in a democratic South Africa by looking at how ordinary citizens experience their social and political circumstances.”

The photographs were taken on an iPhone, which Yudelman says, “is mostly informal and unobtrusive. People seemed to be more relaxed in front of a cellphone rather than a traditional camera.”

– **Tony Sutton**

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## IN THE FRAME

Right:  
Shaheen  
"Toy Boy"  
Manuel and  
Ridewaan  
'Slip Shady'  
Isaacs,  
Salt River,  
Cape Town



Right: Yvonne  
and Ivonilya  
Rakoma,  
Mamelodi,  
Tshwane



Far right:  
Harbour  
security  
guards,  
Hout Bay,  
Cape Town



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**IN THE FRAME**

Left:  
Boy,  
Coronation  
Park squatter  
camp,  
Krugersdorp



Left: Girl,  
Coronation  
Park squatter  
camp,  
Krugersdorp



Far left:  
Nhlakaniphe  
– Afrika  
Tikkun's  
Phutaditjaba  
Community  
Centre,  
Alexandra,  
Johannesburg



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**IN THE FRAME**

**Right:**  
James Smith,  
Cape Town



**Right:**  
Gregory,  
Cape Town



**Far right:**  
Foyer,  
Rand Club,  
Johannesburg





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## IN THE FRAME



Left:  
Juliet Corder  
– Secrecy  
Bill march on  
Parliament,  
Cape Town



Left:  
Woman,  
Gardens,  
Cape Town



Far left:  
Grant  
payment  
centre,  
Hout Bay,  
Cape Town

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## IN THE FRAME

Right:  
Sybil  
Whyt-lyon,  
Melville,  
Johannesburg



Right:  
Moses  
Mogale, jazz  
musician,  
Mamelodi



Far right:  
Kahueka,  
electro-  
mechanical  
student,  
Cape Town



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**IN THE FRAME**

See more of Dale Yudelman's work at <http://daleyudelman.com>



Left:  
Deon  
'Kleinsie'  
Williams,  
car guard,  
Muizenberg,  
Cape Town



Left:  
Church  
service,  
Johannesburg

Far left:  
Beach,  
New Year's  
Day,  
Kalk Bay,  
Cape Town

# What it means to be a socialist

**Chris Hedges** says he is not concerned with what is expedient or what is popular, but what is right

**We will, as Friedrich Engels wrote, make a transition to either socialism or barbarism. If we do not dismantle global capitalism we will descend into the Hobbesian chaos of failed states, mass migrations – which we are already witnessing – and endless war**

*Chris Hedges gave this speech on September 20 at a Santa Ana, Calif., event sponsored by the Green Party of Orange County*

**W**e live in a revolutionary moment. The disastrous economic and political experiment that attempted to organize human behavior around the dictates of the global marketplace has failed. The promised prosperity that was to have raised the living standards of workers through trickle-down economics has been exposed as a lie. A tiny global oligarchy has amassed obscene wealth, while the engine of unfettered corporate capitalism plunders resources, exploits cheap, unorganized labor and creates pliable, corrupt governments that abandon the common good to serve corporate profit. The relentless drive by the fossil fuel industry for profits is destroying the ecosystem, threatening the viability of the human species. And no mechanisms to institute genuine reform or halt the corporate assault are left within the structures of power, which have surrendered to corporate control. The citizen has become irrelevant. He or she can participate in heavily choreographed elections, but the demands of corporations and banks are paramount.

History has amply demonstrated that the seizure of power by a tiny cabal, whether a political party or a clique of oligarchs, leads to despotism. Governments that cater exclu-

sively to a narrow interest group and redirect the machinery of state to furthering the interests of that group are no longer capable of responding rationally in times of crisis. Blindly serving their masters, they acquiesce to the looting of state treasuries to bail out corrupt financial houses and banks while ignoring chronic unemployment and underemployment, along with stagnant or declining wages, crippling debt peonage, a collapsing infrastructure, and the millions left destitute and often homeless by deceptive mortgages and foreclosures.

A bankrupt liberal class, holding up values it does nothing to defend, discredits itself as well as the purported liberal values of a civil democracy as it is swept aside, along with those values. In this moment, a political, economic or natural disaster – in short a crisis – will ignite unrest, lead to instability and see the state carry out draconian forms of repression to maintain “order.” This is what lies ahead.

We will, as Friedrich Engels wrote, make a transition to either socialism or barbarism. If we do not dismantle global capitalism we will descend into the Hobbesian chaos of failed states, mass migrations – which we are already witnessing – and endless war. Populations, especially in the global South, will endure misery and high mortality rates caused by collapsing ecosystems and infrastructures on a scale not seen since perhaps the black

plague. There can be no accommodation with global capitalism. We will overthrow this system or be crushed by it. And at this moment of crisis we need to remind ourselves what being a socialist means and what it does not mean.

First and foremost, all socialists are unequivocal anti-militarists and anti-imperialists. They understand that there is no genuine social, political, economic or cultural reform as long as the militarists and their corporatist allies in the war industry continue to loot and pillage the state budget, leaving the poor to go hungry, workingmen and -women in distress, the infrastructure to collapse and social services to be slashed in the name of austerity. The psychosis of permanent war, which infected the body politic after World War I with the internal and external war on communism, and which today has mutated into the war on terror, is used by the state to strip us of civil liberties, redirect our resources to the war machine and criminalize democratic dissent. We have squandered trillions of dollars and resources in endless and futile wars, from Vietnam to the Middle East, at a time of ecological and fiscal crisis. The folly of endless war is one of the signs of a dying civilization. One F-22 Raptor fighter plane costs \$350 million. We have 187 of them. One Tomahawk cruise missile costs \$1.41 million. We fired 161 of them when we attacked Libya. This missile attack on Libya alone cost us a quarter of a billion dollars. We spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion a year on war, far more than the official 54 percent of discretionary spending, or roughly \$600 billion. If we don't break the back of the war machine, profound change will be impossible.

We have been at war almost continuously since the first Gulf War in 1991, followed by Somalia in 1992, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, Serbia-Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, where we have now been fighting for 14 years, and Iraq in 2003. And we can toss in Yemen, Libya, Pakistan and Syria, along with Israel's proxy war against the Palestinian people.

The human cost has been horrendous.

Over 1 million dead in Iraq. Millions more are displaced or are refugees. Iraq will never be reconstituted as a unified state. And it was our war industry that created the mess. We attacked a country that did not threaten us, and had no intention of threatening its neighbors, and destroyed one of the most modern infrastructures in the Middle East. We brought not only terror and death – including the Shiite death squads we armed and trained – but power outages, food shortages and the collapse of basic services, from garbage collection to sewer and water treatment. We dismantled Iraq's institutions, disbanded its security forces, threw its health service into crisis and engineered massive poverty and unemployment. And out of the chaos rose insurgents, gangsters, kidnapping rings, jihadists and rogue paramilitary groups – including our hired mercenaries, like [the current army of] Iraq. Gary Leupp in an article in *Counterpunch* titled “How George W. Bush Destroyed the Temple of Baal” got it when he wrote:

“Bush destroyed the law and order which had permitted girls to walk to school, heads uncovered, in modern western dress. He destroyed the freedom of physicians and other professionals to go about their work and caused masses of them to exit their country. He destroyed neighborhoods whose residents were forced to flee for their lives. He destroyed the Christian community, which dropped from 1.5 million in 2001 to perhaps 200,000 a decade later. He destroyed the prevalent ideology of secularism and ushered in an era of bitterly contested sectarian rule. He destroyed the right to broadcast rock ‘n roll music, or sell liquor and DVDs.

