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ISSUE 190

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So far this century, there has been only one true invader on Planet Earth and it's not those desperate Central Americans fleeing poverty, drugs, violence, and hunger, writes **Tom Engelhardt**

Who are the real invaders on Planet Earth?

4

HE crossed the border without permission or, as far as I could tell, documentation of any sort. I'm speaking about Donald Trump's uninvited, unasked-for invasion of my personal space. He's there daily, often hourly, whether I like it or not, and I don't have a Department of Homeland Security to separate him from his children, throw them all in degrading versions of prison – without even basic toiletries or edible food or clean water – and then send him back to whatever shithole tower he came from in the first place. (For that, I have to depend on the American people in 2020 and what still passes, however dubiously, for a democracy.)

And yes, the president has

been an invader par excellence in these years – not a word I'd use idly, unlike so many among us these days. Think of the spreading use of “invasion”, particularly on the political right, in this season of the most invasive president ever to occupy the Oval Office, as a version of America's wars coming home. Think of it, linguistically, as the equivalent of those menacing cops on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, back in 2014, toggged out to look like an occupying army with Pentagon surplus equipment, some of it directly off America's distant battlefields.

Not that many are likely to think of what's happening, invasion-wise, in such terms these days.

Admittedly, like so much



else, the worst of what's happening didn't start with Donald Trump. “Invasion” and “invaders” first entered right-wing vocabularies as a description of immigration across our southern border in the late 1980s and 1990s. In his 1992 attempt to win the Republican presidential nomination, for instance, Patrick Buchanan used the phrase “illegal invasion” in relation to Hispanic immigrants. In the process, he highlighted



them as a national threat in a fashion that would become familiar indeed in recent years.

Today, however, from White House tweets to the screed published by Patrick Crusius, the 21-year-old white nationalist who killed 22 people, including eight Mexican citizens, in an El Paso Walmart, the use of “invasion”, or in his case “the Hispanic invasion of Texas”, has become part of the American way of life (and death). Mean-

while, the language itself has, in some more general sense, has continued to be weaponised.

Of course, when you speak of invasions these days, as President Trump has done repeatedly – he used the word seven times in less than a minute at a recent rally and, by early August, his reelection campaign had posted more than 2,000 Facebook ads with invasion in them – you’re speaking of only one type of invasion. It’s a

metaphorical-cum-political one in which they invade us (even though they may not know that they’re doing it). Hundreds of thousands of them have been crossing our southern border, mostly on their own individual initiative. In some cases, however, they have made it to the border in “caravans”. Just about every one of them, however, is arriving not with mayhem in mind, but in search of some version of safety and, if

not well-being, at least better-being in this country.

That's not the way the White House, most Republicans, or right-wing media figures are describing things, however. As the president put it at a White House Workforce advisory meeting in March: "You see what's going on at the border... We are doing an amazing job considering it's really an onslaught very much. I call it 'invasion'. They always get upset when I say 'an invasion'. But it really is somewhat of an invasion".

Or as Tucker Carlson said on Fox News, "We are so overwhelmed by this – it literally is an invasion of people crossing into Texas"; or as Jeanine Pirro plaintively asked on Fox & Friends, "Will anyone in power do anything to protect America this time, or will our leaders sit passively back while the invasion continues?" The examples of such statements are legion.

Here's the strange thing, though: in this century, there has been only one true invader on Planet Earth and it's not those desperate Central Americans fleeing poverty, drugs, violence, and hunger (for significant aspects of which the US is actually to blame).

The real invader in this world of ours happens to be the United States of America. I'm speaking, of course, about the only nation in this century whose armed forces have, in the (once) normal sense of the term, invaded two other countries. In

The US Air Force and its allies dropped an estimated 20,000 bombs on the "capital" of the Islamic State, Raqqa, a modest-sized provincial city

October 2001, the administration of President George W. Bush responded invasively to a nightmarish double act of terrorism here. An extremist Islamist outfit that called itself al-Qaeda and was led by a rich Saudi (whom Washington had, in the previous century, been allied with in a war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan) proved responsible. Instead of organising an international policing operation to deal with bin Laden and crew, however, President Bush and his top officials launched what they quickly dubbed the Global War on Terror, or GWOT. While theoretically aimed at up to 60 countries across the planet, it began with the bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden and some of his crew were indeed there at the time, but the invasion's aim was, above all, to overthrow another group of extreme Islamists, the Taliban, who controlled most of that land.

So, Washington began a war that has yet to end. Then, in the spring of 2003, the same set of officials did just what a number of them had been eager to do

on September 12, 2001: they unleashed American forces in an invasion of Iraq meant to take down autocrat Saddam Hussein (a former US ally who had nothing to do with 9/11 or al-Qaeda). In fact, we now know that, within hours of a hijacked jet crashing into the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was already thinking about just such an invasion. ("Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not", he reportedly said that day, while urging his aides to come up with a plan to invade Iraq.)

So American troops took Kabul and Baghdad, the capitals of both countries, where the Bush administration set up governments of its choice. In neither would the ensuing occupations and wars or the tumultuous events that evolved from them ever truly end. In both regions, terrorism is significantly more widespread now than it was then. In the intervening years, millions of the inhabitants of those two lands and others swept up in that American war on terror were displaced from their homes and hundreds of thousands killed or wounded as chaos, terror, and war spread across the Greater Middle East (later compounded by the "Arab Spring") and finally deep into Africa.

In addition, the US military – equally unsuccessfully, equally long-lastingly, equally usefully when it came to the spread of terrorism and of failed or failing states – took action in Libya, Somalia, Yemen (largely but not only via the Saudis), and even

Syria. While those might have been considered interventions, not invasions, they were each unbelievably more invasive than anything the domestic right-wing is now calling an invasion on our southern border. In 2016, in Syria, for instance, the US Air Force and its allies dropped an estimated 20,000 bombs on the “capital” of the Islamic State, Raqqa, a modest-sized provincial city. In doing so, with the help of artillery and of ISIS suicide bombers, they turned it into rubble. In a similar fashion from Mosul to Fallujah, major Iraqi cities were rubbleised. All in all, it’s been quite a record of invasion, intervention, and destruction.

Nor should we forget that, in those and other countries (including Pakistan), the US dispatched Hellfire missile-armed drones to carry out “targeted” strikes that, once upon a time, would have been called “assassinations”. In addition, in 2017 alone, contingents of the still-growing elite Special Operations forces, now about 70,000 personnel, had been dispatched, in war and peace, to 149 countries, according to investigative journalist Nick Turse. Meanwhile, American military garrisons by the hundreds continued to dot the globe in a historically unprecedented fashion and have regularly been used in these years to facilitate those very invasions, interventions, and assassinations.

In addition, in this period the CIA set up “black sites” in

The three top countries sending unwanted asylum seekers to Europe have been Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, all deeply embroiled in the cauldron of the American war on terror

a number of countries where prisoners, sometimes literally kidnapped off the streets of major cities (sometimes captured in the backlands of the planet), were for years subjected to unbearable cruelty and torture. US Navy ships were similarly used as black sites. And all of this was just part of an offshore Bermuda Triangle of injustice set up by Washington, whose beating heart was a now notorious (and still open) prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Since 2001, the US has succeeded in squandering staggering amounts of taxpayer dollars unsettling a vast swath of the planet, killing startling numbers of people who didn’t deserve to die, driving yet more of them from their homes, and so helping to set in motion the very crisis of migrants and refugees that has roiled both Europe and the United States ever since. The three top countries sending unwanted asylum seekers to Europe have been Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, all deeply embroiled in the cauldron of the American war on terror. (Meanwhile, of course, we live in a country whose pres-

ident, having called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” during his election campaign in 2015, has done his best to follow through on just such a Muslim ban.)

And, by the way, those original invasions and interventions were all surrounded by glorious explanations about the bringing of “democracy” to and the “liberation” of various societies, explanations no less bogus than those offered by the El Paso killer to explain his slaughter.

Invaders, intruders, disrupters? You’ve got to be kidding, at least if you’re talking about undocumented immigrants from south of our border (even with the bogus claims that there were “terrorists” among them). When it comes to invasions, we should be chanting “USA! USA!” Perhaps, in fact, you could think of this country, its leadership, its military, and its war on terror as a version of the El Paso killer raised to a global scale. In this century at least, we have been the true invaders and disrupters on planet Earth (with the Russians in Crimea and the Ukraine coming in a distant second).

And how have Americans dealt with the real invaders of this world? It’s a reasonable question, even if seldom asked in a country where “invasion” is now a matter of almost obsessional discussion and debate. True, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, a striking number of Americans had the urge not to go to war. The streets of major cities and small towns filled

with protesters demanding that the Bush administration not do what it was obviously going to do anyway. When the invasion and occupation happened, it should have quickly been clear that it would be a destructive disaster. The initial shock-and-awe air campaign to “decapitate” Saddam Hussein’s regime, for example, managed not to touch a single key Iraqi official but, according to Human Rights Watch, killed “dozens of civilians”. In this way, the stage was set for so much of what would follow.

When the bad news (Mission Unaccomplished!) started coming in, however, those anti-war protestors disappeared from the streets of our country, never to return. In the years that followed, Americans generally ignored the harm the US was doing across significant parts of the globe and went on with their lives. It did, however, become a tic of the times to “thank” the troops who had done the invading for their “service”.

In the meantime, much of what had transpired globally in that war on terror was simply forgotten (or never noted in the first place). That’s why when, in mid-August, an ISIS suicide bomber blew himself up at a wedding party in Kabul killing at least 63 people, the *New York Times* could report that “weddings, the celebration of union, had largely remained the exception” to an Afghan sense of risk-taking in public. And that would be a statement few Americans would blink at –

as if no weddings had ever been destroyed in that country. Few here would remember the six weddings US air power had obliterated in Afghanistan (as well as at least one each in Iraq and Yemen). The first of them, in December 2001, would kill about 100 revellers in a village in Eastern Afghanistan and that would just be the beginning of the nightmare to come. This was something I documented at TomDispatch years ago, but it’s generally not even in the memory bank here.

In 2016, of course, Americans elected a man who had riled up what soon be called his “base” by launching a presidential campaign on the fear of Mexican “rapists” coming to this country and the necessity of building a “big, fat, beautiful wall” to turn them away. From scratch, in other words, his focus was on stopping an “invasion” of this land. By August 2015, he was already using that term in his tweets.

So, under Donald Trump, as that word and the fears that went with it spread, we became the invaded and they the invaders. In other words, the world as it was (and largely remains) was somehow turned on its head.

As a result, we all now live in the land of the metaphorically invaded and of El Paso killers who, in these years, have headed, armed with military-style weaponry, for places ranging from synagogues to garlic festivals to stop various “invaders” in their tracks. Meanwhile, the

president and a bipartisan crew of politicians in Washington continued to pour ever more money into the US military (and into little else, except the pockets of the one percent).

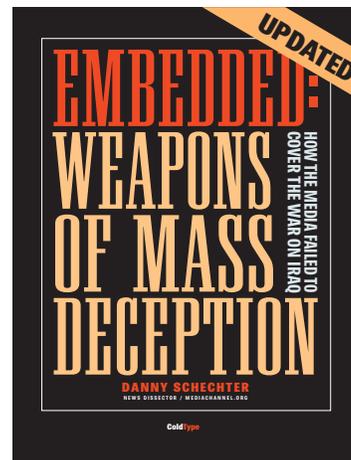
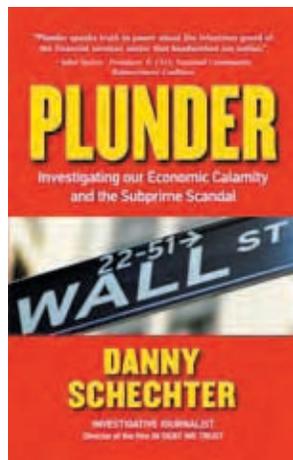
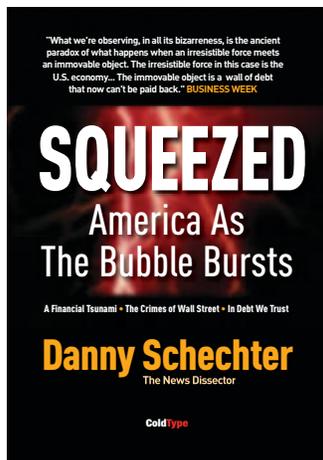
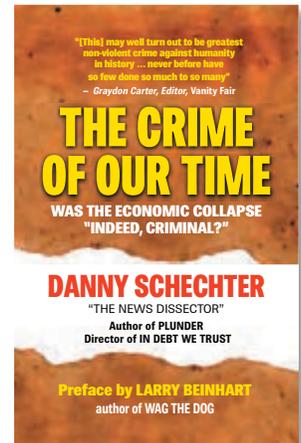
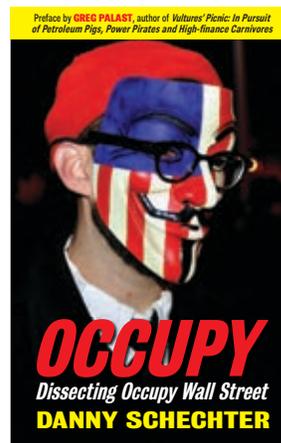
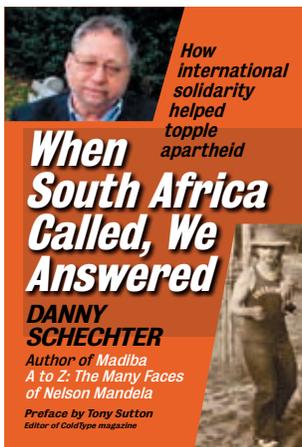
As for me, in all those years before Donald Trump launched his presidential campaign, I had never watched his reality TV shows. Though I lived in New York City, I had never walked into Trump Tower. I had never, in other words, invaded his space, no matter how metaphorically. So, with invasions in the air, I continue to wonder why, every day in every way, he invades mine. And speaking of invasions, he and his crew in Washington are getting ready to invade the space not just of people like me, but of endangered species of every sort.

Of course, the president who feeds off those “invaders” from the south doesn’t recognise me as a species of anything. For him, the only endangered species on this planet may be oil, coal, and natural gas companies.

Believe me, you’re in his world, not mine, and welcome to it! **CT**

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Tom Engelhardt is a co-founder of the *American Empire Project* and the author of a history of the Cold War, *The End of Victory Culture*. He runs *TomDispatch.com* and is a fellow of the *Type Media Center*. His latest book is *A Nation Unmade by War* (Dispatch Books). This article first appeared at www.tomdispatch.com

REMEMBERING Danny SCHECHTER 1942 - 2015



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Danny Schechter, the NewsDissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists in recent memory. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

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It's time to stop acting like zealots for neoliberalism, squabbling over which brand of turbo-charged capitalism we prefer, and face up to our collective responsibility to change our, and our children's, future, writes **Jonathan Cook**

Brexit shows that Corbyn is the true moderate

IF there is an upside to Brexit, it is this: it has made it increasingly hard to present Jeremy Corbyn, contrary to everything the corporate media has been telling us for the past four years, as anything but a political moderate. In truth, he is one of the few moderates left in British – or maybe that should read English – politics right now. The fact that still isn't obvious to many in Britain is a sign of their – not his – extremism.

