



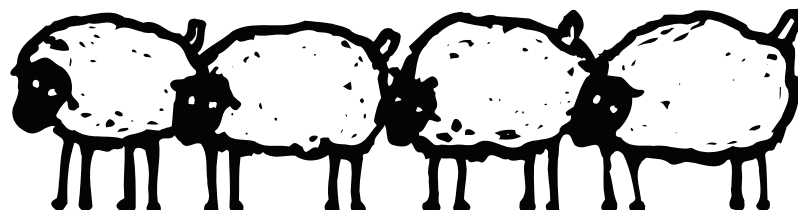
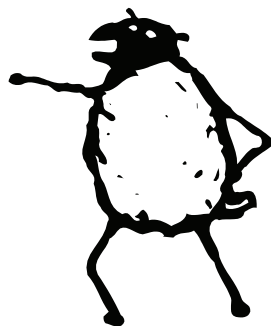
## PROGRESSIVES RAISE EXPECTATIONS; DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO LOWER THEM

JAKE JOHNSON

When Barack Obama won the presidential election in 2008, expectations were high. What occupied the minds of the president-elect's advisers, however, was not how to live up to those expectations, but how to temper them. "He's got to lower some expectations, indicate the limits he's confronting," said former Bill Clinton staffer Leon Panetta. "He's got a story to tell about how he's confronting the worst crisis that any president has faced in modern history, and I think he can make clear that he's going to try to deal with these problems one at a time."

Panetta was, of course, referring to the Great Recession – the worst economic downturn since the Depression – a crisis that sparked a sharp rise in unemployment, eliminated trillions of dollars in wealth, and devastated millions of homeowners, many of whom were victimized by predatory lending.

Over the last several decades, the New Democrats have come to occupy the center of the Democratic establishment, with great consequences for working families and the business class. With Democratic majorities in both houses of



Congress, though, the environment seemed ripe for a move in the direction of a recovery that would both offer robust assistance to Americans harmed by the economic crisis and set the stage for a shift toward a more equitable distribution of wealth. Quickly, the president squashed these hopes. Turning to such figures as Robert Rubin – the "godfather" of Wall Street deregulation during the Clinton years – and Timothy Geithner, Rubin's protégé, President Obama, in the words of Matt Taibbi, "pulled a bait-and-switch on us."

"If it were any other politician, we wouldn't be surprised," Taibbi added. "Maybe it's our fault, for thinking he was different." The banks, in short, were bailed out, and Main Street was not. And the banks are now back, "almost as big as ever," while Main Street contends with stagnant wages and a thoroughly lopsided recovery. In 2015, Justin Wolfers would note that "so far all of the gains of the recovery have gone to the top 1 percent." Further, President Obama reneged on his promise to protect homeowners from foreclosures in the aftermath of the crash and, famously, he failed to hold prominent bankers accountable for their crimes.

Disillusionment followed, but we should not have been surprised President Obama has frequently assured us, if in less than definitive language, that he is no radical, that he is firmly entrenched in the camp of the New Democrats – if his own words were not sufficient, one needed only to observe the institutions that funded his presidential campaign to understand that systemic changes would not be forthcoming.

Over the last several decades, the New Democrats have come to occupy the center of the Democratic establishment, with great consequences for working families and the business class. Particularly since George McGovern's landslide loss to Richard Nixon in 1972, Democrats have maintained a skeptical posture toward what they have long viewed as excessive idealism. Commitment to the New Deal tradition, a tradition that utilized mass politics to force progressive change, was thus transplanted by pragmatism – a fancy word for sterile, business-friendly centrism – in order to ensure that the left was kept in check by a powerful center.

Democrats' shifting donor base – the move from union halls to corporate boardrooms, the abandonment of the

working class in favor of the professional class – also helped to ingrain the ideological bent that brought us the Democratic Leadership Council and, ultimately, Bill Clinton.

The goal of Clinton Democrats, once they achieved power, was simple: To demonstrate that the Democratic Party had adapted to the times. No longer would they conform to the typical perception of the Democratic Party as the party of higher taxes and "big government." Instead, they would embrace a variety of interest groups and take an ostensibly neutral stance toward business and labor. All too often, however, their favor was heaped upon the former.

"Convinced of the state's incompetence, flush with cash from Wall Street and Silicon Valley – or maybe just too busy going after welfare recipients – Clinton showed no interest in initiating ambitious new programs that could improve people's lives," writes Shawn Gude.

Instead, Clinton, while still paying fealty to progressive causes, hit the nation with welfare reform (called by a former Clinton ally "morally and practically indefensible"), NAFTA, and Wall Street deregulation.

And as Republicans continued to lurch further and further right in the years following Clinton, Democrats, unwilling to return to their roots, continued their rightward slide, as well.

Presenting the conservative movement as a powerful force that must be stopped at all costs, Democrats began to focus less on articulating an ambitious social agenda – one that, if implemented, would improve the material conditions of the population – and more on doing just enough to counter the Republican threat.

As Adolph Reed put it in an essay published in 2014, "fears of a relentless Republican juggernaut pressured those left of center to take a defensive stance, focusing on the immediate goal of electing Democrats to stem or slow the rightward tide. At the same time, business interests, in concert with the Republican right and supported by an emerging wing of neoliberal Democrats, set out to roll back as many as possible of the social protections and regulations the left

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**CONNECTIONS**

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*Editors Letter*

BRUCE GIUDICI

Horserace politics moves on. Now it's Hillary and Donald, between whom there is a difference and with Hillary, we do not regress as much. Major media will focus on the personalities, hairstyles and consumption choices of these candidates and their friends - avoiding issues that might upset

advertisers, lobbyists and their bosses.

For us, we will focus on the issues that have stirred and inspired this nation, awakened by gunshots, shocked by bigotry and anxious over a darkening financial future for the great majority.

Answers we have in abundance, if we are willing to ask the hard questions

Building a strong foundation

and be unafraid to offend the rich and powerful. One presidential candidate called it a revolution - the throwing over of power relationships that have sharply favored a tiny class of the global wealthy. Bernie Sanders' laser focus on problems of income inequality, climate change, universal health care, free public higher education, fair trade, and anti-war international relations forced these issues into peoples' homes every day for months. And those issues got votes

of the most important type: those of our youth. From those seeds can spring a hope for our sustainable future - if we water, fertilize, and nurture the crop that we have now planted.

So, the presidential election will start - and we must push all those issues that were not able to run the gauntlet of big money, corporate media and an apathetic political structure. It is not a time for mourning, but a time to continue organizing. And while for many of us who have been doing this for years are growing a bit weary, the good news is that the new crop of activists has just moved the Democratic party a lot more towards our vision of peace

and justice for all. Now is not the time to be angry at not winning the prize; it is a time to build a solid foundation so, when the prize is finally won, it will be impossible to return to where we are now.