“He destroyed the stability of Anbar province by sowing the chaos that allowed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to establish – for the first time – an al-Qaeda branch in Iraq.

“He destroyed the stability of Syria when “Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia” (now ISIL) retreated into that neighboring country during the “surge” of 2007. By creating power vacuums and generating new chapters and spin-

**We have squandered trillions of dollars and resources in endless and futile wars, from Vietnam to the Middle East, at a time of ecological and fiscal crisis**

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## SEEKING CHANGE

**There is a reason no establishment politician, including Sanders, dares say a word against the war industry. If you do, you end up like Ralph Nader, tossed into the political wilderness**

offs of al-Qaeda, he destroyed Yazidi communities and their freedom from genocide and slavery. By hatching the forerunner of ISIL, he destroyed the prospects for a peaceful “Arab Spring” in Syria three years after his presidency ended.

“Through his actions he destroyed the border between Syria and Iraq. He destroyed the Tomb of Jonah in Mosul. He destroyed 3,300 year old monuments, the glorious art of the Assyrians, in Nimrud. On August 23 while sitting in his home artist’s studio in Crawford, Texas, he destroyed the 2,000-year-old Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra, Syria.

“The most complete structure in that gorgeous pearl of an ancient preserved city, a mix of Roman, Syrian and Egyptian artistic influences, is now a pile of rubble.”

Foreign battlefields are laboratories for the architects of industrial slaughter. They perfect the tools of control and annihilation on the demonized and the destitute. But these tools eventually make their way back to the heart of empire. As the corporatists and the militarists disembowel the nation, rendering our manufacturing centers boarded-up wastelands and tossing our citizens into poverty and despair, the methods of subjugation familiar to those on the outer reaches migrate back to us – wholesale surveillance, indiscriminate use of lethal force in the streets of our cities against unarmed citizens, a stripping away of our civil liberties, a dysfunctional court system, drones, arbitrary arrest, detention and mass incarceration. The tyranny empire imposes on others, as Thucydides reminded us, it finally imposes on itself. Those who kill in our name abroad soon kill in our name at home. Democracy is snuffed out. As the German socialist Karl Liebknecht said during the First World War: “The main enemy is at home.” We will destroy the engines of endless war and shut down the war profiteers or we will become the next victims; indeed many in our marginal communities already are its victims.

You cannot be a socialist and an imperialist. You cannot, as Bernie Sanders has done, support the Obama administration’s wars in

Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen and be a socialist. You cannot, as Sanders has done, vote for every military appropriations bill, including every bill and resolution that empowers and sanctions Israel to carry out its slow-motion genocide of the Palestinian people, and be a socialist. And you cannot laud, as Sanders has done, military contractors because they bring jobs to your state. Sanders may have the rhetoric of inequality down, but he is a full-fledged member of the Democratic Caucus, which kneels before the war industry and their lobbyists. And no genuine grass-roots movement will ever be born within the bowels of the Democratic Party establishment, which is currently attempting to shut down Sanders to make sure its anointed candidate is the nominee. No elected official dares to challenge any weapons system, no matter how costly or redundant. And Sanders, who votes with the Democrats 98 percent of the time, steers clear of confronting the master of war.

Sanders, of course, like all elected officials, profits from this Faustian pact. The Vermont Democratic Party leadership, in return for his deference, has not supported any candidate to run against Sanders since 1990. Sanders endorses Democratic candidates, no matter how much they push neoliberalism down our throats, including Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. And Sanders, carrying water for the Democrats, is the primary obstacle to the building of a third party in Vermont.

There is a reason no establishment politician, including Sanders, dares say a word against the war industry. If you do, you end up like Ralph Nader, tossed into the political wilderness. Nader was not afraid to speak this truth. And it is in the wilderness, I am afraid, that real socialists must for the moment reside. Socialists understand that if we do not dismantle the war industry, nothing, absolutely nothing, will change; indeed, things will only get worse.

War is a business. Imperial wars seize natural resources on behalf of corporations and ensure the profits of the arms industry. This

is as true in Iraq as it was in our campaigns of genocide against Native Americans. And, as A. Philip Randolph said, it is only when it is impossible to profit from war that wars will be dramatically curtailed, if not stopped. No one sitting in the boardroom of General Dynamics is hoping peace breaks out in the Middle East. No one in the Pentagon, especially the generals who build their careers by fighting and managing wars, prays for a cessation of conflict.

War, wrapped in the cant of nationalism and the euphoria that comes with the giddy celebration of power and violence, is used by ruling elites to thwart and destroy the aspirations of workingmen and -women and distract us from our disempowerment.

“Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. ... And that is war, in a nutshell,” the [five-time] socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs said during World War I. “The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles.”

Debs, who in 1912 received almost a million votes, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for saying this. The judge who sentenced him denounced those “who would strike the sword from the hand of this nation while she is engaged in defending herself against a foreign and brutal power.”

“I have been accused of obstructing the war,” Debs said in court. “I admit it. I abhor war. I would oppose war if I stood alone.”

Debs, who would spend 32 months in prison, until 1921, also delivered to many a socialist credo at his sentencing after being found guilty of violating the Espionage Act:

“Your honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a criminal element, I am of it. While there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”

The capitalist class and its doppelgängers in the military establishment have carried out what John Ralston Saul calls a coup

d'état in slow motion. The elites use war, as they always have, as a safety valve for class conflict. War, as W.E.B. Du Bois said, creates an artificial community of interest between the oligarchs and the poor, diverting the poor from their natural interests. The redirecting of national frustrations and emotions into the struggle against a common enemy, the cant of patriotism, the endemic racism that is the fuel of all ideologies that sustain war, the false bonding that comes with the sense of comradeship, seduces those on the margins of society. They feel in wartime that they belong. They feel they have a place. They are offered the chance to be heroes. And off they march like sheep to the slaughter. By the time they find out, it is too late.

“Modern totalitarianism can integrate the masses so completely into the political structure, through terror and propaganda, that they become the architects of their own enslavement,” wrote Dwight Macdonald. “This does not make slavery less, but on the contrary more – a paradox there is no space to unravel here. Bureaucratic collectivism, not capitalism, is the most dangerous future enemy of socialism.”

“War,” as Randolph Bourne wrote, “is the health of the state.” It allows the state to accrue to itself power and resources that in peacetime a citizenry would never permit. And that is why the war state, like the one we live in, has to make certain that we are always afraid. Constant violence by the war machine, we are assured, will alone make us safe. Any attempt to rein in spending or expanding power will profit the enemy.

It was the militarists and the capitalists that at the end of World War II conspired to roll back the gains made by workingmen and -women under the New Deal. They used the rhetoric of the Cold War to cement into place an economy geared towards total war, even in peacetime. This permitted the arms industry to continue to make weapons, with guaranteed profits from the state, and permitted the generals to continue to preside over their fiefdoms. The incestuous relations between

**No one sitting in the boardroom of General Dynamics is hoping peace breaks out in the Middle East. No one in the Pentagon, especially the generals who build their careers by fighting and managing wars, prays for a cessation of conflict**

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## SEEKING CHANGE

**Once the capitalists and the militarists killed off the radical movements and unions they finished off the dupes who had helped them do it**

the corporatists and the militarists see retired generals and officers offered lucrative jobs in the war industry.

The manufacturing of weapons systems and the waging of war is today the chief activity of the state. It is no longer one among other means of advancing the national interest, as Simone Weil pointed out, but has become the sole national interest.