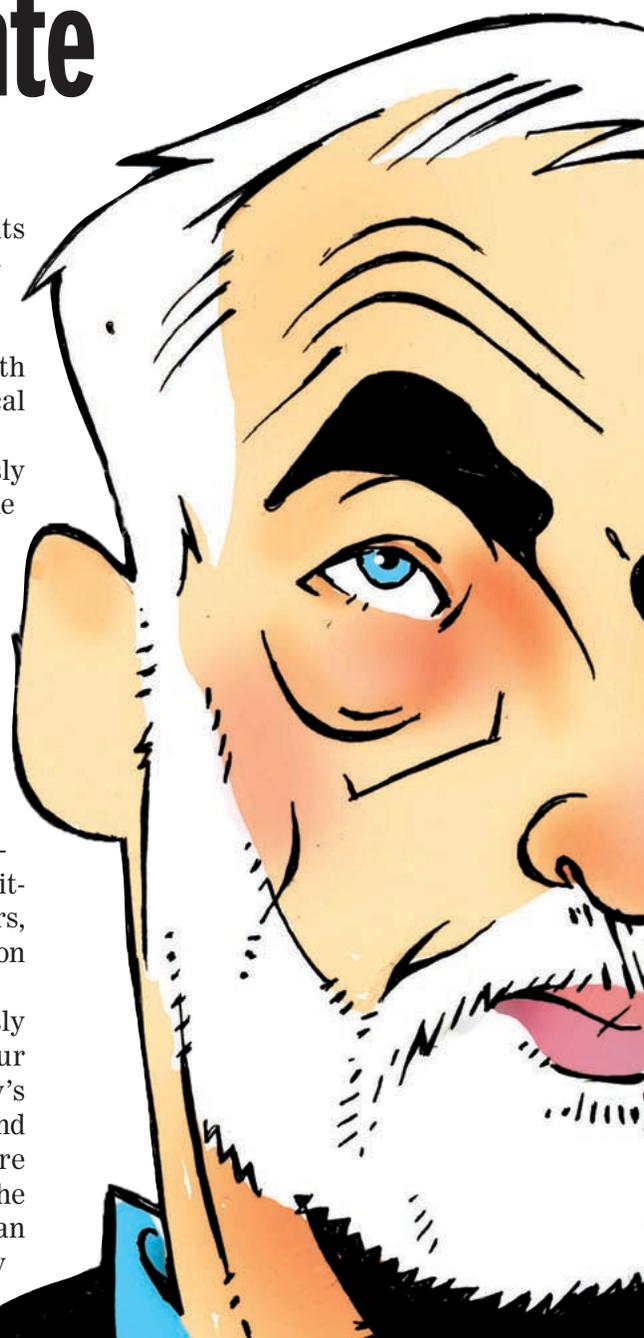
Brexit has brought into sharp focus, at least for those prepared to look, the fanaticism that dominates almost the entire British political class. Their zealotry has been increasingly on show since the UK staged a referendum in 2016 on leaving Europe that was won by the pro-Brexit camp with a wafer-thin majority.

The subsequent feud has usually been portrayed this way: The UK has split into two camps, polarising popular opinion between those who feel Britain's place is in Europe (Remainers) and those who

prefer that Britain makes its own way in the world (Brexiters). But it has actually divided the British political class into three camps, with the largest two at the political extremes.

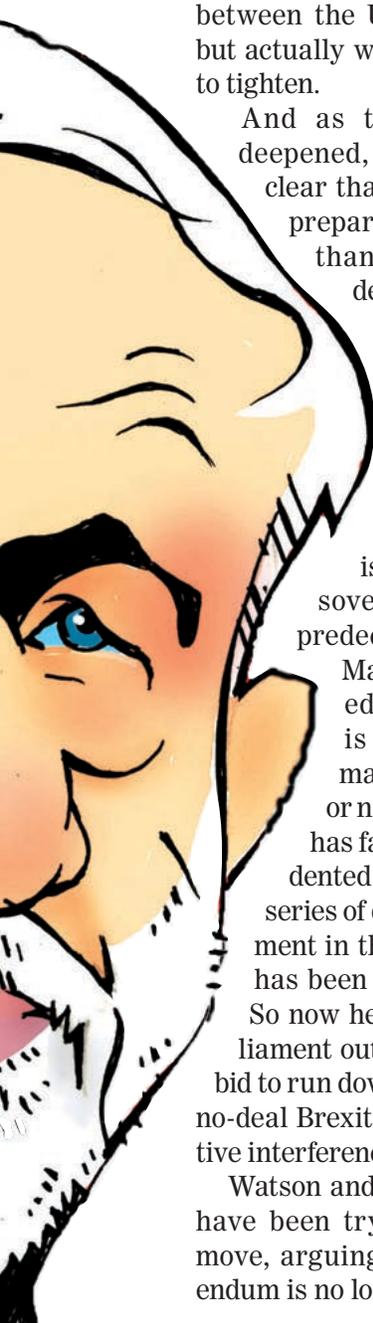
On the one side – variously represented by the new prime minister Boris Johnson and many in his Conservative party, as well as Nigel Farage and his supporters – are those who want Britain to break from Europe and rush into the embrace of the United States, stripping away the last constraints on free-market, ecocidal capitalism. They aren't just Brexiters, they are no-deal Brexiters, who want to turn their back on Europe entirely.

The other side – variously supported by many Labour MPs, including the party's deputy leader Tom Watson, and the Liberal Democrats – are those who wish to stay in the secure embrace of a European bureaucracy that is nearly as committed to sui-



cial capitalism as the US but, given the social democratic traditions of some of its member states, has mitigated the worst excesses of free-market fundamentalism. These UK politicians aren't just Remainers, they are Remainists, who not only refuse to contemplate any weakening of the bonds between the UK and Europe but actually want those bonds to tighten.

And as the divide has deepened, it has become clear that neither side is prepared to pay more than lip service to democracy.



On the Brexit side, Johnson has suspended parliament, an institution representing the people, that is supposed to be sovereign. Like his predecessor, Theresa May, he has repeatedly found there is no legislative majority for a hard or no-deal Brexit. He has faced an unprecedented and humiliating series of defeats in parliament in the few weeks he has been prime minister. So now he has swept parliament out of the way in a bid to run down the clock on a no-deal Brexit without legislative interference.

Watson and the Remainists have been trying a counter-move, arguing that the referendum is no longer valid. They

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has deepened,
it has become clear
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than lip service
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believe that new voters, youngsters more likely to support Remain, have come of age in the three years since 2016, and that more information about the true costs of Brexit have lately swung support to their side. They want to ignore the original referendum result and run the ballot again in the hope that this time the tide will turn in their favour.

The reality is that, if Johnson drives through a no-deal Brexit by ignoring parliament, or if Watson gets to quash the first referendum result to engineer a second, it is likely to trigger civil war in the UK.

The first option will drive Scotland out of the union, could very well reignite the sectarian "Troubles" of Northern Ireland, and will have English urban elites in open revolt. The second option will ensure that large sections of the English public who voted for Brexit because they feel marginalised and ignored are up in arms too. Their trust in politics and politicians will sink even further, and there is the danger that they will turn

in droves to a crowd-pleasing autocrat like Johnson, Farage or worse.

In these circumstances, anyone responsible would be looking to find common ground, to understand that political compromise is absolutely necessary to stop Britain breaking apart. And that is exactly what Corbyn and the largely ignored and maligned third camp have been trying to do.

They want to honour the spirit of the vote by leaving the EU but hope to do so in a way that doesn't cut the UK adrift from Europe, doesn't prevent the continuation of relatively free trade and movement, and doesn't leave the UK exposed and vulnerable to serfdom under a new US master.

For many months Corbyn has been calling for a general election as a way for the majority of the public, having chosen in the referendum what they want to do, to now decide who they want to negotiate how Britain departs from Europe. But even that realistic compromise has not satisfied the fanatics within his own party.

Because the zealots of the right and the immoderate centre dominate the political and media landscape, this approach has barely registered in public debates. Corbyn's efforts have been misrepresented as evidence of muddled thinking, ambivalence, or his covert opposition to Europe. It is none of those things.

The common argument that Corbyn is a Brexit wolf in sheep's clothing draws on the

fact that, like many democratic socialists, such as the late Tony Benn, Corbyn has never been enamoured of the unelected European technocratic class that is misleadingly termed simply “Europe” or the “European Union”.

Rightly, socialists understood long ago that the more Britain was locked into Europe’s embrace, the more it would become caught like a fly in the spider’s web. At some level, most people have started to recognise this, if only because finding a way to leave Europe, even for Brexiters, has proved so inordinately difficult.

Just as banks were too big to fail in 2008 so they had to be bailed out with our, public money to save them from their private malfeasance, the publics of Europe have incrementally had their sovereignty transferred to an unelected and centralised bureaucracy all in the name of pursuing freedom – of movement and trade, chiefly for global corporations.

We haven’t noticed, it is true, because for decades our own, domestic politics has come in one flavour only – support for our little corner of the global neoliberal empire. Till recently the consensus of Britain’s ruling elite, whether of the right or of New Labour centrists, was that being a player in Europe was the best way to protect their – though not necessarily our – interests on that global battlefield. Now, as the neoliberal empire enters a period of terminal decline, this same elite are bitterly divided over

‘Til recently the consensus of Britain’s ruling elite, whether of the right or of New Labour centrists, was that being a player in Europe was the best way to protect *their* interests on that global battlefield

whether the US or Europe is the best guarantor of their wealth and influence continuing a little longer.

But Britain and the world’s problems – whether in the shape of impending economic meltdown or environmental collapse – cannot be solved from within the neoliberal paradigm, as becomes clearer by the day. New political structures are desperately needed: at the local level to foster new, more decentralised economic models, free of corporate influence, resource-stripping and unnecessary consumption; and at the global level to ensure that such models reverse rather than perpetuate the ecocidal policies that have dominated under neoliberal capitalism.

To start on that path will require the democratisation of Britain. The fear of Benn and others was that even if a truly socialist government was elected, its ability to make real, profound changes to the political and economic order – by bringing much of

the economy back into public or cooperative ownership, for example – would be made impossible within the larger framework of European corporate managerialism.

We have been given glimpses of the iron fist Europe’s technocrats wield beneath the velvet glove in the treatment of Greece over its financial troubles and the Catalan independence movement in Spain.

The attitude of Corbyn and other democratic socialists to Brexit, however, has been wildly misrepresented by the other two camps of zealots.

In Benn’s time, it was still possible to imagine a world in which neoliberalism might be prevented from gaining a tyrannical grip on our political imaginations and on national economies. But things have changed since then. Now the issue is not whether Britain can stop being locked into a European neoliberal order. It is that the UK, like everyone else, is already in the stranglehold of a global neoliberal order.

Not just that, but Britain has willingly submitted to that order. As the zealotry of most of the political class demonstrates, few can imagine or want a life outside the neoliberal cage. The debate is about which corner of that suicidal, ecocidal global order we prefer to be located in. The Brexit row is chiefly about which slave-master, America or Europe, will be kinder to us.

In this context, there is no real escape. The best that can

be done, as the moderates in both the Brexit and Remain camps realise, is loosen our chains enough so that we have room once again to contemplate new political possibilities. We can then breathe deeply, clear our heads and start to imagine how Britain and the world might operate differently, how we might free ourselves of the tyranny of the corporations and heal our planet of the deep scars we have inflicted on it.

These are big matters that cannot be solved either by binding ourselves more tightly to European technocrats or by cutting loose from Europe only to chain ourselves to the US. The Brexit feud is an endless theatrical distraction from the real questions we need to face. That is one reason why it drags on, one reason why our political class revel in it, John Bercow-style.

Strangely, it is the Remainists of the immoderate centre – typified by commentary in corporate “liberal” media like the Guardian – who so often claim to lament the fact that the left has failed to offer a vision, a political future, that might serve as an alternative to neoliberalism. But how can such a vision emerge from deep inside the leviathan’s dark belly?

It goes without saying that the Atlanticists cheerleading Brexit are up to no good when they speak of “taking back control” and “reclaiming our sovereignty”. They demand

Chaining ourselves to a European technocratic class – implementing the requirements of an economic system that must end in the destruction of the planet – is cowardice

those powers only so they can immediately surrender them to a US master.

But the much-maligned leftwing, soft Brexit – a version that wishes to distance Britain from Europe without pretending that the UK can stand alone on the global neoliberal battlefield – also has use for such language.

This version of taking back control isn’t about spitting in the face of Europe, blocking the entry of immigrants, or reinventing the imagined halcyon days of empire. It is about recognising that we, like the rest of humankind, are responsible for the crimes we have been, and still are, committing against the planet, against other species, against fellow human beings.

Chaining ourselves to an unelected, distant European technocratic class that simply follows orders – implementing the requirements of an economic system that must end in the destruction of the planet – is cowardice. We can more easily shelter from that truth when we cede our political and economic powers to those compelled to carry out the (il)logic

of neoliberalism.

Standing a little outside Europe is probably the best we can hope to manage in current circumstances. But it might give us the political space – and, more importantly, burden us with the political responsibility – to imagine the deep changes that are urgently needed.

Change has to happen if we as a species are to survive, and it has to happen soon and it has to happen somewhere. We cannot force others to change, but we can recognise our own need to change and offer a vision of change for others to follow. That can begin only when we stop shielding ourselves from the consequences of our decisions, stop hiding in someone else’s ideological life-raft in the forlorn hope that it will weather the coming, real-world storms.

It is time to stop acting like zealots for neoliberalism, squabbling over which brand of turbo-charged capitalism we prefer, and face up to our collective responsibility to change our, and our children’s, future. **CT**

Jonathan Cook won the *Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism*. His books include *“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). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net

Activists plan to release drones near Heathrow airport. Their possible arrest is a small price to pay for fighting the climate crisis, writes **George Monbiot**

History will be kind to airport climate activists

OBEDIENCE is dangerous: it has facilitated every form of institutional oppression and violence. Every advance in justice, peace and democracy has been made possible by disobedience. Ethical progress is unlikely when we do only what we are told.

We owe our right to vote, our freedom from servitude and subjection, our prosperity and security to people reviled in their time as lawbreakers and reprobates. Breaking the law on behalf of others is a long and honourable tradition. This month, a few dozen unaffiliated activists intend to start something they call Heathrow Pause.

They will each fly a toy drone within the restricted zone around Heathrow airport. The drones will fly nowhere near the flight paths, and never above head height, ensuring they present no risk. But any drone activity forces the airport to suspend all flights. The activists know they face arrest

and possibly long prison sentences.

We are told that flying is about freedom. It is: the freedom of the rich to destroy the lives of the poor

Their plan is to launch their drones consecutively, stopping flights for as long as possible: perhaps for several days. In doing so they seek to denormalise one of the most destructive activities on Earth.