Outlaw military weapons - period

Today, I watched in horror as the local and national television media unraveled the Orlando story of the murder of fifty people and injury of fifty-three. These victims happened to be celebrating in a predominantly gay club. The assassin used a military assault rifle and high powered handgun. Then, I attended the rally of Stocktonians at City Hall as they emptied their hearts of the anguish they feel and the need for love that they shared.

My thoughts on this are that it makes

no difference the motives. If the assault had happened at a National Press Club dinner, a Chamber of Commerce gala, a board meeting of General Electric, General Dynamics, or General Motors, there would be a bill on the President's desk by Tuesday. That bill would outlaw ALL military style weapons immediately. All Americans deserve no less. Shame on our congress and our President.

JERRY BAILEY

Peace in Stockton

JESSICA RETH

My proposal to create more peace in Stockton is to start doing an act of kindness, making the right choices, and being respectful to one another. This idea may soon inspire others to do the same thing and commit non-violence.

The first thing you would do is to start with children. As they grow up they would be influenced to do an act of kindness. Friends and family might also be persuaded to do the same thing. When children do things voluntarily, adults may be inspired by these children to do the same. This could also spread from one area to another area.

Meanwhile, making the right choices is something that almost everyone needs to do. When adults take drugs, it becomes a bad influence on children. When making appropriate choices, children would be encouraged to do it. They would soon know what is acceptable and unacceptable. However, making the right choices might not always be the right choice.

Yet, you should always be kind and respectful to someone. Even to people you do not know. By doing this, it might create a more peaceful environment. When you are being rude, someone might get a bad idea. They would judge you unfavorably. That would make a bad environment and not create peace.

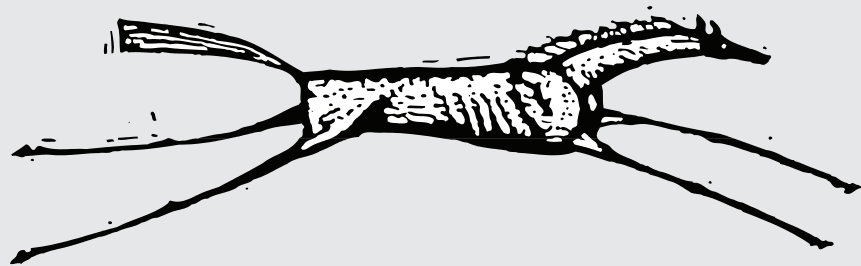
On the other hand, some people may not be able to cooperate with these ideas. Some people might feel at peace when they know their family is safe or when they could trust a friend. They might also feel at peace when they are listening to music. Each individual, in this city, has their own type of peace. It could be anything they want to. Nonetheless, as long as everyone has their own peace, Stockton could become a more peaceful place.



Learning

ANGELES SANVICENTE, GRADE 2

Then I felt happy because the baby swan was learning how to swim. I started to think when my mom taught me to tie my shoes. I felt that the baby swan and I had something in common. I started to think the baby swan had learned something very important. So I thought that everything people are trying to help us with is very important to know.



Peace and Love

ASHLEY MONTELAONGO, GRADE 2

*Peace can be love and love can be peace.  
 So when you have peace, the world comes together and stops, and stops fighting.  
 So be happy with what you have.  
 Have fun in life.  
 You never know what wondrous things might happen in life.  
 So do peace.  
 Be happy in life and life will be happy with life.  
 And life will be happy with you.*

# Beyond Clinton: the plan forward



ETHAN COREY

“We want to make sure the issues that have dominated the course of this political movement, the Bernie issues, are still front and center in everyone’s thoughts... We want to make sure we have debt-free college, that we push towards single-payer healthcare. We want to hold Hillary Clinton responsible on a \$15 minimum wage. We want to make sure there’s a national ban on fracking. It’s really about making sure we hold the nominee accountable.” More than 14 months after launching his bid for president, Bernie Sanders formally endorsed Hillary Clinton at an event in Portsmouth, N.H. on July 12.

As the dust settles, the organizations and movements who helped drive his campaign to victory in 22 states are planning their next steps and pondering how they can continue the fight through the general election.

Many major progressive organizations that broke ranks with the Democratic establishment to endorse Sanders during the primaries, such as the Progressive Change Campaign Committee (PCCC) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA), have chosen to unite around Clinton in the general election. Others, including the grassroots volunteer group People for Bernie and the fiercely independent union National Nurses United, are forging their own path.

“We endorsed Bernie Sanders because we thought he was the right person at the right time to lead our country,” says Rafael Navar, national political director for CWA. “But he’s not going to be the nominee. He didn’t win, so our focus is making sure the Democratic nominee is the next person in the White House and definitely stopping Trump, who supports anti-union policies and thinks wages are too high.” CWA volunteers will knock on doors, make calls and raise money to help Clinton win the general election, joining forces with the AFL-CIO and other labor groups that backed Clinton during the primaries.

## PEOPLE FOR BERNIE

Other Bernie backers, however, remain skeptical of Clinton’s commitment to a progressive agenda and are setting their sights beyond the general election. People for Bernie, a grassroots organization that helped recruit volunteers and organized marches in support of Sanders’ campaign, released a statement after Sanders’ announcement declining to endorse Clinton, instead calling for supporters to focus on building grassroots power on the local, regional and national levels:

“When we face the reality of a new status quo—Hillary Clinton as the Democratic Party’s nominee—there is a strong temptation to yield to the demands of the nominee. That is past practice. But this is no ordinary campaign. We are not a Bernie Sanders fan club. The timeline of a movement is far longer than an election cycle. We will engage in a diversity of tactics in which voting is just the bare minimum. We will take the streets, occupy the voting booth and de-center the Democratic Party establishment—forever.”

Still, People for Bernie will be active in the general election, using the opportunity to advocate for abolishing the electoral college and working to boost turnout among left-wing voters in swing states like Florida and Ohio, according to Winnie Wong, a former Occupy activist who co-founded

People for Bernie last spring.

“We’re going to watch what happens in the general election very closely,” Wong says. “We take the line that Cornel West, our brother, a democratic socialist, is taking, which is that we know the difference between electing a neoliberal and a neofascist. There’s a big difference between a neoliberal and a neofascist. We understand what those differences are.”

But the bulk of People for Bernie’s efforts, Wong says, will be devoted to advocating for policies like single-payer health care and debt-free college that formed the core of Sanders’ platform—by holding Clinton accountable to the commitments she made during negotiations over the Democratic platform and pushing her to the left on issues where she and grassroots activists remain divided.