These corporatists and militarists are the enemy of socialists. They bankrolled and promoted movements in the early 20th century that called for reforms within these structures of capitalism – that spoke in the language of the “politics of productivism,” that eschewed the language of class conflict and talked only about economic growth and a partnership with the capitalist class. The NAACP, for example, was formed to lure African-Americans away from the Communist Party, the only radical organization in the early 20th century that did not discriminate. The AFL-CIO was [later] fed CIA money to help crush and supplant radical unions abroad and at home. The AFL-CIO, like the NAACP, is today a victim of its own corruption and bureaucratic senility. Its bloated leadership pulls down huge salaries as its dwindling rank and file is stripped of benefits and protections. The capitalists no longer need what they once called “responsible” unionism – which meant pliable unionism. And once the capitalists and the militarists killed off the radical movements and unions they finished off the dupes who had helped them do it. And that is why less than 12 percent of our country’s workforce is unionized and why we have such vast income disparities and chronic unemployment and underemployment. Surplus labor, desperate for work and unwilling to challenge the bosses to retain a job, is the bulwark of capitalism.

The radicals, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or Wobblies, founded by Mother Jones and Big Bill Haywood in 1905, were destroyed by the state. Department of Justice agents in 1912 made simultaneous raids on 48 IWW meeting halls across the

country and arrested 165 IWW union leaders. One hundred one went to trial, including Big Bill Haywood, who testified for three days. One of the IWW leaders told the court:

“You ask me why the I.W.W. is not patriotic to the United States. If you were a bum without a blanket; if you had left your wife and kids when you went west for a job, and had never located them since; if your job had never kept you long enough in a place to qualify you to vote; if you slept in a lousy, sour bunkhouse, and ate food just as rotten as they could give you and get by with it; if deputy sheriffs shot your cooking cans full of holes and spilled your grub on the ground; if your wages were lowered on you when the bosses thought they had you down; if there was one law for Ford, Suhr, and Mooney and another for Harry Thaw: if every person who represented law and order and the nation beat you up, railroaded you to jail, and the good Christian people cheered and told them to go to it, how in hell do you expect a man to be patriotic?”

“This war is a business man’s war and we don’t see why we should go out and get shot in order to save the lovely state of affairs that we now enjoy.”

The Wobblies once led strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers and preached an uncompromising doctrine of class warfare. It went the way of the passenger pigeon. The Socialist Party by 1912 had 126,000 members, 1,200 officeholders in 340 municipalities, and 29 English and 22 foreign-language weeklies, along with three English and six foreign-language dailies. It included in its ranks tenant farmers, garment workers, railroad workers, coal miners, hotel and restaurant workers, dock workers and lumberjacks. It too was liquidated by the state. Socialist leaders were jailed or deported. Socialist publications such as *The Masses* and *Appeal to Reason* were banned. The assault, aided later by McCarthyism, has left us without the vocabulary to make sense of our own reality, to describe the class war being waged



against us by our corporate oligarchs. And it has left us without the radical movements that, as Howard Zinn made clear, opened up all the spaces in American democracy.

We will regain this militancy, this uncompromising commitment to socialism, or the system the political philosopher Sheldon Wolin calls “inverted totalitarianism” will establish the most efficient security and surveillance state in human history and a species of neofeudalism. We must stop pouring our energy into mainstream political campaigns. The game is rigged. We will rebuild our radical movements or become hostages to the capitalists and the war industry. Fear is the only language the power elite understands. This is a dark fact of human nature. It is why Richard Nixon was our last liberal president. Nixon was not a liberal [personally]. He was devoid of empathy and lacked a conscience. But he was frightened of movements. You do not make your enemy afraid by selling out. You make your enemy afraid by refusing to submit, by fighting for your vision and by organizing. It is not our job to take power. It is our job to build movements to keep power in check. Without these movements nothing is possible.

“You get freedom by letting your enemy know that you’ll do anything to get your freedom; then you’ll get it,” Malcolm X said. “When you get that kind of attitude, they’ll label you as a ‘crazy Negro,’ or they’ll call you a ‘crazy nigger’ – they don’t say Negro. Or they’ll call you an extremist or a subversive, or seditious, or a red, or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough, and get enough people to be like you, you’ll get your freedom. ... So don’t you run around here trying to make friends with somebody who’s depriving you of your rights. They’re not your friends, no, they’re your enemies. Treat them like that and fight them, and you’ll get your freedom; and after you get your freedom, your enemy will respect you. And I say that with no hate. I don’t have hate in me. I have no hate at all. I don’t have any hate. I’ve got some sense. I’m not going to let anybody who hates me tell me to love him.”

The New Deal – which as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a charter member of the oligarchic class, said – saved capitalism, was put in place because socialists were strong and a serious threat. The oligarchs understood that with the breakdown of capitalism – something I expect we will again witness in our lifetimes – there was a real possibility of a socialist revolution. They were terrified they would lose their wealth and power. Roosevelt, writing to a friend in 1930, said there was “no question in my mind that it is time for the country to become fairly radical for at least one generation. History shows that where this occurs occasionally, nations are saved from revolution.”

In other words, Roosevelt went to his fellow oligarchs and said hand over some of your money or you will lose all your money in a revolution. And his fellow capitalists complied. And that is how the government created 15 million jobs, Social Security, unemployment benefits and public works projects. The capitalists did not do this because the suffering of the masses moved them. They did this because they were scared. And they were scared of radicals and socialists.

George Bernard Shaw got it right in his play “Major Barbara.” The greatest crime is poverty. It is the crime every socialist is dedicated to eradicating. As Shaw wrote:

“All the other crimes are virtues beside it; all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities, spreads horrible pestilences, strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then. What do they matter? They are only the accidents and illnesses of life; there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill-fed, ill-clothed people. They poison us morally and physically; they kill the happiness of society; they force us to do away with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us

**The capitalists did not create 15 million jobs, Social Security, unemployment benefits and public works projects because the suffering of the masses moved them. They did this because they were scared. And they were scared of radicals and socialists**

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## SEEKING CHANGE

**If you will not call for an arms embargo along with the boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, you are not a socialist**

and drag us down into their abyss. Only fools fear crime; we all fear poverty.”

We must stop looking for our salvation in strong leaders. Strong people, as Ella Baker said, do not need strong leaders. Politicians, even good politicians, play the game of compromise and are too often seduced by the privileges of power. Sanders, from all I can tell, began his political life as a socialist in the 1960s when this was hardly a bold political statement, but quickly figured out he was not going to have a seat at the table if he remained one. He wants his seniority in the Senate. He wants his committee chairmanships. He wants his ability to retain his seat unchallenged. This was no doubt politically astute. But in this process he sold us out.

Jeremy Corbyn, the new head of the British Labour Party, offers another example. He spent three decades marginalized even within his own party because he held fast to the central tenets of socialism. And as the lie of neoliberalism, championed by the two ruling parties in Britain, became apparent, people knew whom they could trust. Corbyn never made an astute career move in his life. And that is why the establishment is so frightened of him.

They know they cannot buy Corbyn off, any more than you could buy off Mother Jones or Big Bill Haywood. Integrity and courage are powerful weapons. We have to learn how to use them. We have to stand up for what we believe in. And we have to accept the risks and even the ridicule that comes with this stance. We will not prevail any other way.

As a socialist I am not concerned with what is expedient or what is popular. I am concerned with what is right. I am concerned with holding fast to the core ideals of socialism, if for no other reason than keeping this option alive for future generations. And these ideals are the only ones that make possible a better world.