Once unthinkable, then a bizarre novelty, then an extraordinary luxury, then a hope, then an expectation, flying – and flying frequently – is now treated as a right. Worldwide, the number of flights is expected to double in 20 years.

In the UK, if aviation growth is unchecked, it could soon account for most of the carbon we can afford to burn, if the government is to meet its obligations under the Paris agreement. Even current levels of

flying make a nonsense of international commitments. Yet everywhere governments are seeking to expand airport capacity. Those who defend the sector point out that it currently produces “only” 2.4 percent of the world’s emissions. But this is because just 20 percent of the world’s people have ever flown. In terms of individual impact, taking a flight, because of the quantity of fuel it uses, inflicts more harm on the living planet and its people than anything else you are likely to do.

Even in rich nations, flying is overwhelmingly concentrated among the wealthiest citizens. In the UK, 15 percent of the pop-



Photo: Denisse Leon / Unsplash

ulation accounts for 70 percent of flights. Those most likely to fly frequently, according to House of Commons research, have a second home abroad and a household income of more than £115,000. We are told that flying is about freedom. It is: the freedom of the rich to destroy the lives of the poor. As flying expands, it will become one of the principal causes of global heating. The impact is already greater than the 2.4 percent of emissions suggests, as planes create cirrus clouds that roughly double the overall heating effect. There are technological alternatives for most of our damaging activities – but not flying. Biofuels will cause more problems than they solve.

Large electric planes, for all the hype surrounding them, are many years away and may never materialise.

Carbon offsets are now redundant: the only way of preventing more than 1.5C of heating is to reduce emissions drastically, while simultaneously using the protection and restoration of nature to draw down carbon from the atmosphere. One is not a substitute for the other: we need to maximise both. The only realistic option is to travel less by plane.

Yet flying on a whim is being normalised, even hypernormalised. Last year *Tatler* magazine, whose target readers are extremely wealthy, airily declared:

“The Long-Haul Long Weekend is now a thing”. It gushes about escaping from “grey England” to the Seychelles for four days – or to Kenya, Antigua or Cape Town, a mere 11 hours away. “Slip off to one of these destinations on a Thursday night and you can be back by Tuesday with an adventure worth shouting about.”

Among the most depressing things I have seen in the past year is Jane Goodall’s appearance in an advertisement for British Airways: when a prominent environmentalist endorses an airline, you know we are in deep moral trouble.

The socially just solution is the frequent-flyer levy proposed by the Free Ride coalition. There would be no aviation tax for the first flight in any year that a person takes but escalating taxes on subsequent flights. Set at the right level, the levy would avert the need for airport expansion, and steadily scale down the industry. But don’t expect the government to listen. The new transport secretary, Grant Shapps, was previously chair of the British Infrastructure Group, which lobbied “to

ensure that every opportunity for growth is seized”, backing airport expansion and a reduction in air passenger duty.

Nothing will change until the impacts of flying become salient. One of the Heathrow Pause campaigners, Valerie Brown, told me: “I’m petrified, of course ... It’s not easy to face the idea of prison, but it’s even more frightening to me to think about what my grandchildren and all the children of the world will face in 20 or 30 years’ time.” Another, James Brown (no relation), explained that he decided to act when he found his adult daughter had broken down with grief about ecological destruction. “I’m prepared to face the consequences”, he said. “I don’t know what prison will be like for me. But against the alternatives it’s a small price to pay”.

They risk their liberty in the hope of freeing us from the momentous consequences of climate breakdown. History will judge them kindly. **CT**

George Monbiot is a columnist at the Guardian, where this was first published. His web site is www.monbiot.com

UPDATE: 12 held in drone protest

TWELVE Heathrow Pause protesters were arrested at Heathrow on September 12 over the drone protests. Seven were held in pre-emptive police raids the day before and five were held at the airport when the protest began. A spokesperson for the organisers of the demonstration, at which one drone was launched, said the action, which they vowed would continue, had “triggered a sensible, honest conversation throughout society on the dangerous folly of Heathrow expansion, with the ultimate objective of cancelling the third runway”. **CT**

Woody Guthrie might not have been perfect, but we don't need to 'cancel' him, writes **Will Kaufman**

Misguided attacks on Woodie Guthrie classic

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In recent years, Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land* has become a rallying cry for immigrants. And in July, after President Donald Trump tweeted that four Democratic congresswomen of colour needed to "go back where they came from", Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of the four targeted, responded with a tweet quoting Guthrie's lyrics.

*This land is your land,
This land is my land,
This land was made for you
and me.*

More than 100 of Rep. @IlhanMN's constituents showed up spontaneously at the Minnesota airport to welcome her back home.

But not everyone sees the song as an anthem for inclusion. In June, the Smithsonian's online magazine, *Folklife*, published a piece that lambasted the song for its omissions.

The article, titled "This Land Is Whose Land?", was written by folk musician Mali Obomsawin, a member of the

Native American Abenaki tribe. She wrote of being shaken up "like a soda can" every time she heard the song's lyrics:

"In the context of America, a nation-state built by settler colonialism, Woody Guthrie's protest anthem exemplifies the particular blind spot that Americans have in regard to Natives: American patriotism erases us, even if it comes in the form of a leftist protest song. Why? Because this land 'was' our land. Through genocide, broken treaties and a legal system created by and for the colonial interest, this land 'became' American land".

Obomsawin's article immediately generated a flurry of responses from conservative media outlets.

"Commie Folksinger Woody Guthrie Not Woke Enough for Mob", jeered Breitbart's John Nolte, delighted with this evidence of internecine strife among what he dubbed the "fascist woketards" of the

American left. The Daily Wire's Emily Zanotti soon joined the fray, penning a piece under the headline "This Land Is NOT Your Land: Woke Culture Now Demanding Woody Guthrie Be Cancelled Over Folk Music Faux Pas".

But Obomsawin and her conservative critics might be surprised to learn that some of Guthrie's greatest champions have also had difficulties with the song.

As the author of three books on Guthrie, I sometimes wonder how the folk singer would respond to the criticism of *This Land Is Your Land* for its omissions. While we can't know for sure, a glance at some of his unpublished writings and recently discovered recordings can offer some clues.

Pete Seeger, Woody's colleague and protégé, was perhaps the most responsible for lodging *This Land Is Your Land* in the public consciousness. After Guthrie died in 1967, Seeger continued to perform the song all around the world.



Some of Guthrie's greatest champions have had difficulties with the song.

At the same time, Seeger made it clear that he was sensitive to the theft of Native American lands.

In his memoir, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, Seeger recalled an incident during a 1968 performance: “Jimmy Collier, a great young black singer from the Midwest, was asked to lead [*This Land Is Your Land*]. Henry Crowdog [sic] of the Sioux Indian delegation came up and punched his finger in Jimmy’s chest. ‘Hey, you’re both

wrong. It belongs to me.’ Jimmy stopped and added seriously, ‘Should we not sing this song?’ Then a big grin came over Henry Crowdog’s face. ‘No, it’s okay. Go ahead and sing it. As long as we are all down here together to get something done.’”

Sometimes, in an attempt to ease his conscience when performing *This Land*, Seeger would add a verse penned by the singer and activist Carolyn

“Cappy” Israel to acknowledge the theft of Native land:

This land is your land, but it once was my land

Before we sold you Manhattan Island

You pushed my nation to the reservation,

This land was stole by you from me.

Was Guthrie himself uncomfortable with the song’s glaring failure to acknowledge the facts of settler colonialism?

There’s no record of his

views on the issue. But we do know that he was very aware of – and concerned with – the history of Native American dispossession.

For example, he was angry enough with his cousin, the country singer “Oklahoma Jack” Guthrie, for claiming credit for a song that Woody had written, titled *Oklahoma Hills*. But as Woody wrote in an unpublished annotation to the lyrics, Jack had also left out “the best parts of the whole song” – the names of “the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole” who had prior claim to the lands of Oklahoma.

Then there’s a sound bite in a posthumously discovered live recording from 1949: “They used dope, they used opium, they used every kind of a trick to get these Indians to sign over their lands”, Guthrie says to the crowd.

One of these real estate tricksters was actually Woody’s own father, Charley Guthrie. As biographer and journalist Joe Klein writes in *Woody Guthrie: A Life*, “Because he was able to speak both Creek and Cherokee, Charley became known as especially adept at relieving Indians of their property.”

How did Charley learn these Native tongues? Was it possible that the Guthries had Native ancestors? In a tantalisingly vague 1950 letter to activist Stetson Kennedy, Woody notes “the rainbow blends” of his own bloodline, including “pure virgin island negro” and unnamed “Indian tribelines”.

And in an unpublished poem

“Woody was into people creating their own stories – how to apply this procedure of songwriting, to the topics that affect American Indians”

entitled *Sweetly Black Girl*, written the same year, Guthrie writes:

*my
blood beats Spanish and my
breath burns Indian and my
soul boils negro.*

Guthrie admitted that he was ashamed of his father’s disreputable real estate practices. And while he may have idealised his own genealogy, there’s no doubt that he was fully aware of “whose land was whose”.

Interestingly, not all Native Americans view the song in the same light as Obomsawin. The song has proved adaptable and malleable enough to enable some Native American artists to work with it.

In 2007, the Anishinaabe songwriter and musician Keith Secola sang his Ojibwa-language version of *This Land* on the album *Native Americana – A Coup Stick*.

Secola said in an interview that his version “reflects a worldview, of being a part of the world and not detached from it. Woody was into people creating their own stories. ... That’s what I got from him – how to apply this strategy, this procedure of songwriting, to the topics that affect American Indians”.

A few years before Secola’s

cover, two of Guthrie’s previously unpublished songs – *Indian Corn Song* and *Mean Things Happenin’ in This World* – were recorded by the Navajo siblings, Klee, Clayson and Jeneda Benally.

“We wanted to keep the spirit of Woody Guthrie alive”, Clayton said in a 2012 interview. “He wrote songs about the Dust Bowl and unions, but he also wrote about American Indian issues”.

Clayson noted that *Indian Corn Song* was one of his favourite songs to play, because in it Guthrie “talks about wastefulness and how Indigenous people are ... living off the planet in a balanced way”.

Mali Obomsawin might take heart from Secola, the Benally siblings and the other artist-activists who have adopted and adapted *This Land Is Your Land*.

Woody Guthrie might not have been perfect, they say, but we don’t need to “cancel” him. We’ll work with him instead. **CT**

“Sweetly Black Girl” and unpublished Woody Guthrie correspondence and annotations, words by Woody Guthrie © Copyright Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc., all rights reserved, used by permission.

Will Kaufman is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Central Lancashire, in England. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com



BROKEN DREAMS: Mahmoud al-Neirab (right) with Omran Abu Belal (left) and Bader Mousa

Hamza Abu Eltarabesh shows how Israeli apartheid has destroyed the dreams of a number of leading Palestinian football players

Persecuted by Israel - for playing football

PALESTINIANS are obstructed from playing and, sometimes, even watching football. I learned that as a child.

One day in the summer of 2004, I was making my way to see a match in a southern Gaza stadium. To get there, I had to cross an Israeli military checkpoint.

When I and other football

fans arrived at the checkpoint, the soldiers told us to wait. After an hour had passed, we were told that we could not go any further because of “security reasons” – the excuse Israel often uses to stop Palestinians living normal lives.

The incident left me with a deep sense of anger. Football is a sport enjoyed universally. Why were we not allowed to

enjoy it, too?

Since then, Israel has supposedly “disengaged” from Gaza. Its forces of occupation have moved to the boundary between Gaza and Israel, from where they frequently fire on Palestinians.

I wish that I could say the situation has improved following the “disengagement”. In truth, it has got worse.



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Khadamat Rafah celebrates with his team after winning the Gaza Cup in April 2019.

Mahmoud al-Neirab has been recognised as Gaza’s best football player for the most recent season and has represented Palestine at the international level.

In August 2014, Israel attacked the al-Neirab family home in Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost city. Mahmoud’s mother Arwa and three of his sisters – Ibtisam, Duha and Ola – were killed.

“I can’t describe how it feels to lose your mother”, said Mahmoud, now aged 27. “But it never stopped me from following my dream. I have dedicated every goal I scored after that to my mother”.

Mahmoud is a member of the Khadamat Rafah football team, which qualified for this

year’s Palestine Cup Final against Markaz Balata from the occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

Held in Rafah at the end of June, the final ended in a 1-1 draw. A rematch was, therefore, scheduled to take place in Nablus several days later.

The Palestine Football Association asked that 35 people representing Khadamat Rafah – including the team’s players – be allowed to travel through Erez, the military checkpoint separating Gaza and Israel, for the replay. Yet the Israeli army only granted permits to four people on the list, just one of whom was a player.

Most of the permits were rejected for “security reasons”. Israel’s secret police, the Shin

Bet, claimed to have information “linking most of the teams’ members with terror”, according to press reports. That allegation has been described as a “big lie” by Jibril Rajoub, chair of the Palestine Football Association.

Israel’s stance meant the replay has not yet taken place.

“I was eagerly waiting for this match”, said Mahmoud al-Neirab. “I was very close to my dream of winning the Palestine Cup. It wasn’t enough for Israel to kill my mother and three sisters. Now they have killed my dream too”.

Israel’s restrictions also prevent Gaza’s football players from joining teams based in

the West Bank.

The restrictions have severe economic consequences. The salary paid to a professional player in Gaza is around \$150 a month. According to one local sports journalist, West Bank players receive \$1,400 a month – almost 10 times more.

Bader Mousa, a Gaza player, has signed a three-year contract to play for a team in the West Bank city of Hebron. Yet he is stuck in Gaza: Israel has refused to issue him with a travel permit.

Mousa had hoped that playing in the West Bank would help him secure a place on the Palestine national team. “Israel destroyed my dream before I could even start”, he said.

Another Gaza resident, Omran Abu Belal, has been selected to play for Markaz Balata. By preventing him take up his place, Israel has deprived his family of sorely needed money.

“My family is in a difficult situation”, he said. “I’m eager to support them”.

While being picked for Palestine’s national team is an honour for football players, it offers no protection from Israel’s cruelty.

In 2008, Suleiman al-Ubeid moved from Gaza to Ramallah in the West Bank so that he could play with the national team. Israel would not allow his wife and children to travel with him. He did not see them until he came back to Gaza in 2013, a move that harmed his career.

He explained to the Israeli soldier at Hebron that he was a football player. But suddenly, he found himself on the ground. “I still don’t know why I was arrested”

“For five years, I did not hug my children”, he said. “It was a very difficult decision to sacrifice playing with the national team. But Israel forced me to decide to either keep my job or keep my family”.

Two months after he became engaged in 2016, another player, Ibrahim al-Nateel was offered a place with the Jerusalem team Hilal al-Quds. After leaving Gaza, he spent the next year trying to secure an exit permit for his fiancée, so that she could join him in the West Bank. Israel refused to grant her one. She become so frustrated that she called off the engagement.

“My fiancée couldn’t wait any more”, al-Nateel said. “It was very difficult for me to end my relationship with her. But I had to respect her choice”.