“We want to make sure the issues that have dominated the course of this political movement, the Bernie issues, are still front and center in everyone’s thoughts,” Wong says. “We want to make sure we have debt-free college, that we push towards single-payer healthcare. We want to hold Hillary Clinton responsible on a \$15 minimum wage. We want to make sure there’s a national ban on fracking. It’s really about making sure we hold the nominee accountable.”

Navar says that CWA shares People for Bernie’s commitment to keeping Clinton focused on a progressive agenda, though the union’s primary concern is making sure she wins the election first. Navar notes that CWA and other groups on the Left have learned from their experience with the Obama administration.

“I never have faith in any individual candidate—I have faith in our members and our ability to push policy and push victories on the ground,” Navar says. “In 2008, folks were wary about pressuring Obama on issues where he wasn’t moving forward in the way he had promised as a candidate. If Clinton wins the presidency, we’re going to have a moment that’s very distinct from when Obama won. You have this moment of awakening and a growth in organizing that is going to lead to an opening for us to drive from day one to push our issues with Secretary Clinton. It’s going to be easier to bring folks to get involved to drive campaigns around our issues.”

Navar points to the compromises reached between Clinton and Sanders delegates during the Democratic platform drafting process as evidence that the Left has gained power. On the issue of debt-free college education, Sanders and Clinton reached a deal to make public colleges and universities tuition-free for families making less than \$125,000 a year, a proposal which goes far beyond Clinton’s position during the primaries, when she called for reductions in interest rates on student loans but argued against making college tuition-free. Delegates to the platform drafting committee also approved compromise proposals supporting a public option for health insurance and the opportunity for workers over the age of 55 to buy into Medicare. “In issue after issue, Bernie has pushed the needle in our direction. That creates the space for us to get some policy victories and move forward,” Navar says.

## HUNGER FOR CHANGE

Not everyone is satisfied with the new Democratic platform, however. Deborah Burger, co-president of National Nurses United, which contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteers to Sanders’ campaign, argues that the platform fails to address the root causes of economic and social inequality in the United States.

“It would take an idiot to say they aren’t positive steps,” Burger says. “But it’s frustrating that we’re constantly being told to lower our expectations. And we’re not even having this fight with the Republican Party. This is just inside the Democratic Party. That’s the kind of fight you have with Republicans—it’s not the fight you expect within your own party. That’s probably the most frustrating part.”

Despite their disagreements over the best ways to move their agendas forward, all three groups agree that the Left is in a better position than where it was when Sanders began his campaign last May. “There is a real hunger for radical politics

and change in this country,” Navar says. “I was one of the first people arguing that this was Bernie’s moment, that Bernie would be relevant, but I was blown away by the reception.”

Both NNU and People for Bernie hope to channel this momentum to elect democratic socialists at every level of the political system. People for Bernie has begun recruiting women, people of color and millennials to run in state and local elections. Wong herself may throw her hat in the ring. “I think it bodes very well for younger people who are thinking of running, especially if they’re given the right toolkits and the support they need to make it happen. We’re really focused on building socialist power, and now is the time,” say Wong. “Most people don’t realize there are many thousands of jobs you could run for. And these jobs would certainly be better paying than the \$15 an hour you’d make at Starbucks.”

Most important of all, however, are the alliances that all three groups have built during the 2016 primary election. They joined together in June at the People’s Summit in Chicago, which was hosted by NNU, along with wide range of groups pushing for progressive change, from environmentalists like 350.org to racial justice activists like the Million Hoodies Movement for Justice to political organizations like Democratic Socialists of America. “What’s different about this election cycle and what Bernie Sanders highlighted is the fact that there’s more support than ever for real change. All of the groups we’ve been working with on various issues have been coming together to say it’s not enough to just work on our silo of issues,” Burger says. “We had no illusions that this wasn’t a long shot, and we did better than we ever imagined we could do. The takeaway lesson is: Don’t lower your expectations. Don’t go into the fight bargaining for less.”

ETHAN COREY IS A NEW YORK-BASED REPORTER WRITING ABOUT POLITICS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INEQUALITY. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER AT @ETHANSCOREY <[HTTP://TWITTER.COM/ETHANSCOREY](http://twitter.com/ETHANSCOREY)>.

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# From the Golden Gate to the Tower Bridge

## One night, two events, two different views on managing California water

Last Wednesday night, folks interested in California water had two big public events to choose from. One was a slick and very political sales pitch; the other was a thoughtful discussion of science. One event was held at the Sacramento Bee headquarters, and the other at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. Both were happening at the exact same moment and the contrast between the two serves as fascinating bookends of an ongoing battle over how to best plan for California's water future. Restore the Delta was at both events. Here is our report.

### SACRAMENTO

At the Sacramento Bee event, General Manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) Jeff Kightlinger spoke with Sacramento Bee Editor Dan Morain about California Water broadly and especially the Delta Tunnels plan (CA WaterFix) proposal.

The event was a notably one-sided affair denounced by Restore the Delta as a biased sales pitch, not the public debate one would expect from an objective news source. Weeks before, RTD offered experts to balance the event, but the Bee ignored those suggestions. In a one hour presentation, Restore the Delta executive director Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, counted more than 40 half-truths, misstatements, lies, or deceptions.

Kightlinger began the evening with some positive comments about how MWD is "very supportive" of the Delta Reform Act and that the districts wants to restore 8,000 acres of habitat in the Delta. Yet, he forgot to mention that MWD has yet to meet habitat requirements under the 2008 biological opinions.

He also warned that action was needed soon on the Delta Tunnels because it will take a decade until water districts get even a drop of that water. The Tunnels, Kightlinger explained, were the only sensible project on the table, because desalination was not fiscally and physically realistic. He forgot that the anticipated construction period for the tunnels is 14 years, and that climate change modeling by USGS shows that the Sacramento River watershed will be drier in the years to come. There will be less water for export.

Eventually, even Delta Tunnel opponents will have to admit, Kightlinger explained, that we are not going to get universal consensus on the Tunnels and at some point, "We have to say this gives the most value to the most people in the State and has to move forward." Of course he forgot about the 4 million Delta residents who depend on adequate freshwater flows for many uses or that the San Francisco Bay, which supports millions more residents, depends on freshwater flows from the Delta. Might does not make right. And might doesn't make water rights law, or overturn Clean Water Act protections.

When asked about protecting endangered species, Kightlinger said, "MWD is very supportive of the ESA, but the ESA is a fairly inflexibly piece of legislation." Kightlinger failed to mention that the MWD lobbied to delist Delta smelt in Washington, DC during 2015.

Kightlinger said MWD is telling board members the Delta Tunnels are an upgrade and modernization of infrastructure and that it is a sound investment. It seems that he was forgotten to tell them about the declining Sacramento River watershed, and he certainly forgot to discuss with the audience any cost-benefit analysis considering the value of freshwater for the Bay-Delta estuary.