If you will not call for an arms embargo along with the boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, you are not a socialist. If you will not demand we dismantle our mili-

tary establishment, which is managing the government’s wholesale surveillance of every citizen and storing all our personal information in perpetuity in government computer banks, and if you will not abolish the for-profit arms industry, you are not a socialist. If you will not call for the prosecution of those leaders, including George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who engage in aggressive acts of pre-emptive war, which under post-Nuremberg laws is a criminal act, you are not a socialist. If you will not stand with the oppressed across the globe you are not a socialist. Socialists do not pick and choose whom among the oppressed it is convenient to support. Socialists understand that you stand with all the oppressed or none of the oppressed, that this is a global fight for life against global corporate tyranny. We will win only when we stand together, when we see the struggle of workingmen in Greece, Spain and Egypt as our own struggle.

If you will not call for full employment and unionized workplaces you are not a socialist. If you will not call for inexpensive mass transit, especially in impoverished communities, you are not a socialist. If you will not call for universal, single-payer health care and a banning of for-profit health care corporations you are not a socialist. If you will not raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour you are not a socialist. If you are not willing to provide a weekly income of \$600 to the unemployed, the disabled, stay-at-home parents, the elderly and those unable to work you are not a socialist. If you will not repeal anti-union laws, like the Taft-Hartley Act, and trade agreements from NAFTA to the TPP and CAFTA, you are not a socialist. If you will not guarantee all Americans a pension in old age you are not a socialist. If you will not support two years of paid maternity leave, as well as shorter workweeks with no loss in pay and benefits, you are not a socialist. If you will not repeal the Patriot Act and Section 1021 of the National Defense Authorization Act as well as halt government spying on citizens, along with mass incarceration, you are not a socialist. If you

will not put into place laws that prohibit all forms of male violence against women and criminalize the trafficking and pimping out of prostituted girls and women, while not criminalizing the exploited girls and women, you are not a socialist. If you do not support a woman's right to control her own body you are not a socialist. If you do not support full equality for our GBLT community you are not a socialist. If you will not declare global warming a national and global emergency and divert our energy and resources to saving the planet through public investment in renewable energy and an end to our reliance on fossil fuels you are not a socialist. If you will not nationalize public utilities, including the railroads, energy companies and banks, you are not a socialist. If you will not support government funding for the arts and public broadcasting to create places where creativity, self-expression and voices of dissent can be heard and seen you are not a socialist. If you will not terminate our nuclear weapons programs and build a nuclear-free world you are not a socialist. If you will not demilitarize our police, meaning that police no longer carry weapons when they patrol our streets but rely on specialized armed units that have to be authorized case-by-case to use lethal force, you are not a socialist. If you will not support government training and rehabilitation programs for the poor and those in our prisons, along with the abolition of the death penalty, you are not a socialist. If you will not grant full citizenship to undocumented workers you are not a socialist. If you do not declare a moratorium on foreclosures and bank repossessions you are not a socialist. If you will not provide free education from day care to university, and forgive all student debt, you are not a socialist. And if you will not provide free, state-run mental health care, especially for those now caged in our prisons, you are not a socialist. If you will not dismantle our empire and bring our soldiers and Marines home you are not a socialist.

Socialists do not sacrifice the weak and the vulnerable, especially children, on the altars

of profit. And the measure of a successful society for a socialist is not the GDP or the highs of the stock market but the right of everyone, especially children, never go to bed hungry, to live in safety and security, to be nurtured and educated, and to grow up fulfill his or her potential. Work is not only about a wage, it is about dignity and a sense of self-worth.

I am not naive about the forces arrayed against us. I understand the difficulty of our struggle. But we will never succeed if we attempt to accommodate the current structures of power. Our strength lies in our steadfastness and our integrity. It lies in our ability to hold fast to our ideals, as well as our willingness to sacrifice for those ideals. We must refuse to cooperate. We must march to the beat of a different drum. We must rebel. And we must grasp that rebellion is not carried out finally for what it achieves, but for whom it allows us to become. Rebellion sustains in an age of darkness hope and the capacity for love. Rebellion must become our vocation.

"You do not become a 'dissident' just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career," Vaclav Havel said when he battled the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. "You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society. ... The dissident does not operate in the realm of genuine power at all. He is not seeking power. He has no desire for office and does not gather votes. He does not attempt to charm the public. He offers nothing and promises nothing. He can offer, if anything, only his own skin – and he offers it solely because he has no other way of affirming the truth he stands for. His actions simply articulate his dignity as a citizen, regardless of the cost."

These neoliberal forces are rapidly destroying the earth. Polar ice caps and glaciers are melting. Temperatures and sea levels are rising. Species are going extinct. Floods, monster

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## SEEKING CHANGE

**In the end, I do not fight fascists because I will win. I fight fascists because they are fascists**

hurricanes, mega-droughts and wildfires have begun to eat away at the planet. The great mass migrations predicted by climate scientists have begun. And even if we stopped all carbon emissions today we would still endure the effects of catastrophic climate change. Out of the disintegrating order comes the nihilistic violence that always characterizes societies that fall apart – mass shootings at home and religious persecution, beheadings and executions by individuals that neoliberalism and globalism have demonized, attacked and discarded as human refuse.

I cannot promise you we will win. I cannot promise you we will even survive as a species. But I can promise you that an open and sustained defiance of global capitalism and the merchants of death, along with the building

of a socialist movement, is our only hope. I am a parent, as are many of you. We have betrayed our children. We have squandered their future. And if we rise up, even if we fail, future generations, and especially those who are most precious to us, will be able to say we tried, that we stood up and fought for life. The call to resistance, which will require civil disobedience and jail time, is finally a call to the moral life. Resistance is not about what we achieve, but about what it allows us to become. In the end, I do not fight fascists because I will win. I fight fascists because they are fascists. **CT**

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

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# Smoke and mirrors

Pollution, as scandals on both sides of the Atlantic show, is a physical manifestation of corruption, writes **George Monbiot**

In London, the latest figures suggest, it now kills more people than smoking. Worldwide, a new study estimates, it causes more deaths than malaria and HIV-Aids together. I'm talking about the neglected health crisis of this age, that we seldom discuss or even acknowledge. Air pollution.

Heart attacks, strokes, asthma, lung and bladder cancers, low birth weight, low verbal IQ, poor memory and attention among children, faster cognitive decline in older people and – recent studies suggest – a link with the earlier onset of dementia: all these are among the impacts of a problem that, many still believe, we solved decades ago. The smokestacks may have moved to China, but other sources, whose fumes are less visible, have taken their place. Among the worst are diesel engines, sold, even today, as the eco-friendly option, on the grounds that their greenhouse gas emissions tend to be lower than those of petrol engines. You begin to wonder whether any such claims can still be trusted.

Volkswagen's rigging of its pollution tests is an assault on our lungs, our hearts, our brains. It is a classic example of externalisation: the dumping of costs that businesses should carry onto other people. The air that

should have been filtered by its engines is filtered by our lungs instead. We have become the scrubbing devices it failed to install.

Who knows how many people have paid for this crime already, with their health or with their lives? In the USA, 200,000 deaths a year are attributed to air pollution. For how many of those might Volkswagen be responsible? Where else was the fraud perpetrated? Of what proportion of our health budgets has this company robbed us?

The fraud involves the detection of nitrous oxides (NOx), of which diesel engines are the major source in many places. This month, for the first time in our history, the UK government estimated the impact of NOx emissions on public health, and discovered that they are likely almost to double the number of deaths from air pollution, adding 23,000 to the 29,000 attributed to particulates (tiny particles of soot).