Al-Nateel returned to Gaza later in 2017, after being injured during a match.

According to Fadi Hijazi, head of sports with the newspaper Alresalah, there are about 40 football players from Gaza in the West Bank. Most have not been able to bring their families with them.

“There is a deliberate psy-

chological war against these players”, said Hijazi.

Some Gaza players – including players who moved to the West Bank – have been jailed by the Israeli occupation. Samy al-Daour is among them. After one training session in 2016, he was stopped at a military checkpoint as he was going home in Hebron – where he lived at the time.

“An Israeli soldier asked for my ID card”, he said. “I explained to her that I’m a football player but suddenly, I found myself on the ground and they arrested me. I still don’t know why I was arrested”.

Also in 2016, Fadi al-Sharif was travelling back to Gaza after having a knee operation in Jerusalem when he was apprehended by Israeli forces.

“I left the hospital and returned to Gaza directly”, he said. “I didn’t imagine that I would be arrested, especially as I wasn’t able to move my leg. I’ll never forget the two weeks I spent in prison”.

At the time, al-Sharif was part of the team al-Hilal Gaza but the detention led him to stop playing football.

Football is known to countless fans as the beautiful game. By persecuting Palestinian players, Israel seeks to steal its beauty. **CT**

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Hamza Abu Eltarabesh is a journalist from Gaza. This article first appeared at the Electronic Intifada – www.theelectronicintifada.net

Don't worry, it's just a subtle warning! **Kevin Neish** comes face to face with a Guatemalan death squad during his first outing as a human shield

A human shield learns the tricks of his trade

I **STARTED** work as an internationalist human shield in 1989. I was asked to accompany the five members of the exiled opposition group RUOG (United Representation of the Guatemalan Opposition), – labour lawyers Marta Torres and Frank Larue, university deans Rolando Castillo and Raúl Molina, and Mayan leader, Rigoberta Menchú – who were returning to Guatemala for peace talks with the government.

A genocidal assault by the country's oligarchy against indigenous and left wing activists had been going on for decades, but now peace finally seemed possible.

Marta and I flew from Vancouver to Guatemala City, but halfway through the flight the pilot announced we were diverting to Yucatan due to a “weather problem” in Guatemala City. Half an hour later, he said that the “weather problem” had cleared, and we carried on to Guatemala.

Marta and I were the first out of the airport customs gate,

RADICAL VIGNETTES

A ColdType series

and grabbed the lone taxi. We found ourselves sharing the road with tanks, armoured personnel carriers, squads of heavily armed soldiers, with sandbagged anti-aircraft guns throughout the city.

It turned out that the “weather problem” was a coup by the air force, which everyone in the world knew about, except the passengers on our plane. The coup was put down quickly, but it was a signal to the civilian government that the military did not support the peace talks.

Soon, the RUOG leaders were deluged with telephone threats from the “Negro Blanca” death squad, ordering us all to leave or face execution.

Then on Mother's Day, flowers arrived at the homes of the parents of all the leaders, with cards graphically describing what brutal torture was going

to happen to their children if we didn't leave.

This was a new experience to me but I watched the leaders carefully and, as they didn't appear unduly concerned, neither was I. But one person seemed very concerned: a right wing American missionary in a neighbouring apartment, who always glowered at us menacingly in the hallway.

During our numerous trips to meetings, my job was to scan the traffic behind us and look for death squad vehicles. On one trip to a university rally our little van suddenly accelerated and weaved violently through the traffic. I asked what was going on, and Rolando shouted that a death squad truck was chasing us. I looked back and saw nothing threatening. Finally we ran a red light and drove backwards around a traffic circle and passed the suspect truck, now stuck at the traffic light, with an extremely angry man in dark glasses vio-

SUSPICIOUS: The cops found three anti-tank bombs planted by death squad members in the car outside the hotel in which opposition leaders were staying.

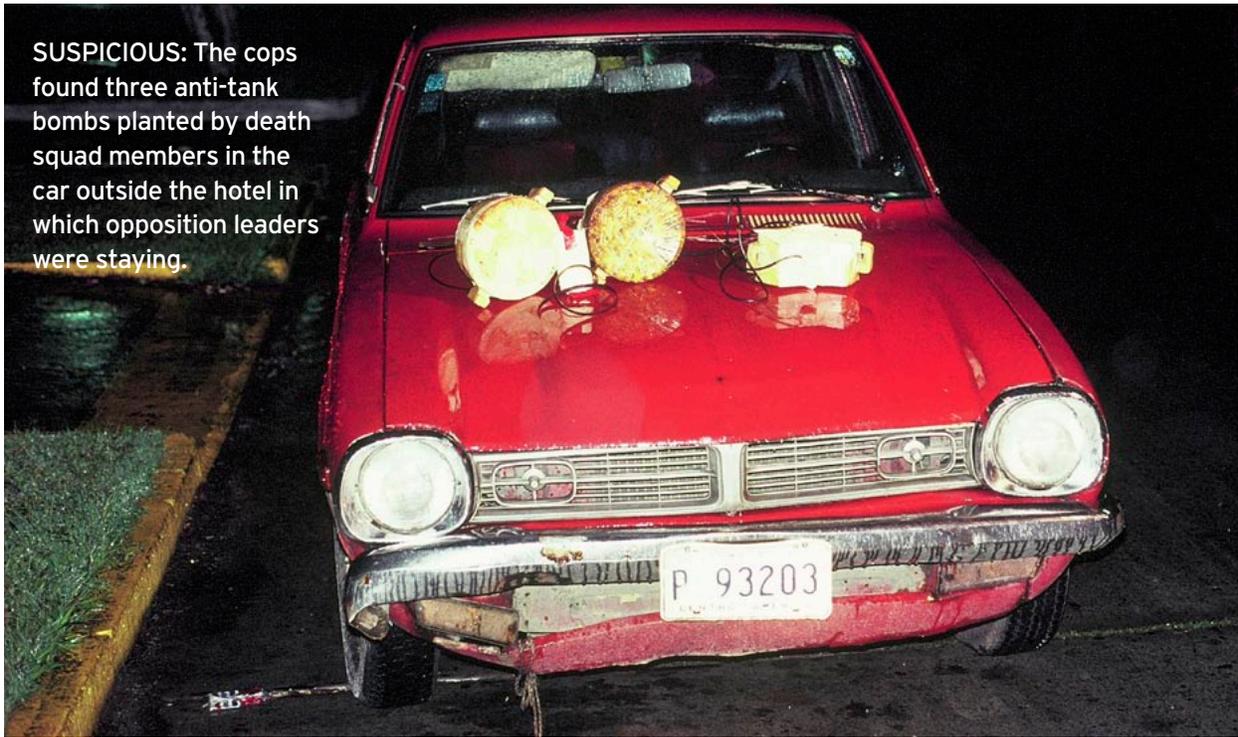


Photo: kevin Neish

lently pounding his steering wheel. Wide-eyed and mesmerised, I forgot to take his picture – I had a lot to learn about human shield work.

That night, a phone call from the death squad told us that a message was waiting downstairs in the apartment lobby. Everyone else was dressed for bed, so I was sent down to pick up the “message”, which turned out to be a car parked across the driveway with an anti-tank mine duct-taped to the hood.

I rushed back upstairs to tell everyone that there was a car bomb parked directly below our balcony. Frank calmly told me that they had already received a warning from the police department about it.

Soon, fire trucks, police cars, ambulances and TV camera crews filled the street below,

with officials running in all directions. But inside our apartment everything was calm, with the five leaders casually getting dressed in suits, ties, and formal dresses, with Rigoberta putting on her beautiful *huipil*.

I asked why the hell we weren't getting out of the building pronto. Marta explained that the car bomb was just another “subtle warning” from the death squad, who, if they really wanted to kill us, could do so at any time without any warning. The death squad was expecting the RUOG leaders to rush out of the building in their night clothes, which the photographers would capture on film, and so embarrass them in the media.

Eventually, we calmly walked out of the front doors and the calm, well-dressed leaders gave media interviews

while, in the background, the police disarmed the car bomb, finding three anti-tank mines, which they disarmed in less than an hour. Marta said they were either very skilled, or knew where to look, as they had put them there – policemen during the day, death squad members by night.

To find better security we moved to the Hilton, which was hosting an “Armies of the Americas” convention, with every fascist general in Latin America in attendance. After registering we headed to our rooms. The elevator doors opened, and there stood another new guest, the American missionary. If looks could kill ... **CT**

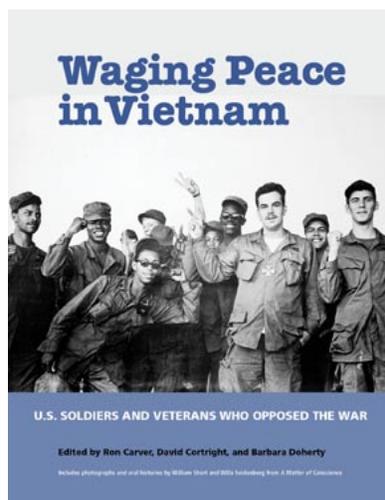
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Kevin Neish is an international activist, who also appreciates the power of humour. His web site is www.kevinneish.ca

In his contribution to *Waging Peace in Vietnam*, **Derek Seidman** tells of the rise of underground newspapers produced by active-duty servicemen and their civilian supporters that called for an end to the disastrous US war

Words against war: The birth of the GI underground press

THE last half decade of the US war in Vietnam saw an historic phenomenon: a wave of antiwar newspapers, circulated across the globe, published by and for the American GIs who were angry at having been drawn in to fight the war. These papers came to be known by a few terms: the GI underground press, the GI antiwar press, or simply the GI press. They were a vital wing of the larger GI movement against the Vietnam War.

The GI press was made up of scores of antiwar newspapers that were oriented toward active-duty US service members. The total number of the papers can never be known for sure, but credible estimates range from 144 to nearly 300. In part, the GI press was inspired by the explosion of the 1960s alternative press – papers such as the *Berkeley Barb*, the *Los Angeles Free Press*, and *The Great Speckled Bird* in Atlanta. The makers of the GI press sought to



WAGING PEACE IN VIETNAM

**US Soldiers and Veterans
Who Opposed the War**

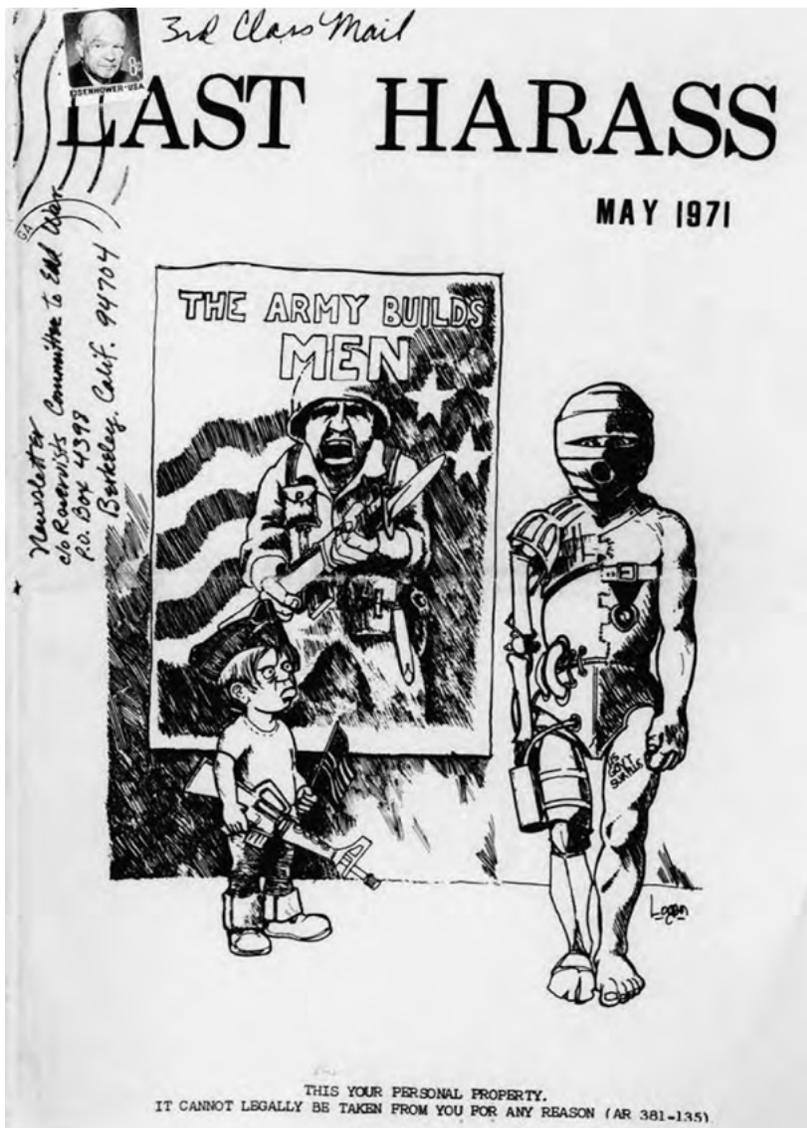
Ron Carver, David Cortright,
Barbara Doherty (editors)
New Village Press, New York
www.newvillagepress.org

US \$35

bring this new media into the military to reach US soldiers – and, hopefully, to help those soldiers build a bridge to the antiwar movement.

The papers spoke the everyday language of the rank-and-file GI, and they served as a voice for draftees and enlistees who, under the constraints of military service, had little. They often carried irreverent titles that mocked the war and the military – *A Four Year Bum-mer*, *Kill for Peace*, and *Green Machine*, for example. Perhaps the most biting title in the GI press was *Fun Travel Adventure*, or *FTA*, which mocked one of the Army's recruitment slogans and riffed on a widespread, darker GI sentiment, "Fuck the Army".

Their pages were filled with critical news about the war, cartoons that lampooned the military leadership, updates about soldier protest, and information on where GIs could find legal help. Most of all, the GI press promoted a wider narrative for soldiers to connect with: one that opposed the war, lambasted the army brass, and offered identification with and participation in a worldwide movement of GI dissent as a response.



LAST HARASS, published by GIs for Peace at Fort Gordon, in Augusta, Georgia.

The GI underground press arose in 1967 and flourished for several years.

The first paper was probably *Vietnam GI*, which was started by Jeff Sharlet, a Vietnam veteran. Sharlet wanted to reach soldiers and veterans with an antiwar perspective, written by their peers. The paper was an immediate smash hit with GIs,

who responded with hundreds of letters. “What impresses most of the guys is that *Vietnam GI* is written to us,” said one letter, “the first termers and lower rank enlisted men, not the lifers”. Another widely read and prominent early GI paper was *The Bond*, which became the paper of the American Servicemen’s Union – a group of radical antiwar soldiers led by



FTA, published by GIs at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Pvt. Andy Stapp that wanted to unionise lower-ranking GIs.

Into the early 1970s, the GI press exploded, with dozens upon dozens of papers – some short-lived, some lasting for years – flourishing across the United States, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. One paper, the *Stuffed Puffin*, was even published in far-off Iceland.