When asked why California voters will not get a vote on the Delta Tunnels as we did on the Peripheral Canal in 1982, he explained that it's rare for people to weigh in on state projects (e.g. Bay Bridge) – it's unprecedented to invite people who aren't paying for a project to vote on it / or who aren't beneficiaries. He forgot about public votes on seismic upgrades to the Bay Bridge, or that people who stand to lose from the project, might like to vote on the matter.

On funding, Kightlinger said revenue bonds will most likely be used to pay for the project and that the Tunnels will lift the same exact amount of water from the North Delta as is now taken from the South Delta. With the Tunnels, he claimed, water exports will interfere less with tidal flow "technically returning the Delta to its prehistoric condition" of brackish water. Here, he forgot to mention: the State Water Board hearing calling for more flows through the Delta, the Delta Reform Act calling for reduced reliance on the Delta, or that the interior Delta was primarily the freshwater end of the estuary – that's why farmers settled here. When asked why SoCal legislators won't engage like NorCal legislators on Tunnels, Kightlinger said, "No comment." This was perhaps his most honest statement of the night.

When asked how will the terms of paying for the Tunnels work, Kightlinger said if Westlands gets 25 percent of water from tunnels they would pay 25 percent of the cost. He doesn't see MWD saying they will pay for Big Ag's share because it's not politically feasible. He forgot to mention that Fitch Credit services reported the other day that Westlands will acquire hundreds of millions of dollars of debt from the settlement requiring them to clean up drainage impaired lands, leaving little extra cash flow for a Delta Tunnels project which will cost them billions.

Kightlinger said we have to build the Tunnels to deal with this problem of sea level rise and that Delta islands cannot survive climate change. He said the Delta Tunnels are part of a long-term solution. He forgot to mention that decisions will need to be made first at the coast on how we will manage the region for sea level rise before deciding on how to manage the Delta. He also failed to mention that recent reports show that if we do not get our act together regarding climate change and sea level rise, the Delta Tunnels will be under ocean water.

### SAN FRANCISCO

At the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco a completely different discussion



was taking place. The panel included three experts who are grappling with climate science and California's water future. Noah Diffenbaugh, Associate Professor, School of Earth Sciences at Stanford University said that many scientists are currently examining whether global warming is influencing drought in California. They conclude, it is.

We now get warm years, year after year. When that mixes with low precipitation years, we are moving towards more droughts. Diffenbaugh sees a connection between the amount of ice in the arctic and the circulation of the atmosphere. Record low Arctic ice and drought in California seem to be connected. As the Arctic warms, it changes the balance and flow of our weather. Since California gets a majority of our rainfall from just a few storms, any changes can create big trouble for our economy and ecology. Diffenbaugh explained that if La Nina, continues to develop in the Pacific, the odds tip towards the winter of 2016 being dry. When asked what solutions he saw, Diffenbaugh mentioned that the emerging "Internet of Things" technology could help improved our information collection on water use data in aggregate while remaining anonymous about specific users. He mentioned lawn retirement as a good idea that has been helpful in Southern California. He also supports better science that links modern weather forecasting technology with an update to regulations for dam operations/flood control.

Karen Ross, the California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary, confirmed that the drought was hitting California farms. In places with no access to groundwater land was being fallowed. Ross explained that in a normal year, California agriculture relies on groundwater for 30 percent of its water supply, but during the drought farms have been drawing 60 percent of their supply from groundwater. Farmers are shifting to higher-value crops that can't grow everywhere. Less cotton and alfalfa is being grown as farmers are now seeking salt and drought-tolerant crops. Some crops have made great progress with underground drip watering like tomatoes, but alfalfa remains one of the biggest water users in the state because it is thirsty and harvested so many times a year. Her lessons from the drought? Conservation really works and really hasn't impacted our lifestyle very much. She also learned that drought really impacts environmental justice communities who get hit hardest as wells go dry.

Peter Gleick, Co-founder, Pacific Institute also spoke at the San Francisco event. Gleick

warned the audience that the drought is not over. We had only an average rain year in 2015, the snowpack was a little below average and melted very fast. As the climate changes, Gleick said, we may see crops change and more lands retired from farming over the long term. Asked if moving to a water market would make a difference, he said markets work, but water in California is given out by water rights, not markets. Changing that system would be quite a political feat. When asked if agriculture is doing enough to save water, Gleick said, "None of us are." We could grow more food with far less water if we adopt better technology and consider new crops. That is the inevitable future for us all. For urban water districts, repairing infrastructure, increasing conservation, using smarter appliances, and water recycling would all help. Gleick called for more open source data on who uses water and what they use it for. It will provide a better tool for decision-making. When asked about his lessons from the drought, Gleick said he was shocked by how hard California's ecosystems were hit during the drought from vanishing fish species to dying trees in the Sierra Nevada. He noted that energy production shifted away from hydro and towards natural gas during the drought.

In the future, Gleick predicts we are not likely to build more dams. But through better water technology for agriculture, stormwater capture, and water recycling he envisions a future when wastewater treatment plants will be renamed "water recovery plants." Gleick pointed to hopeful signs emerging in water recycling, especially in coastal communities and groundwater replenishment projects in Southern California. On the economics of water, Gleick said that a billion dollars spent on efficiency and recycling will produce far more water than a billion spent on desalination plants like the one San Diego recently built. When asked whether California is headed for a megadrought? Gleick answered, "Maybe." So we should start planning now. Uncertainty is a challenge for the state's water system built on the predictable arrival of snow and rain.

What was notable at the scientific panel in San Francisco, is that when climate change is considered, none of the experts mentioned the Delta Tunnels as a viable or smart solution to our long-term problems. Meanwhile, at the Sacramento event, the Delta Tunnels were being sold as the only solution, and a newspaper was hosting the sales pitch.



# How to make a political platform progressive

JIM HIGHTOWER

An old cowboy aphorism offers this advice: "Speak the truth. But ride a fast horse." I relived this truism last weekend in Orlando, Florida, where I spent two hot, muggy days wrangling over policy issues as one of the members of the Democratic Party's national platform committee. Depending on the moment and the issue, the experience was both invigorating and infuriating, with refreshing outbreaks of broad and bold democratic vision, interspersed with too many rigid, Tammany Hall tactics used to dictate corporate-friendly policies. Bernie Sanders' 40-percent minority of platform members (of which I was one) managed to "Bern" the platform with more than two dozen big and very important amendments. As a result, instead of the same old business-as-usual blah-blah of party platforms, Democrats and their nominee, Hillary Clinton, are now on public record in support of the most progressive policy agenda in decades.