The government released this discovery, alongside its useless proposals for dealing with the problem, on Saturday 12 September, a few minutes before Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader was announced. How many government press releases are published on a Saturday? How many are

**Volkswagen's rigging of its pollution tests is a classic example of externalisation: the dumping of costs that businesses should carry onto other people**



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## ECONOMIC REALITY

**Paradoxically, the Volkswagen scandal may succeed where all else has failed, by obliging the government to take the only action that will make a difference: legislating for a great reduction in the use of diesel engines**

published on a Saturday during an event on which everyone is focused? In other words, as a Labour press officer once notoriously advised, this was “a good day to bury bad news”. Not only was the number of deaths buried by this means, but so was the government’s consultation on its feeble plans for reducing this pollution: a consultation to which it evidently wanted as few respondents as possible. Liz Truss, the environment secretary, has some explaining to do.

She has her reasons for keeping us in the dark. In April, the Supreme Court ruled that the UK is in breach of the European air quality directive, and insisted that the government draw up a plan for compliance by the end of this year. Instead, Truss produced a plan to shed responsibility. Local authorities, her consultation suggests, should create clean air zones in at least eight cities, in which diesel engines are restricted or banned. But she has given them neither new money nor new powers. Nor has she offered an explanation of how this non-plan is going to address the issue in the rest of the country, as the ruling demands.

Already, the UK has missed the European deadline by six years. Under Truss’s proposals, some places are likely still to be in breach by 2025: 16 years after the original deadline. I urge you to respond to the consultation she wanted you to miss, which closes on November 6.

The only concrete plan the government has produced so far is to intensify the problem, through a new programme of airport expansion. This means more nitrous oxides, more particulates, more greenhouse gas emissions.

Paradoxically, the Volkswagen scandal may succeed where all else has failed, by obliging the government to take the only action that will make a difference: legislating for a great reduction in the use of diesel engines. By the time this article is published, we might know whether the company’s scam has been perpetrated in Europe as well as North America: new revelations

are dripping by the hour. But whether or not this particular deception was deployed here, plenty of others have been.

Last week the Guardian reported that nine out of ten new diesel cars break European limits on nitrous oxides – not by a little but by an average of sevenfold. Every manufacturer whose emissions were tested had cars in breach of the legal limit. They used a number of tricks to hotwire the tests: “stripping components from the car to reduce weight, using special lubricants, over-inflating tyres and using super-smooth test tracks.” In other words, the emissions scandal is not confined to Volkswagen, not confined to a single algorithm and not confined to North America: it looks, in all its clever variants, like a compound global swindle.

There are echoes here of the ploys used by the tobacco industry: grand deceptions smuggled past the public with the help of sophisticated marketing. Volkswagen sites advertising the virtues of “clean diesel” have been dropping offline all day. In 2009, the year in which its scam began, the TDI engine at the centre of the scandal won the Volkswagen Jetta 2.0 the green car of the year award. In 2010, it did the same for the Audi A3.

There’s plenty that’s wrong with corporate regulation in the United States, but at least the fines, when they occur, are big enough to make a corporation pause, and there’s a possibility of guilty executives ending up in prison. Here, where corruption, like pollution, is both omnipresent and invisible, major corporations can commit almost any white-collar crime and get away with it. Schemes of the kind that have scandalised America are, in this country, both commonplace and unremarked. How can such governments be trusted to defend our health?

**CT**

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*George Monbiot’s book “Feral” was recently released in paperback format. This article was originally published in the Guardian newspaper*

# Warmongers and warriors

Listen to those who know how to stop war before it begins, says **Stacey Warde**

I've spent most of my adult life studying the ways of a warrior and unlearning the ways of war. I grew up during the Vietnam war in the midst of air fighter squadrons, the roar of jets blasting and taking off from El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, and the whoop-whoop of Chinook helicopters from another base closer to home, all done in readiness for war.

My formative years were steeped in war talk. I heard the nightly body counts from Walter Cronkite and wondered why that was so important. I learned that the "good" guys don't always win, that not everyone likes war.

Countless Marines, sailors, and soldiers from all over the country patronized local bars and liquor stores, returning to their quarters drunk and happy. They looked strong and tough, if not a little weary.

They were boastful and rowdy and rash, beligerent and angry. More than once as a teenage boy I had to fast-talk my way out of a fight with one who always wanted me to know for some reason that Marines will kick your ass.

It wasn't until much later that I learned the difference between a tough guy, or even a soldier or a Marine, and a genuine warrior.

By warrior, taken mostly from the Japanese samurai tradition, I mean one who has mastered himself. He has honed himself like his sword – sharp, swift, capable of delivering blows. His spirit is strong and generous. He rises above and prevents conflict. He doesn't oppress others. He is kind and quick and steady.

He is fierce and formidable.

My understanding of the best warrior is the one who stops conflict before it begins. He has the skills, training and heart to care enough to confront without rancor or bellicosity or violence. That way, few people get hurt and precious resources do not get squandered or destroyed or taken.

I began my fascination with war, as most American boys do, growing up with war. I had barely started grade school in 1965 when a family friend shipped overseas to Vietnam, a jungle dangerous and dark, full of mud and men in black pajamas who wanted to kill you. He showed me black-and-white polaroids of him and his buddies camped out in the middle of the jungle, their army issue socks and skivvies hanging on a clothesline behind them. They stood together, arms around shoulders, cigarettes hanging from their mouths, crooked smiles. I stared at the photo, studying the detail of plants behind them, which I'd never seen before, and the spooky darkness between their massive leaves.

"Did you kill anyone?" I asked him earnestly, wondering what lay beyond the jungle darkness.

He took the polaroid from my hand, gave me a squinty look. "We don't like to talk about that, son."

A boy in this country discovers quickly that he'd better learn how to fight because, one way or another, there's a bully or a commie or a

**He showed me black-and-white polaroids of him and his buddies camped out in the middle of the jungle, their army issue socks and skivvies hanging on a clothesline behind them**

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## LESSON LEARNED

**Joining the Army at 17 made sense because, like so many other young men, I had nothing else going for me, and I could reform myself, study a craft and improve my limited opportunities**

terrorist who's coming after you and you're going to have to show him you're not afraid, you won't back down, and you'll do what it takes to knock the bejesus out of him. You have to take a stand, or find someone who will take it for you.

I scrapped with most of the boys I grew up with. We argued, pushed, shoved and sometimes fought. As I grew older, the gaming and roughhousing got more risky, bloody and brawling, so I decided to pursue wrestling, organized and competitive, and learned quickly, as dad liked to say, "There's always going to be someone who's better than you, son."

Still, it was as important as ever to develop a killer instinct, to go after blood if necessary, to make it on the mat against other wrestlers, and eventually to make it in the world. More than a killer's instinct, I learned how to endure, how to give and take a beating, to experience pain. This has always made me think twice about getting into a fight, unlike many of our leaders. My interest in the combat arts grew as much from curiosity as it did from environment, from growing up in the U.S., where militarism and warcraft permeate nearly every aspect of our culture. I wanted to know it as well as anyone else. I didn't want to just play but be a soldier, and I was encouraged by friends and family to do it.

Joining the Army at 17 made sense because, like so many other young men, I had nothing else going for me, and I could reform myself, study a craft and improve my limited opportunities. It became a rite of passage, where boys become men who learn the art of warfare.

In 1976, the Soviet "threat" kept spreading across the globe and I signed for a three-year stint as an Army Ranger to contain it; we were a light infantry strike unit whose mission was to destroy enemy communications and supply lines. We trained for terrorism and kidnappings, and conducted rescue operations in the desert. We were given plenty of opportunities for honing our killing capabilities.

I took a course in explosives from Sgt. "Boom Boom" Mattoon, Ranger demo expert, and an advisor in the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day

War, to broaden my kill potential.