The contents of the GI press spoke to the disenchanted soldier. The papers criticised the war and mocked the “lifers” who commanded GIs (the title of one fleeting paper out of Fort Leonard Wood was *The Pawn’s Pawn* – one of many that railed against the class divide in the war and the army’s authoritarian culture). Papers criticised racism in the military and US society, and analysed the racist and imperialist nature of the Vietnam War. Many contained hilarious features, such as a regular contest for “Pig of the Month” or “Lifer of the Month”. In one case, the “winner”, a

despised officer nominated by the readers, was awarded a well-ripened set of pigs' feet.

Active-duty GIs were central to the production and distribution of the GI antiwar press. Every paper had its own local context. Some were produced for a single base and some aimed at a global readership; some were more radical and hard-edged, while others relied on the language and visuals of the hippie counterculture.

There were reports of the rare paper being produced in the lower decks of ships, and even in Vietnam. But typically, the papers were put together – columns penned, articles and letters collected, visuals laid out, and the whole thing usually mimeographed – by a combination of GIs, veterans, and antiwar civilians. The papers were aided financially by a network of civilian-backed fundraising efforts. One prominent organisation that raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for GI papers and coffeehouses was the United States Servicemen's Fund.

Once printed, the papers would be circulated on military posts and in surrounding towns, as well as in transport hubs like bus stations, and in GI antiwar coffeehouses where service members congregated. Soldiers across the United States, Europe, the Pacific, and Southeast Asia requested bundles of different papers, which they would distribute in mailrooms, mess halls, and



RAP!, published by antiwar soldiers stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, and their civilian supporters.

barracks. This was a key way that GIs from all over the world were able to join the GI movement – by interacting with and spreading the contents of the GI press.

The news reports in the GI press also inspired soldiers to take action.

Papers contained stories about antiwar protests across the country, some staged by soldiers specifically, others by the wider antiwar movement. The

papers also promoted upcoming local and national protests, and covered causes célèbres – stories of the national and global heroes of the GI movement whose actions and arrests grabbed media headlines. By reporting on protests involving GIs at other bases, the papers also encouraged soldiers to create their own.

It's worth noting that troops who produced and circulated the GI press took serious risks.

the Ally

A NEWSPAPER FOR SERVICEMEN



INT. INSTITUT
SOC. GÉOGR. CHRON. 1914

No. 10 October, 1968 FREE to GIs Box 9276 Berkeley, Calif.

Brass helpless GI's TO MARCH; THIS TIME FOR PEACE



AIC Michael Locks, LL, Hugh Smith, and AIC John Wright at a press conference concerning the march. If they can openly organize and publicize this march, so can you. March with them or telegraph support.

IT IS ABSOLUTELY LEGAL FOR GIs WEARING CIVILIAN CLOTHES TO MARCH IN THE GIs AND VETS MARCH FOR PEACE ON OCTOBER 12.
IT IS YOUR RIGHT AND MORAL DUTY TO DEMONSTRATE.
ONLY THEN WILL THE PUBLIC KNOW OF THE SOLDIERS' CONCERN.
ONLY WE CAN END THIS WAR.
LET THE ONES WHO MUST DIE FOR PEACE, WAGE PEACE ALSO.
-L.L. Hugh Smith

More GI's Resist

As election time approaches resistance increases. This seems to be the development, survey. But some of the major presidential aspirants offer no pledges for the GI - none intend to give him any when elected.

Another Letter from LBJ

Dear Editor,
Don't get me wrong I don't see you out there, at least at first I had 2 years to go. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio. And I just got out of LBJ. It's a long story but you know how I got in. I'm not sure. Here is my story about LBJ.
I'm a good brother and I put LBJ on the 4th of September with only 17 days to go. I'm not sure my story until September 12, they were in jail for 10 days. I'll leave here December. LBJ is not a place where you can go. You are in jail. Try to LBJ you are in jail. I'm not sure. I had 4 months to do and if you are good they give you five days good time for every month.
This is true. At first I was up for a 2 1/2 which means out of the Army, but they said LBJ is not the one. We got up to 400 every morning. Now is from 5 to 8 and we go to work with our work with guard. It's two sides to LBJ. I had a good side and a bad side. We have still call three times a day and the only thing that is good about LBJ is when you get short. For those it's like this, one piece of shit.

It's LEGAL to march

Members of the Armed Forces are entitled to march on October 12 if they wish to. This is a Constitutional right. If the Armed Services take any action against any active or inactive member of the Armed Forces the full weight of the 125-man Lawyers Guild Service Force will be used in their behalf.
-statement of San Francisco attorney Aubrey Grossman.
If you are prevented from marching, Grossman, 4123 7th St., S.F., will issue a lawyer to your case. If you have a case for the phone, you have enough money.



AIC AUBREY GROSSMAN

EAST COAST MARCH

As the Ally goes to press, we have information of another GI march for October 12th. The Servicemen's Peace & Freedom League is planning to march on the White House at the same time that West Coast GIs will be marching in San Francisco.
East Coast GIs should contact GI Barry, 1204 Wyoming St., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20005, or District of Columbia, peace groups.
(Continued on Back Page)

Inside this Ally...

U.S. elections: ALLY comments... p. 23
A WAC speaks... p. 8
SUPREME COURT and the MARCH... p. 7

THE ALLY, published by service personnel and supporters in Berkeley, California.

They could face harassment, punishment, and even time in the stockade if they were caught spreading material that was considered subversive. Skip Delano was stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and was a key organizer in the GI organizing efforts there. Delano and others put out a paper called *Left Face*. He recounts elsewhere in *Waging Peace in Vietnam*:
"We'd have to spend a fair amount of time figuring out

how to get the paper out, into hands of people on the base. You'd sneak around at night and you'd run in barracks and you'd throw it on the beds and you'd split and get the hell out of there. I can remember running out and jumping into the trunk of a car and laying in the trunk; the MPs would come and you would be hiding in the trunk of some cars and hoping you wouldn't get caught. Because if you got caught, you could

get six months in the stockade, the potential punishment for distributing unauthorized literature, which the papers were characterized as".

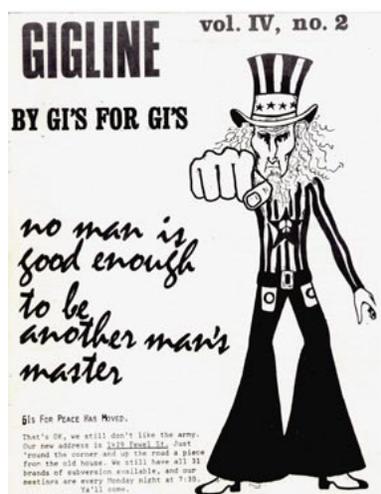
Along with production and distribution, the very act of reading and writing for the GI press was a way that thousands of soldiers across the world could plug into a movement of global GI dissent. Letters to specific papers brimmed with readers' words of praise, stories of perceived injustices at their own bases, countercultural musings about love and peace (and sometimes drugs), and updates on their own GI organizing efforts. These letters are windows into an otherwise-lost world of Vietnam-era soldier dissent that had the GI press at its center.

For example, *The Ally*, a paper produced in Berkeley and circulated globally for years, with a print run in the thousands, received hundreds of letters in which GIs described their feelings about the war, the military, and their attempts to help build the GI movement. From Korea to the Philippines, from Long Binh to Da Nang, and from bases across every US region, GIs sent letters describing local protests, paper-distribution efforts and run-ins with the brass, and offered critical riffs on the war and the military.

Like many other papers, *The Ally* would print these letters in its pages (in a section called "Sound-Off!" - the paper's most popular feature). These printed

letters showed readers that they were not alone in their thoughts – that GIs all over the world felt as they did. In this way, the GI press, functioned as the “social media” of its day and, like the GI antiwar coffee-houses, was a core vehicle for the advancement of the wider GI movement.

By the early to mid-1970s, the GI press was in decline, though some papers would continue operations for years after the Vietnam War ended. In today’s Internet age, the power of the GI press lives on – not so much in the print press that the GI movement used, but in blogs, social media accounts, and podcasts



GIGLINE, published by GIs at Fort Bliss, in El Paso, Texas.

by antiwar military groups and individuals who draw inspiration from the history of soldier dissent during the Vietnam era.

The story of the GI underground press is a testament to the scope and dynamism of the historic wave of soldier dissent during the Vietnam War.

Fortunately, through the digital GI Press Collection compiled by James Lewes and made available online by the Wisconsin Historical Society, scholars, journalists, activists, and others now have access to an extensive archive through which we can continue to explore the history of the GI movement. **CT**

Derek Seidman is a researcher and historian based in Buffalo, New York. He has a PhD in history from Brown University. All images provided by the GI Press Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society.

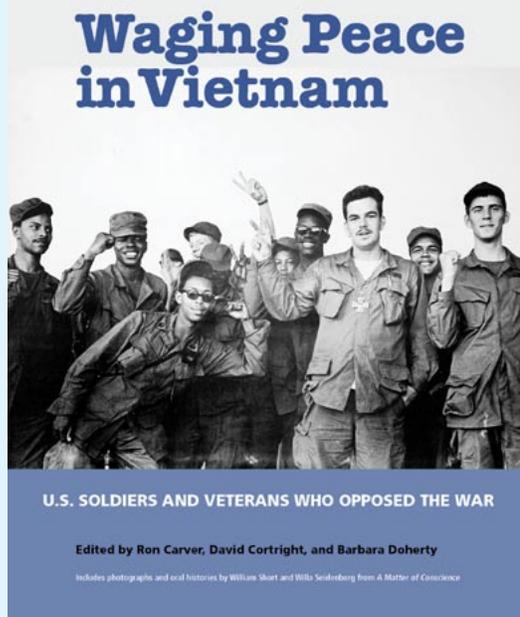
WAGING PEACE IN VIETNAM

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Climate change is an equal opportunity disrupter. Now it's Europe's turn as it faces a one-two punch of too much water in the north and centre and not enough in the south, writes **Conn Hallinan**

Climate catastrophe comes to Europe

ON August 18, several dozen people gathered around a patch of snow in Iceland to commemorate the demise of the Okjokull glacier, a victim of climate change. Further to the west, Greenland shed 217-billion tons of ice in the month of July alone.

- Paris reached 108.7 degrees Fahrenheit on July 25, and normally cold, blustery Normandy registered 102 degrees. Worldwide, July 2019 was the hottest month on record.

- Melting Russian permafrost – which makes up two-thirds of the country – is buckling roads, collapsing buildings, and releasing massive amounts of methane, a gas with the ten times the climate-warming potential of carbon dioxide,

- 1,500 residents of Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire were recently evacuated when a dam – overwhelmed by intense rainfall that pummelled northern England – threatened to break. The rains washed out roads and rail lines and swamped

homes and business.

Ever since coal was partnered with water to generate steam and launch the industrial revolution, Europeans have been pouring billions of tons of atmospheric warming compounds into the planet's atmosphere. While scientists were aware of the climate-altering potential of burning hydrocarbons as early as 1896, the wealth generated by spinning jennies, power looms and drop forges was seductive, as was the power it gave countries to build colonial empires and subjugate populations across the globe.

But the bill is finally coming due.

When most people think of climate change, what come to mind are the Poles, Asia's fast vanishing glaciers, or Australia, where punishing droughts are drying up the sub-continent's longest river, the Murray. But climate change is an equal opportunity disrupter, and Europe is facing a one-two punch of too much water in

the north and centre and not enough in the south.

According to recent projections, drought regions in Europe will expand from 13 percent of the continent to 26 percent and last four times as long, affecting upwards of 400-million people. Southern France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece will be particularly hard hit, though how hard will depend on whether the planet's temperature hike is kept to 1.5 degrees centigrade or rises to 3 degrees centigrade.

Northern and Central Europe, on the other hand, will experience more precipitation and consequent flooding. Upward of a million people would be effected and damage would run into the hundreds of billions of euros. While weather is battering away at Europe, sea rises of from four to six feet over the next century would inundate Copenhagen, the Netherlands, many French and German ports and London. If the Greenland ice sheet actually melted, the oceans would



TOO MUCH WATER: Flooding at Bradford, in England, 2015.

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come up 24 feet.

Food production will be another casualty. According to David Wallace-Wells in *The Uninhabitable Earth*, cereal crops will decline 10 percent for every degree the temperature goes up. When crops fail, people will move and the logical place to go is north. It is not just war and unrest that is driving refugees toward Europe, but widespread crop failures brought about by too little or too much water.

The warming climate also allows insects like the bark beetle to attack Europe's forests. The beetles are increasingly active in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Norway and, particularly, Russia, which host the largest temperate forests in the world.

Each tree that dies is one less carbon sink to transmute CO₂ to oxygen. And dead trees are more susceptible to forest fires, which can pump yet more of the climate warming gas into the atmosphere. Fires are not only increasing in countries like Spain, Greece and Portugal, but also in Sweden and Finland.

For many years climate change deniers – funded by hydrocarbon industry think tanks and sophisticated media campaigns – managed to inject a certain amount of doubt concerning global warming, but a rash of devastating hurricanes and last year's wildfires in California have begun to shift public opinion. Last spring's European elections saw Green parties all

over the continent do well, and polls indicate growing alarm among the public.

A number of different European parties, including the British Labour Party, are pushing a “Green New Deal For Europe” based on a call by the United Nations to reduce green house gas emissions to zero by 2050.

The European Green Deal proposes using public investment banks to fund much of the plan, which is aimed at keeping rising temperatures to 1.5 degrees centigrade. While the price for rolling back emissions will certainly be high, the costs for not doing so are far greater, including the possibility that worldwide temperatures could go by as much as 5 degrees centigrade, a level that might make

much of the world unlivable for human beings.

A jump of that magnitude would be similar to the kind of temperature rise the world experienced at the end of the Permian Era, 25-million years ago. Called the “Great Extinction,” it killed 96 percent of life in the sea and 70 percent on land.

A major reason for the Permian die off was the expansion of cyanobacteria, which produce a toxic cocktail that can kill almost anything they come in contact with. Such cyanobacteria blooms are already underway in more than 400 places throughout the world, including a large dead zone in the Baltic Sea. Some New York lakes have become so toxic that the water is fatal to pets that drink from them.

The major fuel for cyanobacteria is warm water coupled with higher rainfall – one of the consequences of climate change – that washes nutrients into lakes and rivers.

Of the 195 countries that signed the Paris Climate Accords, only seven are close to fulfilling their carbon emission pledges. And one of the world’s biggest sources of global warming gasses, the US, has withdrawn. If all 195 countries met their goals, however, the climate is still on target to reach 3 degrees Celsius. Even if the rise can be kept to 2 degrees, it will likely melt the Greenland ice cap and possibly

the Antarctic ice sheets. Greenland’s melt would raise ocean levels by 24 feet, the Antarctic by hundreds of feet.

As overwhelming as the problem seems, it can be tackled, but only if the world mobilises the kind of force it did to fight World War II. It will, however, take a profound rethinking of national policy and the economy.