## A LOSS ON TRADE

More about those specific policies in a moment, but first, let's get on that horse. The worst development at the Orlando meeting was the Clinton campaign's acquiescence to the dream of global corporate powers: The Trans-Pacific Partnership. The platform's draft language on this horrendous TPP trade scam actually seemed to endorse it! So Sanders' forces went all out to replace such a pusillanimous surrender with an amendment to flat-out kill TPP.

I sponsored the Sanders alternative, dubbing it "a form of political Viagra to stiffen the spine of our party." Our amendment prompted panicky parliamentary manipulations by Clintonites to doctor their language so it would be a bit less wimpy – and also to block my amendment from even being considered. But Sanders' savvy policy staff outflanked them, so we forced them to debate and vote on our proposal – in view of C-SPAN's national TV audience. Of course, with their controlling percentage of committee members (plus strict orders from their campaign's command center that all Clinton members must vote "no"), we lost the vote 104-71.

Nonetheless, against all odds, we advanced the progressive cause by forcing the corporate interests into public view, getting four out of every 10 members to vote for killing TPP, and energizing our base to carry this hot issue directly to grassroots voters this fall and beyond. Sometimes, progress comes from a stubborn determination to stand on principle. Sam Rayburn, a longtime speaker of the U.S. House who hailed from my home district in Texas, once declared: "Every now and then a politician ought to do something just because it's right."

## WINS ON LOTS OF OTHER STUFF

As a member of the Democratic Party's platform committee, I saw many examples of that adage at work in the committee's recent meeting to hammer out an agenda to take to the people in this year's elections. While

there were plenty of disagreements and a lot of free-floating passion ripping through the hall where center-clinging Clintonites and populist Bernie-istas tried to find common ground – there was a remarkable lack of the sort of sour, personal animosity that usually gets in the way of group progress. A myriad of policies were adopted (or rejected) that I don't like, but consider just a few of the major progressive breakthroughs that came out of the Orlando confab:

—The creation of a nationwide jobs initiative that will hire millions of our people to rebuild and expand America's crumbling infrastructure.

—Increasing the national minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

—Breaking up too-big-to-fail Wall Street banks.

—Making public colleges tuition-free for working class families.

—Expanding Social Security.

—Making it harder for CEOs to block workers from joining unions.

—Reestablishing postal banks in our public post offices to give low-income families affordable banking and an alternative to predatory lenders.

—Encouraging new power plants to use renewable energies rather than shale gas from BigOil's destructive fracking wells.

—Expanding community health centers to reach 25 million more uninsured families, requiring Medicare to negotiate with BigPharma to lower our drug prices, and encouraging states to provide universal health care.

—Decriminalizing marijuana, eliminating for-profit prisons and detention centers, and abolishing the death penalty.

—Eliminating SuperPacs, moving to public financing of elections, providing automatic voter registration, and making election day a national holiday.

Of course, party platforms are not actual laws and programs, but statements of principles and intent. They are important as blueprints for organizing grassroots support and as specific makers for holding elected officials accountable. Making it all happen is up to us, for progressive change always has to be pushed from the bottom up – so let's get moving.

SOURCE: BUZZFLASH AT TRUTHOUT, WWW.TRUTHOUT.ORG 7/15/16

November 8

## Get ready - lots of November ballot measures!

TYPE	TITLE	SUBJECT
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 51 Education</b>	Authorizes issuance and sale of \$9 billion in bonds for education and schools
<b>CICA/SS</b>	<b>Proposition 52 Healthcare</b>	Requires voter approval of changes to the hospital fee program
<b>CICA</b>	<b>Proposition 53 Elections and campaigns</b>	Requires voter approval for projects that cost more than \$2 billion funded by revenue bonds
<b>CICA</b>	<b>Proposition 54 Government accountability</b>	Prohibits the legislature from passing any bill until it has been in print and published on the Internet for 72 hours prior to the vote
<b>CICA</b>	<b>Proposition 55 Taxes</b>	Extends the temporary personal income tax increases on incomes over \$250,000 implemented by Proposition 30
<b>CICA</b>	<b>Proposition 56 Tobacco</b>	Increases the cigarette tax to \$2.00 per pack
<b>CICA/SS</b>	<b>Proposition 57 Civil and criminal trials</b>	Increases parole chances for felons convicted of non-violent crimes and give them more opportunities to earn credits for good behavior
<b>LRSS</b>	<b>Proposition 58 Education</b>	Repeals Prop 227 of 1998, thus allowing for bilingual education in public schools
<b>AQ</b>	<b>Proposition 59 Campaign finance &amp; Federal issues</b>	Indicates whether voters approve of California State Legislators using what influence they have over federal issues to overturn Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission and "to make clear that corporations should not have the same constitutional rights as human beings."
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 60 Adult entertainment</b>	Requires the use of condoms in all pornographic films featuring sexual intercourse produced in California
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 61 Healthcare</b>	Prohibits state agencies from paying more for a prescription drug than the lowest price paid for the same drug by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 62 Death penalty</b>	Repeals the death penalty in the state of California
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 63 Firearms</b>	Prohibits possession of large capacity ammunition magazines and requires individuals to pass a background check and receive authorization from the Department of Justice in order to purchase ammunition
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 64 Marijuana</b>	Legalizes marijuana and hemp under state law and enacts certain sales and cultivation taxes
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 65 Environment</b>	Redirects money collected from the sale of grocery and retail carry-out bags to a special fund administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board
<b>CISS</b>	<b>Proposition 66 Death penalty</b>	Changes procedures governing state court appeals and petitions challenging death penalty convictions and sentences
<b>VR</b>	<b>Proposition 67 Business reg</b>	Ratifies SB 270, thus prohibiting plastic single-use carryout bags

Source: California Secretary of State 1500 11th Street, Sacramento, California 95814 (916) 653-6814



# Numbers in Obama's drone deaths report don't add up

MARJORIE COHN

a crowd killing. A signature strike does not target specified individuals but rather areas of suspicious activity. In many instances, the U.S. doesn't know whom it is killing.

Along with the DNI report, Obama released an executive order prioritizing the protection of civilians and requiring that future administrations be forthcoming about annual deaths from the drone program. One wonders why Obama waited until seven years into his presidency and seven months before leaving office to prioritize the protection of civilians and advocate transparency. And any future president is free to modify or rescind his order. Obama's order says, "Civilian casualties are a tragic and at times unavoidable consequence of the use of force in situations of armed conflict or in the exercise of a state's inherent right of self-defense."

It is puzzling that Obama would invoke the United Nations Charter's right of self-defense—the only exception to the charter's prohibition of military force. The charter permits a state to act in self-defense only after an armed attack on the United States or another U.N. member state. Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya have not mounted an armed attack against the U.S. or any other U.N. member country. (Neither have Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, for that matter.) So there is no lawful basis for the U.S. to claim it is acting in self-defense when it launches airstrikes in those countries.