"I got da record for blowing up da most churches in Vietnam in one day," he boasted. "So listen up, and listen good!" He demoed the explosive magic of C4, a putty-like substance kids would love. Roll it up in a little ball, or light it with a match and cook your meals and it won't explode, but stick a blasting cap in a brick of it and you can take out a church.

"I love war, let's kill somebody!" a newbie to the unit said after "Boom Boom" detonated a charge. You could always count on at least one person, usually someone who'd never seen combat, someone who didn't really know what they were talking about, to make these comments. They were usually the first to wash out of the Ranger unit.

Even my father, as I was preparing at 17 to go into active military service two days after my 18th birthday, advised me: "Son, you either kill or be killed."

Not many days later at a seedy hotel in Los Angeles, dizzy from the realization that in the morning I'd get on a bus to the airport with dozens of other young recruits and fly to New Jersey for basic training, I found a pay phone on the street and in tears pleaded with my mother, "I don't want to go!"

"It's too late now, son. You made your decision."

The military did not train me to be a warrior. I learned that much later. I learned instead how to be a tactician, how to plan an attack and kill. It takes so much more to be a warrior, to be a voice of reason in the heat of combat, to see the futility and stupidity and waste of war, to be diplomatic and prevent war from happening in the first place.

Unfortunately, we don't have that in this country. Rather, we have warmongers, not warriors, who love to talk about killing and war. They talk a big talk, men of dubious reason, lacking humility, pounding the war drums, who have no experience as warriors, and lead others into hell. Don't listen to them. Listen to the ones who have mastered themselves, the true warriors, who know how to stop war before it starts.

**CT**

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**Stacey Warde** is publisher of *The Rogue Voice* – <http://roguevoice.com>



# They live. We sleep

Despite what they may believe, Americans are living in a dictatorship disguised as a democracy, writes **John W. Whitehead**

*“You see them on the street. You watch them on TV. You might even vote for one this fall. You think they’re people just like you. You’re wrong. Dead wrong.” – They Live*

**W**e’re living in two worlds, you and I. There’s the world we see (or are made to see) and then there’s the one we sense (and occasionally catch a glimpse of), the latter of which is a far cry from the propaganda-driven reality manufactured by the government and its corporate sponsors, including the media.

Indeed, what most Americans perceive as life in America – privileged, progressive and free – is a far cry from reality, where economic inequality is growing, real agendas and real power are buried beneath layers of Orwellian doublespeak and corporate obfuscation, and “freedom,” such that it is, is meted out in small, legalistic doses by militarized police armed to the teeth.

All is not as it seems.

This is the premise of John Carpenter’s film “They Live” (1988), in which two migrant workers discover that the world’s population is actually being controlled and exploited by aliens working in partnership with an oligarchic elite. All the while, the populace – blissfully unaware of the real agenda at work in their lives – has been lulled into complacency, indoctrinated into

compliance, bombarded with media distractions, and hypnotized by subliminal messages beamed out of television and various electronic devices, billboards and the like.

It is only when homeless drifter John Nada (played to the hilt by the late Roddy Piper) discovers a pair of doctored sunglasses – Hoffman lenses – that Nada sees what lies beneath the elite’s fabricated reality: control and bondage.

When viewed through the lens of truth, the elite, who appear human until stripped of their disguises, are shown to be monsters who have enslaved the citizenry in order to prey on them. Likewise, billboards blare out hidden, authoritative messages: a bikini-clad woman in one ad is actually ordering viewers to “MARRY AND REPRODUCE.” Magazine racks scream “CONSUME” and “OBEY.” A wad of dollar bills in a vendor’s hand proclaims, “THIS IS YOUR GOD.”

When viewed through Nada’s Hoffman lenses, some of the other hidden messages being drummed into the people’s subconscious include: NO INDEPENDENT THOUGHT, CONFORM, SUBMIT, STAY ASLEEP, BUY, WATCH TV, NO IMAGINATION, and DO NOT QUESTION AUTHORITY.

This indoctrination campaign engineered by the elite in “They Live” is painfully familiar to anyone who has studied the decline of American culture. A citizenry that does not

**When viewed through the lens of truth, the elite, who appear human until stripped of their disguises, are shown to be monsters who have enslaved the citizenry in order to prey on them**

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## TWO WORLDS

**Tune out the government's attempts to distract, divert and befuddle us and tune into what's really going on in this country, and you'll run headlong into an unmistakable, unpalatable truth**

think for themselves, obeys without question, is submissive, does not challenge authority, does not think outside the box, and is content to sit back and be entertained is a citizenry that can be easily controlled.

In this way, the subtle message of "They Live" provides an apt analogy of our own distorted vision of life in the American police state, what philosopher Slavoj Žižek refers to as dictatorship in democracy, "the invisible order which sustains your apparent freedom."

We're being fed a series of carefully contrived fictions that bear no resemblance to reality. The powers-that-be want us to feel threatened by forces beyond our control (terrorists, shooters, bombers). They want us afraid and dependent on the government and its militarized armies for our safety and well-being. They want us distrustful of each other, divided by our prejudices, and at each other's throats. Most of all, they want us to continue to march in lockstep with their dictates.

Tune out the government's attempts to distract, divert and befuddle us and tune into what's really going on in this country, and you'll run headlong into an unmistakable, unpalatable truth: the moneyed elite who rule us view us as expendable resources to be used, abused and discarded.

In fact, a 2014 study conducted by Princeton and Northwestern University concluded that the US government does not represent the majority of American citizens. Instead, the study found that the government is ruled by the rich and powerful, or the so-called "economic elite." Moreover, the researchers concluded that policies enacted by this governmental elite nearly always favor special interests and lobbying groups.

In other words, we are being ruled by an oligarchy disguised as a democracy, and arguably on our way towards fascism – a form of government where private corporate interests rule, money calls the shots, and the people are seen as mere subjects to be controlled.

Consider this: it is estimated that the 2016 presidential election could cost as much as \$5 billion, more than double what was spent getting Obama re-elected in 2012.

Not only do you have to be rich – or beholden to the rich – to get elected these days, but getting elected is also a surefire way to get rich. As CBS News reports, "Once in office, members of Congress enjoy access to connections and information they can use to increase their wealth, in ways that are unparalleled in the private sector. And once politicians leave office, their connections allow them to profit even further."

In denouncing this blatant corruption of America's political system, former president Jimmy Carter blasted the process of getting elected – to the White House, governor's mansion, Congress or state legislatures – as "unlimited political bribery... a subversion of our political system as a payoff to major contributors, who want and expect, and sometimes get, favors for themselves after the election is over."

Rest assured that when and if fascism finally takes hold in America, the basic forms of government will remain. As I point out in my book "Battlefield America: The War on the American People", fascism will appear to be friendly. The legislators will be in session. There will be elections, and the news media will continue to cover the entertainment and political trivia. Consent of the governed, however, will no longer apply. Actual control will have finally passed to the oligarchic elite controlling the government behind the scenes.

By creating the illusion that it preserves democratic traditions, fascism creeps slowly until it consumes the political system. And in times of "crisis," expediency is upheld as the central principle – that is, in order to keep us safe and secure, the government must militarize the police, strip us of basic constitutional rights, criminalize virtually every form of behavior, and build enough private prisons to house all of us nonviolent criminals.

Clearly, we are now ruled by an oligarchic elite of governmental and corporate interests. We have moved into “corporatism” (favored by Benito Mussolini), which is a halfway point on the road to full-blown fascism.