The US organisation most focused on climate change these days is the Pentagon, which is gearing up to fight the consequences. But the US’s enormous defence apparatus is a major part of the problem, because military spending is carbon heavy. According to Brown University’s “Cost Of War” project, the Pentagon is the single largest consumer of hydrocarbons on the planet. Yet a number of European countries – under pressure from the Trump administration – are increasing their military spending, exactly the wrong strategy to combat the climate threat.

The world will need to agree that keeping hydrocarbons in the ground is essential. Fracking, tar sands and opening yet new sources for oil and gas in the arctic will have to halt. Solar, hydro and wind power will need to be expanded, and some very basic parts of the economy re-examined.

This will hardly be pain free.

For instance, it takes 1,857 gallons of water to produce a pound of beef, compared to 469 gallons for a pound of chicken. Yogurt uses 138 gallons. While beef production uses 60 percent of agricultural land, it only provides 2 percent of human caloric intake.

It is unlikely that people will give up meat – although growing economic inequality has already removed meat from the diet of many – but what we eat and how we produce it will have to be part of any solution. For instance, a major source of green house gases is industrial agriculture with its heavy reliance on chemical fertilisers.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, close to 30 percent of food production goes to waste, most of it in wealthy countries. A fair distribution of food supplies would not only feed more people, it would use less land, thus cutting green house gasses up to 10 percent. Add to that curbing beef production, and hundreds of millions of square miles of grange land would be freed up to plant carbon absorbing trees.

Can this be done incrementally? It may have to be, but not for long. Climate change is upon us. What that future will be is up to the current generation to figure out, and while there is no question that concerted action can make a difference, the clock is ticking. When next the bell tolls, it tolls for us all. **CT**

Conn Hallinan writes a regular column at www.dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com and at middleempireseries.wordpress.com

The global capitalist ruling classes need to keep everyone whipped into a frenzy until they can implement the New Normality, after which the really serious reality policing can finally begin, writes **CJ Hopkins**

The future of the spectacle

(Or how the West learned to stop worrying and love the reality police)

If you want a vision of the future, don't imagine "a boot stamping on a human face – for ever", as Orwell suggested in 1984. Instead, imagine that human face staring mesmerised into the screen of some kind of nifty futuristic device on which every word, sound, and image has been algorithmically approved for consumption by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ("DARPA") and its "innovation ecosystem" of "academic, corporate, and governmental partners".

The screen of this futuristic device will offer a virtually unlimited range of "non-divisive" and "hate-free" content, none of which will falsify or distort the "truth", or in any way deviate from "reality". Western consumers will finally be free to enjoy an assortment of news, opinion, entertainment, and educational content (like this *Guardian* podcast about a man who gave birth, or MSNBC's latest bombshell about Donald Trump's secret

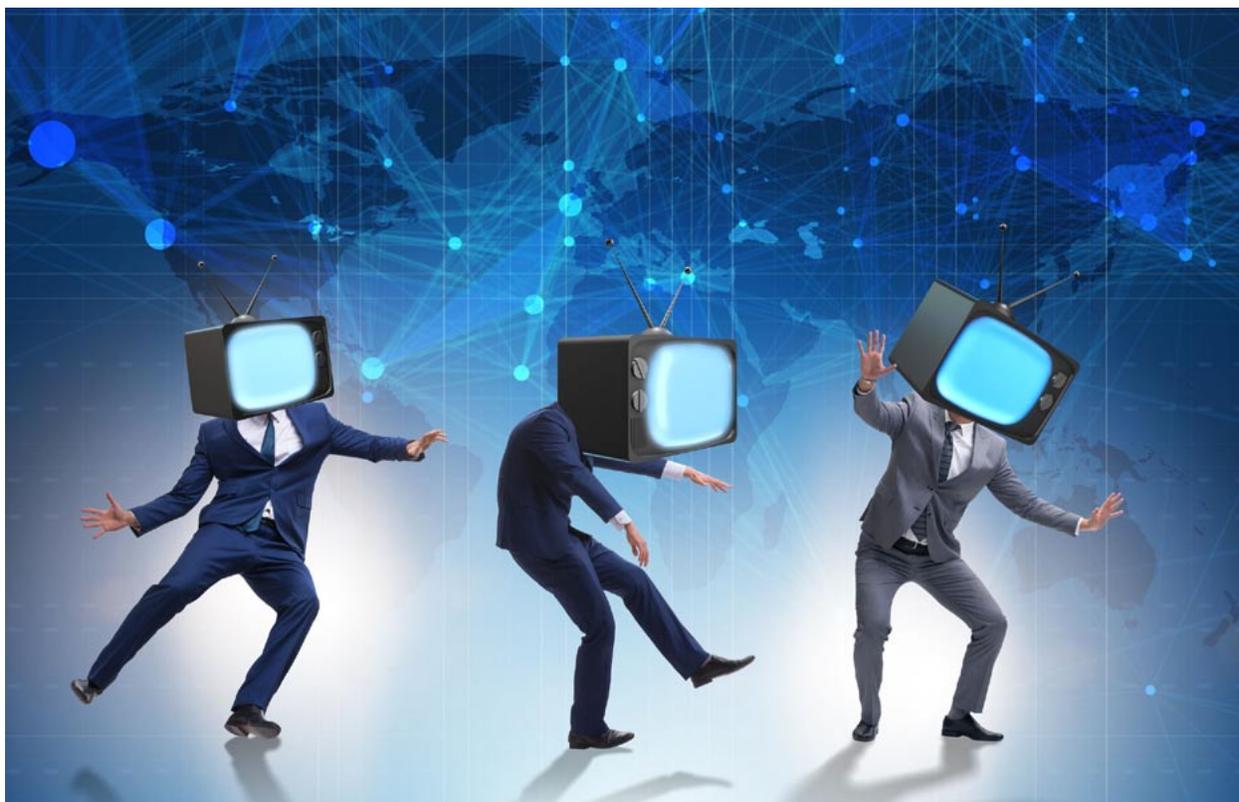
Russian oligarch backers) without having their enjoyment totally ruined by discord-sowing alternative journalists like Aaron Maté or satirists like myself.

"Fake news" will not appear on this screen. All the news will be "authentic". DARPA and its partners will see to that. You won't have to worry about being "influenced" by Russians, Nazis, conspiracy theorists, socialists, populists, extremists, or whomever. Such Persons of Malicious Intent will still be able to post their content (because of "freedom of speech" and all that stuff), but they will do so down in the sewers of the internet where normal consumers won't have to see it. Anyone who ventures down there looking for it (ie, such "divisive" and "polarising" content) will be immediately placed on an official DARPA watch list for "potential extremists," or "potential white supremacists", or "potential Russians".

Once that happens, their lives will be over (ie, the lives of

the potentially extremist fools who have logged onto whatever dark web platform will still be posting essays like this, not the lives of the Persons of Malicious Intent, who never had any lives to begin with, and who by that time will probably be operating out of some heavily armed, off-the-grid compound in Idaho). Their schools, employers, and landlords will be notified. Their photos and addresses will be published online. Anyone who ever said two words to them (or, God help them, appears in a photograph with them) will have 24 hours to publicly denounce them, or be placed on DARPA's watchlist themselves.

Meanwhile, up where the air is clean, Western consumers will sit in their cubicles, or stagger blindly down the sidewalk like zombies, or come barrel-assing at you on their pink corporate scooters, staring down at the screens of their devices, where normal reality will be unfolding. They will stare at their



screens at their dinner tables, in restaurants, in bed, and everywhere else. Every waking hour of their lives will be spent consuming the all-consuming, smiley, happy, global capitalist Spectacle, every empty moment of which will be monitored and pre-approved by DARPA.

What a relief that will finally be, not to have to question anything, or wonder what is real and what isn't. When the corporate media tell us the Russians hacked an election, or the Vermont power grid, or are blackmailing the president with an FSB peetape, or that the non-corporate media are all "propaganda peddlers", or that the Labour Party is a hive of antisemites, or that some boogeyman has WMDs, or is yanking little

babies out of their incubators, or gratuitously gassing them, or attacking us with crickets, or that someone secretly met with Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy, or that we're being attacked by Russian spy whales, and suddenly self-radicalised Nazi terrorists, or it's time for the "International Community" to humanitarially intervene because "our house is burning", and our world is on fire, and there are "concentration camps", and a "coup in Great Britain" ... or whatever ass-puckering apocalyptic panic the global capitalist ruling classes determine they need to foment that day, we will know that this news has been algorithmically vetted and approved by DARPA and its corporate, academic, and gov-

ernment partners, and thus, is absolutely "real" and "true", or we wouldn't be seeing it on the screen of our devices.

If you think this vision is science fiction, or dystopian satire, think again. Or read this recent article in *Bloomberg*, "US Unleashes Military to Fight Fake News, Disinformation". Here's the lead to get you started:

"Fake news and social media posts are such a threat to US security that the Defense Department is launching a project to repel 'large-scale, automated disinformation attacks' ... the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) wants custom software that can unearth fakes hidden among more than

500,000 stories, photos, video and audio clips. If successful, the system after four years of trials may expand to detect malicious intent and prevent viral fake news from polarising society ...”

What could be more reassuring than the knowledge that DARPA and its corporate partners will be scanning the entire Internet for content created with “malicious intent”, or which has the potential to “polarise” society, and making sure we never see that stuff? If they can’t do it, I don’t know who can. They developed the Internet, after all. I’m not exactly sure how they did it, but Yasha Levine wrote a book – *Surveillance Valley* – about it, which I think we’re still technically allowed to read.

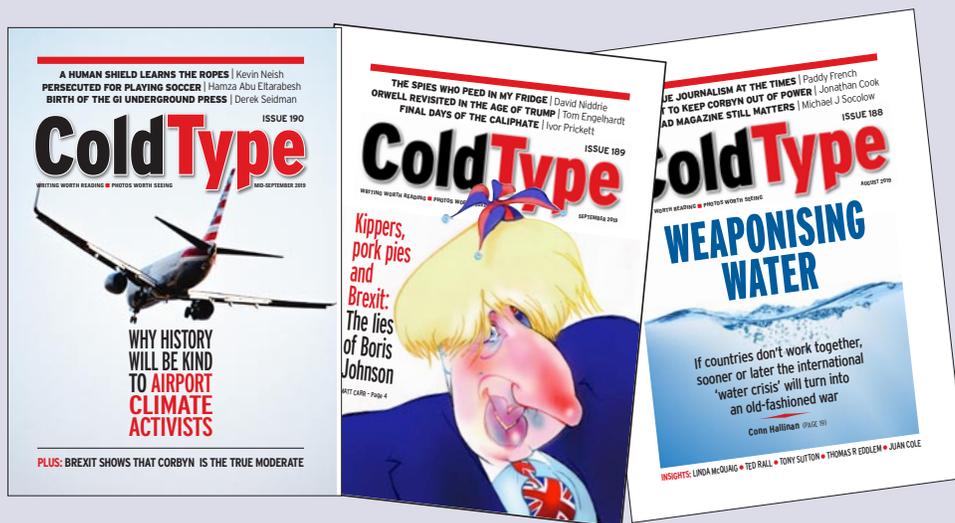
Anyway, according to the *Bloomberg* article, DARPA and its corporate partners won’t have the system up and running in time for the 2020 elections, so the Putin-Nazis will probably win again. Which means we are looking at four more years of relentless Russia and fascism hysteria, and fake news and divisive content hysteria, and anti-Semitism and racism hysteria, and ... well, basically, general apocalyptic panic over anything and everything you can possibly think of.

Believe me, I know, that prospect is exhausting ... but the global capitalist ruling classes need to keep everyone whipped into a shrieking apoplectic frenzy over anything other

than global capitalism until they can win the War on Populism and globally implement the New Normality, after which the really serious reality policing can finally begin.

I don’t know, call me crazy, or a Person of Malicious Intent, but I think I’d prefer that boot in the face. **CT**

C. J. Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and political satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, ZONE 23, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant Paperbacks. He can be reached at cjhopkins.com or consentfactory.org



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Shafted

The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath

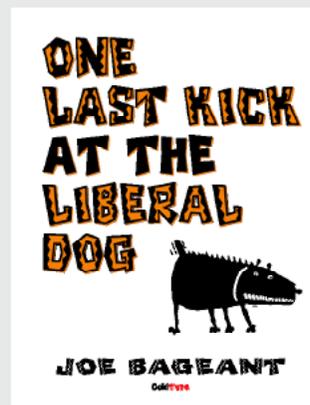
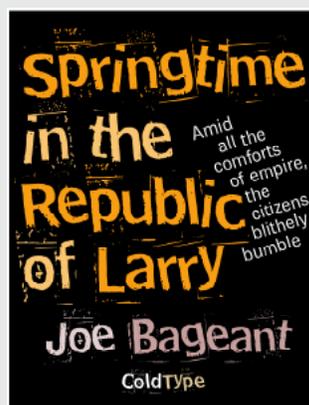
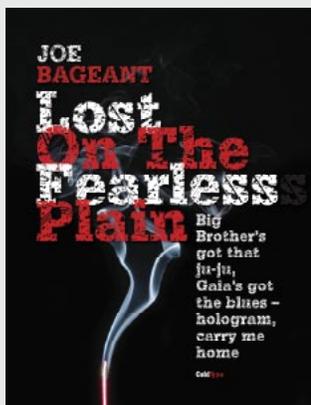
New Edition | Edited by Granville Williams

The first edition of *Shafted* was published for the 25th anniversary of the miners' strike, just after lax regulation and the financial excesses of the banks led to a government bailout of billions of pounds. So much has happened in the decade since that the second edition is a completely new book. The revelations in the government archives on the miners' strike, the establishment of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, the cruel austerity policies of the LibDem and Tory governments, and the new interest in the pit camps set up in the wake of the announcement in October 1992 to close 31 pits with the loss of 31,000 jobs are all covered in the new edition.



You can buy *Shafted* direct from the publisher, **Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North)**. The book costs £9.99 and is available in the UK for £11.00 inc P&P. Send cheques made out to CPBF(North) to 24 Tower Avenue, Upton, near Pontefract, West Yorks, WF9 1EE

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READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT

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A brief history of smells and social spaces, by **William Tullett**

The past stinks

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ON a sunny afternoon in Paris an intrepid TV presenter asks passers-by to smell a bottle he has in his hand. When they smell it they react with disgust. One woman even spits on the floor as a mark of her distaste. What is in the bottle? It holds, we are told, the *Pong de Paris*, a composition designed to smell like an 18th-century Parisian street.

The interpretation of past scents that we are given on the television, perhaps influenced by Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume*, is frequently dominated by offence. It's a view found not just on TV but in museums. In England, York's Jorvik Viking Centre, Hampton Court Palace, and the Museum of Oxfordshire have all integrated smells into their exhibits.

The one smell that unites these attempts at re-odorising the past: toilets. Viking toilets, a Georgian water closet, and the highly urinous and fecal smell of a Victorian street, all included in the above exam-

ples, thread the needle of disgust from the medieval to the modern.