When a state is engaged in armed conflict, it must abide by the laws of war, or international humanitarian law. That means the use of force must satisfy the *distinction* and *proportionality* requirements. In order to comply with the distinction mandate, the state must always distinguish between combatants and civilians. Proportionality means that an attack cannot be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage.

The evidence shows we cannot trust the administration to comply with these legal requirements. "The Drone Papers" is a treasure trove of secret military documents provided to The Intercept by an anonymous whistleblower, a member of the intelligence establishment. Those documents indicate that the administration labels unidentified males who are killed in a strike zone "enemies killed in action," unless there is evidence posthumously proving they were not terrorists or "unlawful enemy combatants."

Perhaps most disturbing, "[Obama's] order further institutionalized and normalized air strikes outside conventional war zones as a routine part of 21st-century national security policy," Charlie Savage and Scott Shane wrote in The New York Times. Like his predecessor, Obama defines the whole world as his battlefield, reserving for himself the role of judge, jury and executioner. Compliance with due process (arrest and fair trial), which the U.S. Constitution guarantees all persons, not just U.S. citizens, has not been a priority in the Obama administration's "war on terror."

Drone strikes will not conquer terrorism. The bipartisan Stimson Task Force, composed of senior military and intelligence officials, warned that the "secret war" of lethal drone strikes was "creating a slippery slope toward continual or widening conflict and instability."

Four former Air Force service members who participated in the drone program are Brandon Bryant, Michael Haas, Stephen Lewis and Cian Westmoreland. They wrote an open letter to Obama saying that the drone program has "fueled the feelings of hatred that ignited terrorism and groups like [Islamic State]" and that the killing of civilians in drone strikes has been one of the most "devastating driving forces for terrorism and destabilization around the world."

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Source: TruthDig 7/5/16 <http://www.truthdig.com/>

More than three years after President Barack Obama pledged to be transparent about the United States' lethal drone program, his administration has finally come forward with an accounting of the numbers of civilian deaths that resulted from drone strikes between Jan. 20, 2009, and Dec. 31, 2015. But they only cover airstrikes "outside areas of active hostilities," which encompasses Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya. Civilian deaths in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria are not included in the report.

As expected, the administration's numbers are significantly lower than tallies documented by leading nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, New America and The Long War Journal. Obama's Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) sets the figure of "noncombatant deaths" at between 64 and 116. The NGOs, however, estimate between 200 and 1,000 civilian deaths occurred as a result of U.S. drone strikes in the areas, and during the time periods, covered by the DNI report.

The DNI report omits significant details that would enable the public to fully assess its claims, including the locations, dates, numbers and names of both civilians and combatants killed in each airstrike. Micah Zenko, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, told The Washington Post that releasing raw numbers without explanation "leaves reason to remain skeptical of the government's claims. You can't grade your own homework."

## DISTRUST

There is good reason to distrust the DNI's claimed numbers of civilian casualties. "Every previous (rare) public, on-record statement made by the Obama administration on the program has been shown to be false or deeply misleading," the international human rights organization Reprieve noted in a recent report. "Moreover, the administration has repeatedly shifted the goal posts, secretly redefining who can be targeted and what it means to be a civilian," it said.


One of the Obama administration's most notorious lies was the statement of current CIA Director and former counterterrorism adviser John Brennan, who claimed in June 2011 that there had not been a "single collateral death" caused by drones in 2010-2011. As Reprieve reports, the CIA knew that statement was false at the time it was made. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism documented at least 45 civilian casualties during that period.

While the DNI report is far from perfect, it provides much more information than the administration previously disclosed. Before the report was released, the U.S. had admitted responsibility for only two civilian deaths: the 2015 accidental killing of two aid workers held hostage by al-Qaida in Pakistan. Both those victims were Westerners. But much more information is needed. It is disappointing that the report lumps together seven years of airstrikes, making it impossible to gauge whether Obama is complying with the rules he established in 2013 for his targeted killings.

The 2013 Presidential Policy Guidance remains classified. The White House released a fact sheet that year requiring that strikes outside areas of active hostilities be taken only in the face of a "continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons" and when there is "near certainty that the terrorist target is present."

Although the fact sheet did not define "continuing" or "imminent," a leaked 2011 Department of Justice white paper said that a U.S. citizen can be killed even when there is no "clear evidence that a specific attack on U.S. persons and interests will take place in the immediate future." This makes a mockery of the "imminence" requirement for killing U.S. citizens. The administration presumably sets an even lower bar for noncitizens.

It is impossible to fathom how the administration can have near certainty that a terrorist target is present. One type of drone attack is called a "signature strike," also known as



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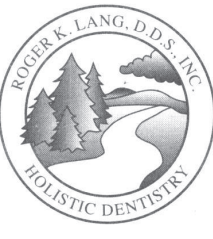
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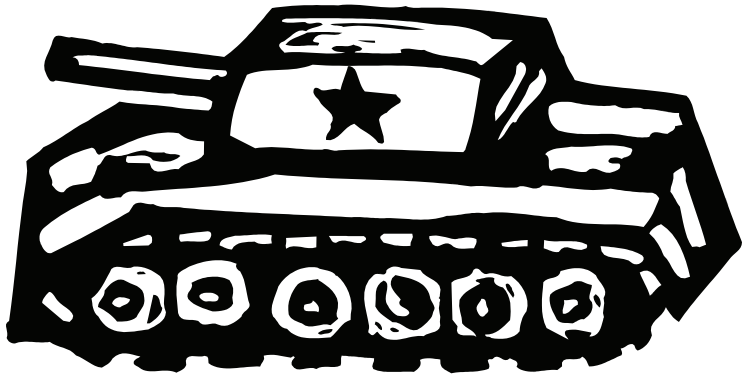


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# Are we in for another increase in military spending?



LAWRENCE S. WITTNER

At the present time, an increase in US military spending seems as superfluous as a third leg. The United States, armed with the latest in advanced weaponry, has more military might than any other nation in world history. Moreover, it has begun a \$1 trillion program to refurbish its entire nuclear weapons complex.

America's major military rivals, China and Russia, spend only a small fraction of what the United States does on its armed forces -- in China's case about a third and in Russia's case about a ninth. Furthermore, the economic outlay necessary to maintain this vast US military force constitutes a very significant burden. In fiscal 2015, US military spending (\$598.5 billion) accounted for 54 percent of the US government's discretionary spending.

Certainly most Americans are not clamoring for heightened investments in war and war preparations. According to a Gallup poll conducted in February 2016, only 37 percent of respondents said the US

government spent too little "for national defense and military purposes," compared to 59 percent who said it spent too much (32 percent) or about the right amount (27 percent).