Vast sectors of the economy, government and politics are managed by private business concerns, otherwise referred to as “privatization” by various government politicians. Just study modern government policies. “Every industry is regulated. Every profession is classified and organized,” writes economic analyst Jeffrey Tucker. “Every good or service is taxed. Endless debt accumulation is preserved. Immense doesn’t begin to describe the bureaucracy. Military preparedness never stops, and war with some evil foreign foe, remains a daily prospect.”

In other words, the government in America today does whatever it wants.

Corporatism is where the few moneyed interests – not elected by the citizenry – rule over the many. In this way, it is not a democracy or a republican form of government, which is what the American government was established to be. It is a top-down form of government and one which has a terrifying history typified by the developments that occurred in totalitarian regimes of the past: police states where everyone is watched and spied on, rounded up for minor infractions by government agents, placed under police control, and placed in detention (a.k.a. concentration) camps.

For the final hammer of fascism to fall, it will require the most crucial ingredient: the majority of the people will have to agree that it’s not only expedient but necessary. But why would a people agree to such an oppressive regime? The answer is the same in every age: fear.

Fear makes people stupid.

Fear is the method most often used by politicians to increase the power of government. And, as most social commentators recognize, an atmosphere of fear permeates

modern America: fear of terrorism, fear of the police, fear of our neighbors and so on.

The propaganda of fear has been used quite effectively by those who want to gain control, and it is working on the American populace.

Despite the fact that we are 17,600 times more likely to die from heart disease than from a terrorist attack; 11,000 times more likely to die from an airplane accident than from a terrorist plot involving an airplane; 1,048 times more likely to die from a car accident than a terrorist attack, and 8 times more likely to be killed by a police officer than by a terrorist, we have handed over control of our lives to government officials who treat us as a means to an end – the source of money and power.

We have allowed ourselves to become fearful, controlled, pacified zombies.

In this regard, we’re not so different from the oppressed citizens in “They Live.” Most everyone keeps their heads down these days while staring zombie-like into an electronic screen, even when they’re crossing the street. Families sit in restaurants with their heads down, separated by their screen devices and unaware of what’s going on around them. Young people especially seem dominated by the devices they hold in their hands, oblivious to the fact that they can simply push a button, turn the thing off and walk away.

Indeed, there is no larger group activity than that connected with those who watch screens – that is, television, lap tops, personal computers, cell phones and so on. In fact, a Nielsen study reports that American screen viewing is at an all-time high. For example, the average American watches approximately 151 hours of television per month.

The question, of course, is what effect does such screen consumption have on one’s mind?

Psychologically it is similar to drug addiction. Researchers found that “almost immediately after turning on the TV, subjects

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## TWO WORLDS

**Oblivious to what lies ahead, we've been manipulated into believing that if we continue to consume, obey, and have faith, things will work out**

reported feeling more relaxed, and because this occurs so quickly and the tension returns so rapidly after the TV is turned off, people are conditioned to associate TV viewing with a lack of tension." Research also shows that regardless of the programming, viewers' brain waves slow down, thus transforming them into a more passive, nonresistant state.

Historically, television has been used by those in authority to quiet discontent and pacify disruptive people. "Faced with severe overcrowding and limited budgets for rehabilitation and counseling, more and more prison officials are using TV to keep inmates quiet," according to *Newsweek*.

Given that the majority of what Americans watch on television is provided through channels controlled by six mega corporations, what we watch is now controlled by a corporate elite and, if that elite needs to foster a particular viewpoint or pacify its viewers, it can do so on a large scale.

If we're watching, we're not doing.

The powers-that-be understand this. As television journalist Edward R. Murrow warned in a 1958 speech:

"We are currently wealthy, fat, comfortable and complacent. We have currently a built-in allergy to unpleasant or disturbing information. Our mass media reflect this. But unless we get up off our fat surpluses and recognize that television in the main is being used to distract, delude, amuse, and insulate us, then television and those who finance it, those who look at it, and those who work at it, may see a totally different

picture too late."

This brings me back to "They Live", in which the real zombies are not the aliens calling the shots but the populace who are content to remain controlled.

When all is said and done, the world of "They Live" is not so different from our own. As one of the characters points out, "The poor and the underclass are growing. Racial justice and human rights are nonexistent. They have created a repressive society and we are their unwitting accomplices. Their intention to rule rests with the annihilation of consciousness. We have been lulled into a trance. They have made us indifferent to ourselves, to others. We are focused only on our own gain."

We, too, are focused only on our own pleasures, prejudices and gains. Our poor and underclasses are also growing. Racial injustice is growing. Human rights is nearly nonexistent. We too have been lulled into a trance, indifferent to others.

Oblivious to what lies ahead, we've been manipulated into believing that if we continue to consume, obey, and have faith, things will work out. But that's never been true of emerging regimes. And by the time we feel the hammer coming down upon us, it will be too late. **CT**

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*John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and author. He is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest book "Battlefield America: The War on the American People" is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)*

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# With candidates like these . . . !

**Lawrence Houghteling** sizes up the Republican candidates

Scott Walker's abrupt and embarrassing departure from the Republican presidential field should be, above all, a wake-up call to America: Hey, folks, we seem to be doing this all wrong, this picking a president business. It turned out Gov. Walker was a good deal less able a politician – and a far worse candidate – than the political smart-guy class had told us. His most impressive feat had unquestionably been that soon after his first election as governor, in 2010, he pushed through the Wisconsin legislature a budget that made public-sector unions all-but illegal – though he had never mentioned such a goal during the election – and then survived a hard-fought campaign to recall him as governor. He won his three campaigns for governor (in four years) with 52-53 per cent of the votes. In the recall campaign and in the 2014 re-election campaign, with unfavorable ratings above 50 per cent, he was forced to rely to an extraordinary extent on out-of-state billionaire money, which apparently succeeded in holding back the get-rid-of-Walker tide in both elections.

Walker had been counting on some of the same donors – he was famously the favored candidate of David Koch, who applauded Walker's "right-to-work" (i.e., anti-union) goals – to boost him to the presidency. But his obvious lameness as a candidate – above all, his inability to look smart in the normal give-and-take – doomed him. The biggest single stated reason for his dropping out, though, was that his

campaign was running out of money. Strangely, his non-campaign PAC still has a reported \$20 million for him to play with as he tries to turn himself into an anti-Trump kingmaker.

Walker's departure so soon after that of Rick Perry (who should have known better than to try again after falling on his face so memorably in 2012) should give the Republicans pause. It's increasingly apparent they have no candidate who can reach out to the various wings of the party as well as the non-affiliated voters who are sometimes mistakenly called "moderates."

Let's line up the remainder of the major GOP presidential pretenders and examine them.

- **Bobby Jindal** has been a rather unsuccessful, not deeply respected governor of Louisiana. He has an interesting life-story, but maybe he should write a book instead of running for president.

- **Lindsay Graham** is a U.S. Senator from South Carolina about whom the most interesting fact is that he is liked and re-elected in the Palmetto State despite the fact that everyone assumes he is gay. He is extremely hawkish, and seems determined to be the most pro-war candidate in any discussion.

- **George Pataki** was elected and twice re-elected governor of New York. He was governor at the time of the World Trade Center disaster in 2001. He claimed to be "a leader," but no one except members of his family could ever remember how he "led." Why he is running for president in 2015 remains a mystery.

**Walker's obvious lameness as a candidate – above all, his inability to look smart in the normal give-and-take – doomed him**

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## WHAT A CHOICE!

**Carly Fiorina's running as the great CEO who can get things done. But in less than six years at HP she received compensation worth well over \$100 million. She laid off 30,000 workers, and then was given a \$42 million severance package by the people who fired her!**

• **Jim Gilmore** was a one-term governor of Virginia, some time ago. The silliness of his running for president makes Pataki's campaign look like Abraham Lincoln's come back to life.