The consequence of such depictions is to portray the past as an odorous prelude, with foul-smelling trades and poor sanitation, to the clean and pleasant land of modernity.

Suggesting that people who are not "us" stink has a long history. It is applied to our forebears just as often as is to other countries, peoples, or cultures. It is not accident that *Filthy Cities* – an English TV programme, highlighted the stink of 18th-century France – for even then the English had associated the French, their absolutist Catholic enemies, with the stink of garlic.

The toilet-training narrative is a simple and seductive story about "our" conquest of stench. But the *Pong de Paris* misses the point. Too busy turning the past into a circus of disgust for modern noses, it fails to ask how it smelled to those

who lived there. New historical work reveals a more complex story about past scents.

A careful examination of the records of urban government, sanitation, and medicine reveal that 18th-century English city-dwellers were not particularly bothered by unsanitary scents. This was partly because people adapted to the smells around them, to the extent that they failed to notice their presence.

But, thanks to 18th-century scientific studies of air and gases, many Georgians also recognised that bad smells were not as dangerous as had been thought. In his home laboratory, Joseph Priestley experimented on mice, while others used scientific instruments to measure the purity of the air on streets and in bedrooms. The conclusion was simple: smell was not a reliable indicator of danger.

Scientist and social reformer Edwin Chadwick claimed in 1846 that "all smell... is disease". But smell had a more complex place in miasma theory – the idea that diseases were caused



'Living Mady Easy: Revolving hat', a satirical print with a hat supporting a spy glass, an ear trumpet, a cigar, a pair of glasses, and a scent box, 1830, London.

by poisonous airs – than has often been assumed. In fact, by the time cholera began to work its morbid magic in the 1830s, a many medical writers held that smell was not a carrier of sickness-inducing atmospheres.

Smelts tend to end up in the archive, recorded in the sources historians use: either they are normally offensive or people decide to pay special attention to them. One scent that appeared in the diaries, letters, magazines, and literature of 18th-century England, however, was tobacco smoke. A preoccupation with politeness in public places would prove a problem for pipe smokers.

Tobacco had become popular in England during the 17th-cen-

tury. But, by the mid-18th century, qualms began to be raised. A satirical poem told the story of a wife who had banned her husband from smoking, only to allow its resumption – she realised that going cold turkey had made him impotent.

New sociable venues proliferated in towns and cities, with the growth of provincial theatres, assembly rooms, and pleasure gardens. In these sociable spaces, a correspondent to *The Monthly Magazine* noted in 1798, “smoking [sic] was a vulgar, beastly, unfashionable, vile thing” and “would not be suffered in any genteel part of the world”. Tobacco smoking was left to alehouses, smoking clubs and private masculine spaces.

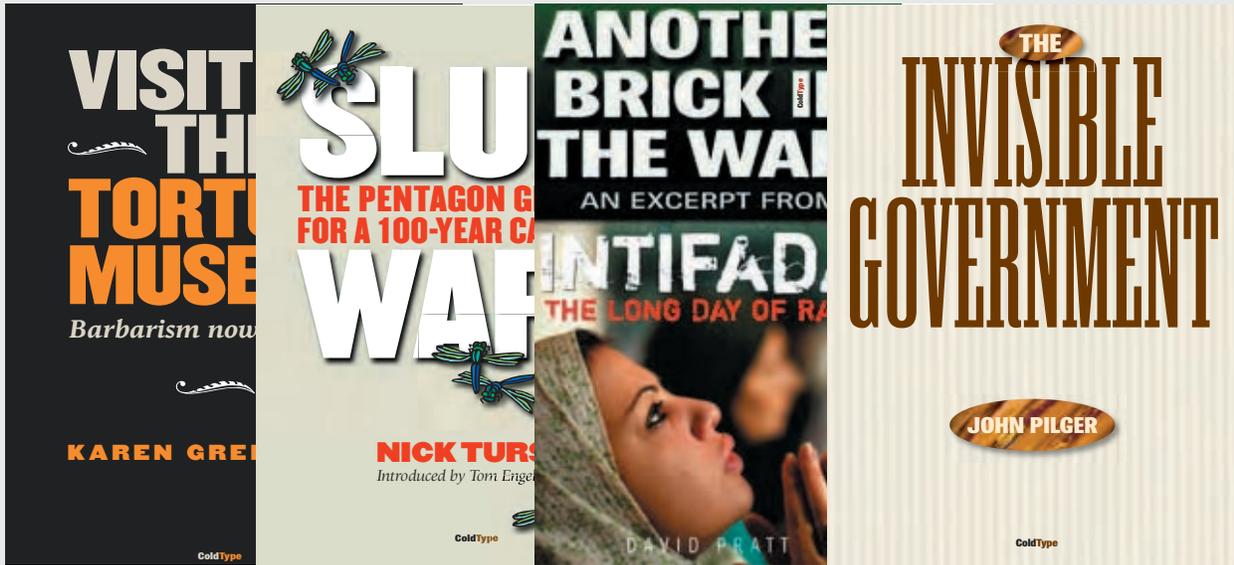
Clouds of smoke subjecting

people to atmospheres that were not of their own choosing. Instead, fashionable 18th-century nicotine addicts turned to snuff. Despite the grunting, hawking and spitting, snuff could be consumed without enveloping those around you in a cloud of sour smoke.

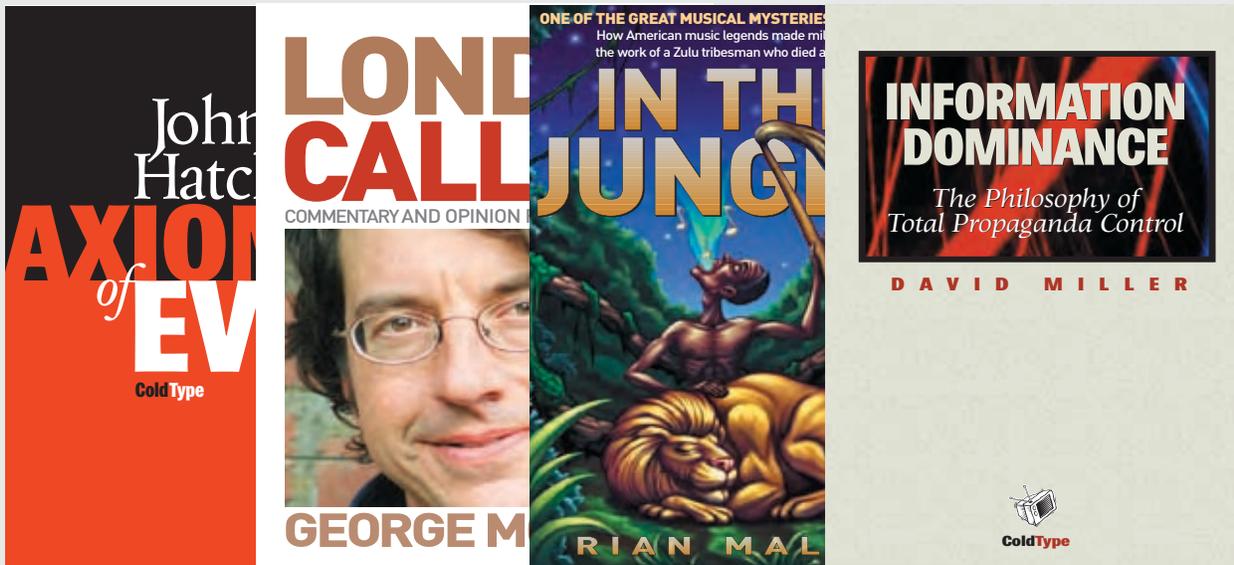
The 18th-century gave birth to modern debates about smoking and public space that are still with us today. The fact that the smell of tobacco smoke stains the archives of the period is a testament to the new ideas of personal space that were developing within it. **CT**

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William Tullett is lecturer in history at Anglia Ruskin University in England. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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Insights

Photo: Ron Fassbender



SHARING THE STAGE: Roger Waters and John Pilger.

Media ignore musical defence of Assange

By **Oscar Grenfell**

ON the evening of September 6, Roger Waters and John Pilger staged a powerful event in defence of imprisoned WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange outside the British Home Office in central London.

Waters delivered a moving rendition of Pink Floyd's iconic song *Wish You Were Here*, dedicated to Assange, while Pilger issued a scathing denunciation of the British government's attempts to facilitate his extradition to the US, where the WikiLeaks founder faces life

imprisonment for exposing war crimes.

In his first public appearance, Gabriel Shipton, Assange's brother, outlined the brutal conditions in which his sibling is imprisoned in the maximum-security Belmarsh Prison and made an appeal for his freedom.

The event was attended by around 1,000 workers, students and defenders of democratic rights. It was an objectively significant and newsworthy event, bringing together Waters, a famous musician, and Pilger,

an acclaimed investigative journalist, in defence of the most prominent political prisoner in the world today.

However, if one judged solely on the basis of coverage in the major corporate publications in Britain, continental Europe, the US and Australia, the event simply did not take place. In an extraordinary act of political censorship, none of the major news outlets even carried a brief report on the rally.

A search of Google News indicates that the number of publications that covered the event can be counted on two hands. They primarily include the World Socialist Web Site and other alternative and anti-war websites.

The censorship is most stark in Britain, where Assange is imprisoned. The *Guardian* and the *Times* newspapers have not said a word about the protest, which was within walking distance of their plush London offices. In Europe, France's *Le Monde* and Germany's *Der Spiegel*, both hailed for their supposedly "liberal" editorial inclination, have not said a word.

In the US, the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post* have published nothing. In their silence, they are joined by publications such as the *Intercept*, the *Nation* and *Jacobin*, which

claim to be “left-wing” and “progressive,” but promote the Democratic Party, which has played a central role in the pursuit of Assange.

In Australia, the blackout of the Waters/Pilger protest has extended from “liberal” outlets, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the state-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation, to the Murdoch-owned *Australian*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun*. The lack of any reportage in that country is all the more glaring, given that Assange is the most well-known Australian imprisoned abroad and that his plight is the direct outcome of the refusal by successive Labor and Coalition governments to meet their responsibility to defend a persecuted citizen.

There is no innocent explanation for the almost universal media blackout.

The *Guardian*, for instance,

has published four articles this year extensively referencing Waters’ stance on a host of political issues, including his defence of children trapped in Syria; his opposition to the Israeli regime’s persecution of the Palestinians; and condemnations of the right-wing shift in the political life of South America.

In October last year, the publication featured an on-the-spot report of a Waters’ concert in Brazil, which occurred amid the singer’s condemnations of the country’s reactionary government. Apparently, the *Guardian* was able to dispatch a reporter to Rio de Janeiro to cover a performance by the former Pink Floyd singer, but not to central London, within a stones’ throw of its headquarters. **CT**

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Oscar Grenfell wrote this column for the *World Socialist Web Site* – www.wsws.org

health care system far superior to our own. Canada’s single-payer approach to health care has become — for many Americans — a guiding inspiration.

We need what Canadians have — in more ways than one. An innovative new report from the Canadian Centre for the Study of Living Standards finds that Canadians now enjoy higher incomes than their counterparts in the United States as well.

The new report challenges conventional economic wisdom on household well-being.

That wisdom, notes report author Simon Lapointe, typically defines well-being as “GDP per capita.” To calculate this yardstick, economists take the sum total of the goods and services a nation produces, divide that by the nation’s population, and tell us the resulting number measures how well a nation’s people are doing.

By this conventional measure, Americans are doing much better than Canadians. In 2016, the latest year with comparable stats available, GDP per capita in the United States ran over 20 percent higher than GDP in Canada, \$57,798 to \$47,294.

But GDP per capita can obscure reality as most households live it, especially in a deeply unequal society like the United States. American households certainly do rate as richer than Canadian on average. But “much greater incomes at the top of the income distribution” in the United States, explains

We should make the US more like Canada

By **Sam Pizzigati**

WE Americans tend not to pay much attention to our northern neighbours. Often, entire election cycles can come and go without anyone running for

national office saying anything about Canada.

But that’s changing.

Canada now looms much larger in our politics, mainly because Canadians enjoy a

the study, are inflating that average.

To remedy this statistical distortion, Lapointe divided the Canadian and US populations “into 100 equal sized groups, ordered from lowest to highest income,” then compared the actual income for each “percentile” group. The result? Well over half of Canadian households — 56 percent — turn out to be “better off than American households at the same point in the income distribution.”

At the 20th percentile, for instance, Canadian households pocketed \$27,201 in 2016, some \$3,786 more than the comparable US household. At the 40th percentile, Canadian households made \$1,871 more than similarly situated American households.

Rich American households, on the other hand, make much more than rich Canadian households. At the 100th percentile — the top 1 percent — US households collected \$711,801 in 2016, a stunning 57 percent more than Canadian top 1 percent households.

Lapointe would be the first to admit that his new research on comparative Canadian-US household well-being has some significant limitations. His numbers, he acknowledges, only trace “money incomes before tax” and do not factor in “major government transfers in kind — public education, publicly funded health care, and publicly supported housing.”

What would happen if we

did factor in these transfers? The lives average Canadians lead would appear even more economically secure, since Canadians today get much more substantial “transfers in kind” from their government than Americans do.

Higher taxes do, to be sure, accompany Canada’s more generous social benefits — but the rich in Canada pay taxes at higher rates than the rich in the United States. This would leave ordinary Canadians even

further ahead of their American counterparts.

Let’s hope we hear a good bit more about Canada in the 2020 election campaign. We Americans have a lot to learn about how much more decent life in North America can be. **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org* for the Institute for Policy Studies. His latest book is *The Case for a Maximum Wage*.

Why Canada wants to tax the super-rich

By **Linda McQuaig**

THE *Onion* magazine once sardonically described the gap between rich and poor as the Eighth Wonder of the World -- “a tremendous, millennia-old expanse that fills us with both wonder and humility... the most colossal and enduring of mankind’s creations.”

Another aspect of the rich-poor gap that fills me with wonder is the way the rich manage to keep it off the political agenda, although that may be changing.

Prominent US Democratic presidential contenders Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders are campaigning on taxing

the super-rich, with Warren calling for a two per cent annual tax on wealth above \$50 million, rising to three per cent on billionaires.

In Canada, where politicians have shied away from even putting their toe in the water when it comes to taxing the rich, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has taken a bold plunge, calling for a version of Warren’s tax -- an annual one per cent tax on wealth over \$20-million.

This is an excellent idea, and is apparently popular. A new Abacus poll shows that 67 per cent of Canadians support (or somewhat support) a wealth

tax, along the lines proposed by Warren, and that even a majority of Conservative voters support it. That's probably about the same percentage of Canadians who support (or somewhat support) Mother's Day.

Yet the wealth tax has received little media coverage -- beyond denunciations in the *National Post*, which surely has nothing to do with the fact the media is largely owned by billionaires.

One *Post* columnist posed the bizarre question: what is the problem to which creating a wealth tax is a solution?

Fortunately, the brilliant French economist Thomas Piketty answered that question at length in his celebrated international best-seller, *Capital in the 21st Century*, where he made the case for wealth taxes.