These findings were corroborated by a Pew Research Center survey in April 2016, which reported that 35 percent of American respondents favored increasing US military spending, 24 percent favored decreasing it, and 40 percent favored keeping it the same. Although these latest figures show a rise in support for increasing military spending since 2013, this occurred mostly among Republicans. Indeed, the gap in support for higher military spending between Republicans and Democrats, which stood at 25 percentage points in 2013, rose to 41 points by 2016.

Actually, it appears that, when Americans are given the facts about US military spending, a substantial majority of them favor reducing it. Between December 2015 and February 2016, the nonpartisan Voice of the People, affiliated with the University of Maryland, provided a sample

of 7,126 registered voters with information on the current US military budget, as well as leading arguments for and against it.

The arguments were vetted for accuracy by staff members of the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees on defense. Then, when respondents were asked their opinion about what should be done, 61 percent said they thought US military spending should be reduced. The biggest cuts they championed were in spending for nuclear weapons and missile defense systems.

When it comes to this year's presumptive Presidential candidates, however, quite a different picture emerges. The Republican nominee, Donald Trump, though bragging about building "a military that's gonna be much stronger than it is right now," has on occasion called for reducing military expenditures. On the other hand, his extraordinarily aggressive foreign policy positions have led defense contractors to conclude that, with Trump in the White House, they can look forward to sharp increases in US military spending.

Indeed, insisting that US military power has shrunk to a pitiful level under President Obama, he has promised that, under his presidency, it would be "funded beautifully." In March 2016, when Trump appeared on Fox News, he made that commitment more explicit by promising to increase military spending.

Given the considerably more dovish orientation of the Democratic electorate, one would expect Hillary Clinton to stake out a position more opposed to a military buildup. But, thus far, she has been remarkably cagey about this issue. In September 2015, addressing a campaign meeting in New Hampshire, Clinton called for the creation

of a high-level commission to examine US military spending. But whether the appointment of such a commission augurs increases or decreases remains unclear.

Meanwhile, her rather hawkish foreign policy record has convinced observers that she will support a military weapons buildup. The same conclusion can be drawn from the "National Security" section of her campaign website, which declares: "As president, she'll ensure the United States maintains the best-trained, best-equipped, and strongest military the world has ever known."

Although the big defense contractors generally regard Clinton, like Trump, as a safe bet, they exercise even greater influence in Congress, where they pour substantially larger amounts of money into the campaign coffers of friendly US Senators and Representatives.

Thus, even when a President doesn't back a particular weapons system, they can usually count on Congress to fund it. As a Wall Street publication recently crowed: "No matter who wins the White House this fall, one thing is clear: Defense spending will climb."

Will it? Probably so, unless public pressure can convince a new administration in Washington to adopt a less militarized approach to national and international security.

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Source: Truthout 7/19/16 <http://www.truth-out.org>

# On training police: killing is the last option

MARC ASH

I want to be very clear: what happened in Dallas this week was not merely a despicable act, or an attack on democracy as some have categorized it. It was a direct consequence of an unprecedented campaign of lethal force applied by law enforcement agencies across the country.

U.S. cops kill. They kill at a rate unparalleled anywhere else in the world. The killing exceeds that of any domestic nationwide police contingent in history, during peacetime. These are not Praetorian-style security forces, shadowy death squads, or uniformed police acting at the behest of drug lords, they are fully sanctioned, state-sponsored civilian police forces functioning in a supposedly democratic state.

The numbers are staggering. Private media accounts, because private media accounts are the only ones available to the public, put the number of people killed by U.S. police so far this year at 571 (as of this writing). This simply does not happen anywhere else in the world and never has.

Micah Johnson, the man who attacked police with an assault rifle at an anti-police

violence rally in Dallas, was the 566th. Five more people have been killed by U.S. police since the events in Dallas. This according to The Guardian's ongoing landmark investigation, The Counted: People killed by police in the US.

Vice President Joe Biden delivered an address today that eulogized in heroic tones the police officers killed and wounded in Dallas. His rationale, while heart-rending, leads toward, not away from, the violence he urged Americans to reject. Biden said in part, "Being a cop wasn't just what they did. It was who they were -- like every officer who joined for essentially the same reason. There was something about them that made them think they could help, that they should serve, that they had a duty." While those are stirring words, they obfuscate the truth.

The truth is that U.S. police are trained to kill. Not just maim, wound, or subdue -- kill. The problem is systemic, from the highest echelons of government right down to the patrol officer on the street. "Kill when you need to kill. We've got your back."

There are a number of initiatives in the U.S. to promote training that would teach police officers to de-escalate potentially

violent situations. The instruction is referred to as "de-escalation training." It is a good idea that will fail. As long as police officers are confident that they can kill with impunity, they will continue to kill. Make no mistake about it: today in America, police kill with impunity. Not until police officers are consistently held accountable by the justice system will the appalling number of killings decline.

If you grieve for the slain Dallas Police officers, that is perfectly reasonable. They were murdered and taken from their families horrifically. They were human beings, and deserved human dignity in life and even more so now in death. However if you cannot find the courage to extend that respect to the people killed unnecessarily by police, then you are procreating the conditions that led to Dallas.

In reviewing the limited data in The Guardian's synopses of the individual killings, it's important to read between the lines, trying to understand why U.S. police are the only police in the world who have to resort to killing so often. The key question in each case is, "Was this the only way?" The answer in the vast majority of cases is no,

another way could have been found. Even if it meant temporarily backing off. Something U.S. police are rarely trained to do. It's the training that leads to the killing.