• **Rick Santorum** is a crazy-Catholic religious nut with an open face, a slightly worried look at all times, and winning manner. His calling card has been, for some time, that he is more anti-abortion, more anti-same-sex-marriage than anyone else. He briefly, in 2012, played the part of the super-conservative alternative to Mitt Romney, and won a few primaries. I think the most interesting fact about him is that his grandfather was an anti-clerical, socialist refugee from Mussolini's Italy who came to Pennsylvania and worked as a coal miner. How the grandson has gone so far astray from the path of common sense is anybody's guess.

• **Chris Christie.** There was a time, during his first term as governor of New Jersey, when Christie appeared a likely and even attractive Republican presidential candidate. Unfortunately for him, he suffers from what can best be described as a "serious personality defect" – he is a bully and a boor. His administration's attempt to punish the mayor and the people of Fort Lee for the mayor's refusal to back Christie's re-election in 2013 (the so-called Bridgegate scandal) has stripped him bare, and any attempt on Christie's part to be re-elected in New Jersey will be problematic. He is running for president because he is clueless as to what a jerk he really is (like lots of politicians, alas) and he is able to raise enough money from wannabe-players to keep his campaign afloat. How much longer? Not much, one would think.

• Speaking of tiresome, there's **Jeb Bush**, son of "41" and brother of "43." It used to be said (especially by "Papa" and "Mama" Bush) that Jeb, not George W., was the natural politician and the one who "ought" to be president. Which shows how much they know! Jeb!® has an amazing amount of money, over \$100 million, and will stay in the campaign for a long time. But the bloom is mos def off this Bush.

• **Carly Sneed Fiorina** has a virtually unparalleled ability to tell plausible lies, especially the kind that involve misleading numbers, though

she's really good at other types of lies, too. And she sticks to her script. She worked her way up from the secretarial pool? Was that before or after the MBA her father the federal appeals court judge paid for? To adapt the old Bush joke, Carly was born on second base and persuaded herself she'd bunted her way on, and then stolen second. Can you imagine spending a fun evening chilling with her? I can't, either. Trump is right: her "persona" is the ugliest thing about her. She's running as the great CEO who can get things done, but front and center in her résumé there is the fact that she almost destroyed one of America's great companies, and got fired. In less than six years at HP she received compensation worth well over \$100 million and laid off 30,000 workers, then got a \$42 million severance package to ease the pain of being fired! She's done nothing else memorable in her life, except losing – by double digits! – her senatorial race in 2010, in a GOP landslide year. And now she wants to be president? Some kind of therapy, one supposes. Well, fuck that!

• **Ted Cruz**, who looks like Joe McCarthy reborn as a vampire, is one strange guy. Part of me wants to describe him as the most obviously insincere "religious" person I've ever seen in public life, but I sense there's more. His father, Rafael, is a right-wing Christian pastor who has said Ted has been "anointed" to lead. It'd be a difficult situation for any intellectually able young man: either you break away, or you double down. Maybe what I sense is ambivalence. Anyway, he's always wrong, he talks weird, and his Mommy dresses him funny. 'Nuff said..

• **Mike Huckabee** is another religious nut. (Do I sense a pattern here?) He is a sincere one, however. Which sort is worse, I'm not sure. If you want a good laugh, find the YouTube video in which a ventriloquist turns Huckabee into a Cher puppet. (No shit.) If you want another good laugh, watch Huck on the campaign trail in 2015. Like Cruz, he has tried to make political hay out of backing the county clerk in Kentucky who refused to do the job she's sworn to do because some of the couples-to-be-married didn't meet her religion's approval. What in heavens are these people thinking of?

• Rounding out the religious-nut category, there is **Dr. Ben Carson**, a pediatric brain surgeon from Johns Hopkins who retired a few years back and became a successful bloviator on the right-wing religious circuit, with lots of anti-Obama material, including hints that the president might be a Muslim. The fact that Dr. Carson is himself an African-American, and speaks in a non-ranting, even gentle manner, helped greatly to give this crap a little heft. I think the main lesson to be gleaned from Dr. Carson's stirring life-story – rise from poor son of single mother to famous surgeon and “motivational” speaker – is that being a surgeon is far more an athletic activity than an intellectual one. It's difficult to say openly, because of the color issue and “political correctness” and all that, but it's fairly obvious that Dr. Ben simply isn't very smart. Dr. Ben's recent comment that a Muslim shouldn't be considered for president is so blatantly un-American that even a few Republicans will take note, and it has probably doomed his campaign. Let us pray.

• **Rand Paul**, senator from Kentucky, is almost interesting. Like his father, the squirrely former Cong. Ron Paul of Texas, he comes from the libertarian end of the GOP spectrum. (He's named for Ayn Rand, of all people! Try imagining a conversation between Ayn Rand and Mike Huckabee or Rick Santorum, if you want a good laugh.) Most of the time Libertarianism, a modern variant of Anarchism, is designed to give hedge-fund managers cover for their excesses, but when the Pauls start talking about America's crazy drug laws and excessive imprisonment, and the wickedness of our ever-expanding imperial military sprawl, they become interesting. Young Rand provided some of the few non-awful moments in the second Republican debate. I think he has genuinely wanted to make the party better, but the dumbed-down, Foxified “base” has tamed him far more than vice versa, and he seems diminished.

Which leaves us with Donald Trump, entrepreneur, casino magnate and showman; Marco Rubio, a junior senator from Florida whose parents were immigrants; and John Kasich. Imagine how you will feel in March or April of 2016

if these three men turn out to be the last three GOP presidential candidates.

• **Rubio** is cute and young and has a good life story, but he is a super-hawk, and is all-too-obviously not someone we should regard as ready to be a leader.

• **Gov. Kasich** has an interesting story, but those who know him well seem dubious about whether he should be looked upon as anything other than a cranky, nutty guy who almost always says one thing and does another. (Ironically, he will be forever reviled by the Republican electorate for one of the best things he ever did, expanding Medicaid in Ohio.)

• And then there's left “Mister You're Fired” **Trump**, known as **the Donald**, the most entertaining one in the crowd, for what that's worth, and with his apparent refusal to abide by the rules of political correctness (or, as we used to say, be polite) he has won a large following, especially among those white working class men who have come to believe that they are now the victims of history, and that darkies are to blame. In other words, the sort of people Trump always counted on to keep his casinos profitable. Jon Stewart called Trump out, not long before retiring as America's best (and certainly funniest) political pundit; Stewart called him “America's first openly ‘asshole’ presidential candidate.” Which pretty much says it all.

But there's this: who else among the candidates has raised the whole question of how elections are being paid for, and the warping of democracy (to the point that Jimmy Carter says we no longer have Democracy, we have an Oligarchy) that has grown out of the legal-bribery of our present system? The Donald has said, on many occasions (including the two Republican debates we've “enjoyed” so far), that he, as a plutocrat, has routinely bought politicians. You'd think the media would be all over that remark, and want to know more, much more. No? Hah, that's strange.

So that's it: fourteen men and one woman who think they have what it takes to be President of the United States. And who want the job, many of them “desperately.”

I mean, is this party fucked, or what? **CT**

**If you want a good laugh, find the YouTube video in which a ventriloquist turns Mike Huckabee into a Cher puppet**

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**Lawrence Houghteling**, aka Larry, is a former carpenter, reporter/ editor and New York City special education teacher who is enjoying his retirement from all these professions, and is still “amazed,” he says, “at how strange and often wonderful the world is”.

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## WRITING WORTH READING