Without them, he argued with extensive data, wealth will become ever more concentrated, allowing the mega-rich to swallow up an ever-larger share of the world's resources.

Given that 26 individuals now have as much wealth as the bottom half of humanity (3.8-billion people), one wonders at what point conservative commentators might consider this a problem. What if one individual had as much as the rest of humanity -- or if she had all the world's wealth? Would that cause alarm at the *Post*?

Let's not forget that the



super-rich typically made their fortunes by selling products built by employees we all paid to educate, and shipping those products on roads we all paid to build.

A wealth tax would redirect a tiny fraction of those fortunes back to the community to help ordinary Canadians. I'd call that a good solution to the problem of millions of Canadians working really hard but still struggling to get by.

A wealth tax would also help curb the enormous political power of the super-rich. Fossil fuel billionaires, for instance, have effectively managed to block global efforts against climate change.

Billionaires and their defenders maintain the super-rich would find ways to hide their money from tax authorities. But then why do billionaires resist such taxes? Because they know they would actually pay more -- just as they did in the early postwar years, when taxes on the rich were much higher.

Piketty notes that Warren's wealth tax is in line with historically high US tax rates on the

rich. He maintains those higher rates were key to the strong economic growth from 1940 to 1980 -- before Republicans gutted taxes on the rich, slowing down growth and swelling family fortunes.

The Canadian tax system also helps perpetuate dynastic fortunes. Canada is the only G7 country without an inheritance tax.

According to a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, between 2012 and 2016, the net worth of Canada's wealthiest 87 families grew by more than \$800-million -- per family.

The study also found that inheritance is growing in importance. Among the wealthiest Canadian families, 45 per cent had passed down wealth at least one generation in 1999, compared to 53 per cent in 2016.

So much for the argument that the super-rich are increasingly self-made entrepreneurs.

Turns out that Canada's billionaires are mostly winners in what Warren Buffett calls the "ovarian lottery." They just think they hit a triple. **CT**

Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author. Her book *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths* was among the books selected by the *Literary Review of Canada* as the "25 most influential Canadian books of the past 25 years." This column first appeared in the *Toronto Star*.

American privilege

By Caitlin Johnstone

AMERICAN liberals and progressives talk a bit about white privilege, male privilege, straight privilege etc, but one thing I never hear them talk about is American privilege: the ability their nationality gives them to have a relationship with this world we all share that the rest of us do not have.

- **American privilege** is reassuring yourself that there are problems enough at home without worrying about the trillions your government's war machine is spending terrorizing the world and encircling the planet with military bases.

- **American privilege** is reluctantly allowing the potential Commanders-in-Chief have an eight-minute conversation about foreign policy in your presidential primary debates, when your country's military policy functionally dictates the affairs of rest of the world.

- **American privilege** is arguing against the legality of assault weapons on the basis that they are "weapons of war", implying that they're fine as long as they're used to kill some foreigner's kids.

- **American privilege** is being able to masturbate your outrage addiction over a racist joke while ignoring the way your military murders black

and brown people by the tens of thousands every year.

- **American privilege** is being able to lose your mind over someone using the wrong pronouns while your government pours your tax money and resources into governments and groups who hang gay people in the town square.

- **American privilege** is believing your propaganda is the truth, and everyone else's understanding of the world is fake news.

- **American privilege** is assuming your prudish Puritanical brand of sexuality is healthy and normal so it's no big deal that you insist that all English-speaking social media adheres to your creepy nipple-hating norms.

- **American privilege** is telling foreigners to butt out of your politics when your politics are literally killing them.

- **American privilege** is having a shit fit over election meddling in one social media post, while cheerleading regime change in the next.

- **American privilege** is committing war crimes with impunity while jailing the whistleblowers and journalists who reveal them and still getting to call yourselves the good guys.

- **American privilege** is

being able to spend all day arguing online about domestic policy while the rest of the world, completely incapable of influencing your government's behavior, prays you don't get us all killed.

- **American privilege** is only having a robust antiwar movement when your own citizens are at risk of being drafted, then completely forgetting about peace for decades while an increasingly robotic military force gives you even more peace of mind.

- **American privilege** is being able to relax about war because your soldiers are being replaced with drones and proxy militias in US-driven conflicts, even though those kill people just as dead as manually operated killing machines.

- **American privilege** is being hush-hush about the egregious imperialist stances of progressive candidates like Bernie Sanders because they have some decent domestic policies.

- **American privilege** is black bloc protests against public appearances by figures like Milo Yiannopoulos and the Proud Boys while murderous war pigs like Bill Kristol, Henry Kissinger, John Bolton, David Frum and arms industry executives go from appearance to appearance completely unbothered.

- **American privilege** is benefiting from cheap goods and oil and a strong dollar and never wondering how many

innocent foreigners lost their lives and homes in the wars your government starts to make that so.

● **American privilege** is living in a nation whose government can murder an entire family one day with explosives dropped from the sky, and yet you never hearing about it because that isn't considered a newsworthy occurrence.

● **American privilege** is being one of the worst-travelled populations in the world while having military bases in

countries that most Americans wouldn't recognize the name of, let alone have been to.

● **American privilege** is having your insane culture normalised around the world via Hollywood and other media so that nobody stops and wonders why we're letting this bat shit crazy nation rule our planet, and so no one makes you feel bad about your American privilege. **CT**

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Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian blogger. Follow her at www.caitlinejohnstone.com

about... They want to be able to stir up a lot of controversy around your light bulbs, around your straws", when "70 percent of the pollution comes from the building industry, the electric power industry, and the oil industry".

Like my cupcakes, those three industries are the real problem. Banning straws while leaving those three industries in place will make about as much of a dent in the climate as eating two cups of parsley a day while continuing my cupcake habit would have made in my waistline: Not much.

My cupcake habit was a problem, but it was also a symptom of a larger problem. In the end, I got therapy for difficult feelings I was dealing with. Once I took care of my mental health, the emotional eating stopped, and I lost 30 pounds.

It's not about your straws or your light bulbs

By **Jill Richardson**

A FEW years ago, I had a cupcake problem. I'd go to the cupcake store almost daily and I'd eat at least one cupcake, sometimes more.

At the same time, I wanted to lose weight, or at least stop gaining it. So I kept looking up information about diets and superfoods, just looking for some magical solution to present itself. Something like: "The key to weight loss is eating large quantities of parsley every day." Or turmeric, maybe? Ginger? Garlic? Finally, I realised, there is no magical fix. The problem was

the cupcakes.

It's tempting to look for easy ways to fix big problems by trimming around the edges to avoid making the real changes you don't want to make. Tempting, but not feasible.

That's similar to what presidential hopeful Elizabeth Warren just said about fixing climate change. She was asked about her position on small changes like banning plastic drinking straws or inefficient light bulbs.

"Give me a break", she said. "This is exactly what the fossil fuel industry wants us to talk

Carbon pollution is also a problem as well as a symptom of a larger problem. As Warren pointed out, fossil fuel companies exert too much influence on Washington, preventing us from regulating them in the ways we need to save our climate. They also hire public relations firms to dupe the public into doubting that the climate crisis is caused by humans – or at least, not by them – and to convince us not to regulate them in a way that would save the planet but cost them money.

We should be looking for

win-win solutions to the climate crisis: solutions that create jobs and preserve quality of life and individual freedoms while simultaneously reducing carbon emissions.

In order to do that, we need to curb the corrupt influence of polluting industries that are profiting off of carbon emissions while harming the future

of our planet. And, when they try to distract us with light bulbs and drinking straws, we can't allow ourselves to be fooled. **CT**

Jill Richardson is pursuing a PhD in sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her column is distributed by OtherWords.org

Machel, not Thatcher, put Mugabe into power

By Trevor Grundy

In a two-page obituary highlighting the life and times of Robert Mugabe published in the *Times* on Saturday September 7, the late Zimbabwean President from 1980 to 2017 is quoted making a little known statement to some of his followers following the overthrow of Margaret Thatcher by her Cabinet colleagues in November, 1990.

The obituary said Mugabe rebuked his followers for cheering when they heard the news about her downfall and said to them: "Who organised our independence? Let me tell you – if it hadn't been for Mrs Thatcher none of you would be sitting here today. I'm sorry she's gone".

Mugabe's affection for the Conservative leader must have come as a jolting surprise to

most Zimbabwean MPs who were led to believe that power came from the barrels of guns and not the kind words of a British (Imperialist) Prime Minister in Britain.

Commonwealth pundits don't like to admit it but there is an over-whelming case for asserting that the person most responsible for Mugabe being in power in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2017 was not Margaret Thatcher but the quasi-Marxist President of Mozambique, the late Samora Machel.

After Mugabe's release at the end of 1974 following a decade in Rhodesian prisons, Mugabe and his sidekick Edgar Tekere made an easy "escape" from Rhodesia to Mozambique where the majority of the

largely Shona-affiliated guerrillas were based.

Legend has it that Mugabe was immediately welcomed by Machel who used his own formidable military skills to turn a book-man with nine degrees into a man of war.

Before I left Zimbabwe (I lived and worked there as a journalist from 1980 to 1996) I spent several months interviewing the nationalist leader James Chikerema. He shed light on another side to the relationship between the two men.

Chikerema was, until 1971, the Vice-President of Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (Zapu).

In mid-1975 he visited Mozambique in a failed attempt to sell himself as the natural leader of the guerrilla.

He met Samora Machel, who asked if Robert Mugabe was a Smith agent.

Chikerema told me that Machel, who came to power in 1969 after the assassination in Dar es Salaam of the founder of FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane, could not understand how closely watched "communist terrorists" (to use of the political jargon of Ian Smith's security men) like Mugabe and Tekere, could so easily slip out of police and army-controlled border areas in Rhodesia into an enemy state.

The answer came fast – Machel was wrong. Mugabe was a dedicated freedom

fighter, no-one's puppet.

But where was he?

At that time, Chikerema did not know that Mugabe and Tekere were being held under house arrest by the Mozambican authorities at a place called Vila Gouveia (Villa Katandica) in Mozambique.

Chikerema told me he was eventually able to find out the whereabouts of his uncle and let nationalist leaders know Mugabe was safe and sound but not free to act for the time being.

A relieved Mugabe wrote to his nephew on 29th July, 1975 (I have the original letter) thanking him for all his efforts: "The position of Tekere and I here is a surprise not only to you people but also to us here. We never expected to remain here for as long as this. We do not understand why the authorities here would not convey to their seniors the fact of our presence when they informed us they were doing it. We did write Chissano once and explain our position. We were assured that the letter had gone. Anyway, we are no longer worried about this since you people [James Chikerema and George Nyandoro] have got to know where we are".

Chikerema and Nyandoro had broken from ZAPU to form the small Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) in 1971.

The formation of FROLIZI

angered Mugabe and he looked to the day when nationalists would be under the same umbrella. In the meantime, he wrote, "Let the slashing and the chopping campaign go on and when there is finally a fall, what a big thud there will be".

Mugabe and Tekere were released, but Machel's intense dislike of Mugabe never quite ended.

It was Samora Machel who ordered Mugabe to return to the Lancaster House Conference after he had walked out protesting loudly about a British plan to safeguard European land rights for ten years after Independence and for farms to be transferred from one to another on a willing seller, willing buyer basis.

Machel was sick and tired of the economic consequences of supporting squabbling and irreconcilable black leaders in Rhodesia. He told Mugabe

to fall in line with Lord Carrington's demands or come and live at a small rather remote cottage at a place called Quelimane, Mozambique for the rest of his days.

Chikerema told me that Machel was jealous of Mugabe's intellectual achievements and preferred more down-to-earth men, especially the guerrilla commander Josiah Tongogara.

Sadly, Tongogara died in a car accident on Boxing Day 1979 only months before the country's first one-person-one vote elections.

Margaret Thatcher played an important role in the creation of Zimbabwe, but without Machel's strong (and threatening) words to Robert Mugabe almost four decades ago, Zimbabwe might be a different, more pleasant, place than it is today. **CT**

Trevor Grundy lived and worked as journalist in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1996.

Why some people don't trust doctors

By **Armen Henderson**

On a recent night on duty at my hospital, I was called to the room of a 60-year-old patient from Puerto Rico. He had a treat-

able cancer that had now turned end-stage and metastatic. But he refused medical interventions such as intubation or resuscitation.

Upon questioning him, I learned he was not fond of hospitals or medical treatment. In fact, he said he'd never accept chemotherapy from any doctor – even if it could have cured his disease.

He told me that a white physician once came to Puerto Rico and killed unsuspecting people using the same chemicals used to treat cancer. One of the victims was his relative, and the story was passed down through the generations, along with a warning: Never trust doctors.

I'm a black, Florida-based physician who grew up in third world Philadelphia. When I hear a story like this one, I investigate further.

My Puerto Rican patient proved to be no conspiracy theorist. The man he referred to was Cornelius Rhoads, who travelled to Puerto Rico in 1931 to study anaemia.

Soon after, Rhoads wrote a racist screed to a colleague: "What the island needs is not public health work but a tidal wave or something to totally exterminate the population. I have done my best to further the process of extermination by killing off 8."

Hospital staff in Puerto Rico discovered the letter, spurring a scandal. A government investigation cleared Rhoads of his own claims, and he went on to start what we now know as modern-

day chemotherapy. Yet a University of Puerto Rico researcher later found evidence to support the original allegations.

Throughout our history, black and brown people have repeatedly been used as test subjects without their consent, from the Tuskegee experiment that shortened the lives of black men with syphilis, to forced sterilisation of unsuspecting poor black women in Mississippi.

While I don't know any doctors who emulate Rhoads, more subtle biases abound. A 2015 survey found that 50 percent of medical students at the University of Virginia think black people naturally feel less pain. Nationally, other studies show, black people are under-treated for pain.

Doctors are also 71 percent less likely to suggest routine clinical screening such as colonoscopy to black patients with a family history of colon cancer – and 31 percent less likely to Latino patients – compared to white patients, even though these patients are more likely to die from the cancer.

These biases and others have horrifying effects. For instance, black women experience over three times more pregnancy-related deaths than white mothers.

Such cases remain in the

minds of many people of colour when we go to the doctor – and in my mind, too, as a black doctor.

Here's a prescription for American physicians: Stop violating the Hippocratic oath. Physicians must confront their biases by first recognising what they are. The same way these are learned, they can be unlearned.

Take implicit bias tests to probe some of your own hidden prejudices. Read books like *Medical Apartheid* by Harriet Washington, which medical schools should make required reading. Join or start a local chapter of Campaign Against Racism to identify institutional bias and find solutions.

Finally, if patients say they don't trust doctors, understand that they're probably right on some level.

My Puerto Rican patient died before I could apologise for the evil that had been done to his family by people who swore to do no harm. How many more people have to die feeling that way? **CT**

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Armen Henderson is a Florida-based physician from Philadelphia and founder of the Dade County Street Response. This op-ed was produced by the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, first published by the Philadelphia Inquirer, and adapted for distribution by www.OtherWords.org

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