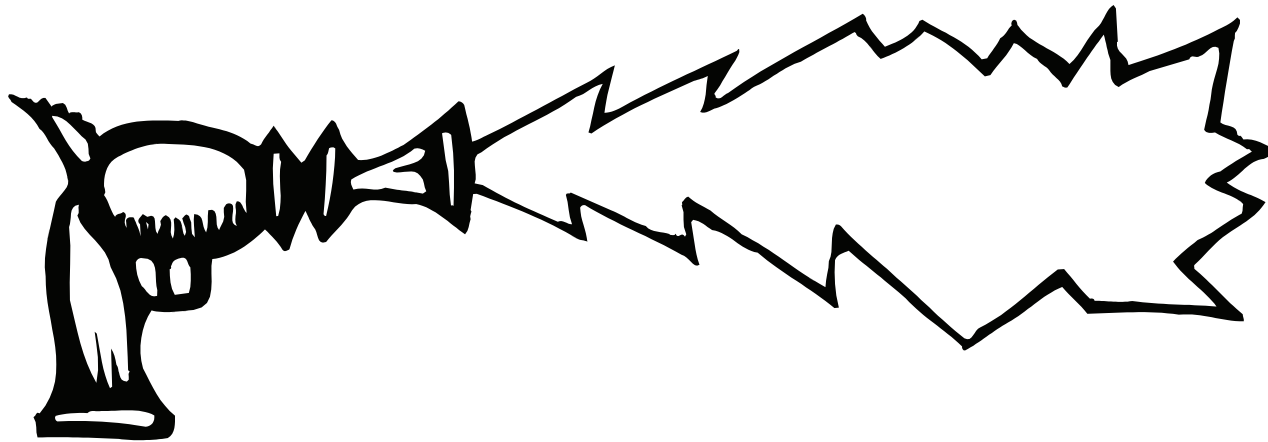
The U.S. Department of Justice can and must take a leading role, and they must prosecute. Failure to do so will ensure that the cycle of violence continues. Once the police are reminded in no uncertain terms that the taking of human life is not insignificant, then and only then will they apply their intellect and find other ways of addressing these situations. Further, it is absolutely imperative that we not continue to issue blanket free passes to "our boys (and women) in blue." By demanding accountability on the part of armed law enforcement officers, we lead them toward job conditions that are more humane for them and for the public that they serve.

MARC ASH IS THE FOUNDER AND FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TRUTHOUT, AND IS NOW FOUNDER AND EDITOR OF READER SUPPORTED NEWS.

Source: Reader Supported News 7/10/16 <http://readersupportednews.org>



# Policing isn't working for cops either



Looking at that picture, no one should be surprised at incidents of police violence, and we should all understand that to some extent, it is rooted in the spiritual and emotional degradation that results from being immersed in such a violent institution.

KAZU HAGA

"It's okay mommy.... It's okay, I'm right here with you..."

Those were the words of four-year-old Dae'Anna, consoling her mother Lavish Reynolds after she witnessed the police shoot and kill her boyfriend Philando Castile.

Those words are now scarred into the psyche of America, much like words that came before it: "Hands up, don't shoot." "I can't breath." "It's not real."

If you haven't realized that the system of policing isn't working for the black community, you haven't been paying attention. Just hours after the killing of Alton Sterling, a four-year-old child witnessed someone getting shot and bleeding out while she sat in the backseat. The system didn't work for her, her mother or for Philando Castile. The system didn't work for Alton Sterling, or for Mike Brown, or for Freddie Gray or for countless others.

But here's something we miss in this climate of police violence: the system of policing isn't working for those

working in law enforcement either. It doesn't serve anyone.

When I watched the video taken by Lavish Reynolds, I was blown away by the cool and calm demeanor in her voice and how it was offset by the complete panic in the voice of the officer. His was filled with fear.

And why wouldn't it be? Behind that trigger lies a man who just took the life of another man in front of a child. I've worked with enough people in prison, as well as veterans who have taken the lives of others, to know that no human being is immune to the fear, guilt and shame that comes with the taking of another's life.

The *system* of policing is one that relies on violence, fear, repression and a colonizer mentality. But the *individuals* who are employed to enforce that mentality are human beings with a human psyche, just like any other. It's silly to assume that these men and women aren't impacted by the violence they witness and participate in every day. No human being can participate in the levels of heightened violence that police are engaged in without being affected by it.

The tragedy in Dallas is a response from a people within a community that has lived with that fear and violence for generations. If you belong to a community that is constantly facing murder, incarceration and dehumanization, it should come as no surprise when members of that community decide that they have had enough and react with violence. It is tragic, yet should not be surprising if you can see their perspective. Similarly, just because police experience that violence from "the other side," it should not surprise us that if may affect them in similar ways, and that they may similarly react with outbursts of violence.

Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that "the white man's personality is greatly distorted by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred." He said that the work of defeating segregation was for the "bodies of black folks and the souls of white folks." He understood that to be a white supremacist, to hold hatred in your heart for so many and to inflict violence on others destroys your soul.

Others have written about the history of policing in the United States – especially in the South – and its roots in the slave patrol. So it should come as no great leap to consider that participating in policing in 21st century America could scar one's soul.

This is not about being an apologist for the individuals responsible for the killing of black life. It is not about comparing the suffering of black communities to that of law enforcement. But in nonviolence, we know that if you don't understand the perspective of those who you are in conflict with, you do not understand the conflict. You do not need to agree with, excuse or justify the other's perspective, you simply need to understand it so you can see the complete picture.

And part of the picture looks like this: Cops are human. They work for an institution with historical ties to slavery and a long legacy of racism. They are indoctrinated in a culture of "us vs. them," of doing "whatever is necessary so you get home," of fear, distrust, and dehumanization of those deemed as being on "the other side." They are taught to fear for their lives. They are trained almost exclusively in tactics of violence and repression. They are sent into situations of conflict every day with those limited tools, into communities

where they are playing out tensions that have been brewing for hundreds of years.

Looking at that picture, no one should be surprised at incidents of police violence, and we should all understand that to some extent, it is rooted in the spiritual and emotional degradation that results from being immersed in such a violent institution.

I've been thinking lately about Eric Casebolt, the officer who responded to a call at a pool party in McKinney, Texas and proceeded to throw a young girl onto the ground and point his gun at other teenagers. Casebolt should have been fired immediately, and his record should follow him everywhere, preventing him from ever having employment as a cop or even as a security guard.

If we look more into the history of that conflict, the story of Casebolt's own trauma begins to emerge. The pool party was the third call that he attended to that day. His first was a suicide where he witnessed a man blow his head off in front of his family, and had to console the family. Immediately after, he was called to another attempted suicide, where he had to talk a young girl down from jumping off a ledge – also in front of her family. By the time he reached the pool party, he was an emotional wreck.

Again, that's not to excuse his actions as an individual. But understanding that context and perspective also allows us to point our fingers at the larger culprit: a system of policing that didn't care enough about Casebolt's mental health that they couldn't even give him the rest of the day off. A culture of machismo that doesn't give space for cops like Casebolt to grieve or process what he just went through.

When the system comes together to defend cops like Casebolt, their defense of him is a smokescreen. The system doesn't care about any individuals – the individuals are dispensable. It is trying to distract us from the fact that the system itself is corrupt. If the system truly cared about the people who work in the system, it would create fundamental changes to stop the killings of black people, thereby decreasing the chances of retaliatory killings like the ones in Dallas.

But for us, the more we focus our anger on the individual who pulled the trigger, the more we are letting the system off the hook. And the more the system defends the individual, the more we want to see him or her locked up, as if they are the problem.


Individual accountability requires healing, and a space for the perpetrator of the harm to feel remorse for their actions. I've learned over time that people can't empathize with the pain that they caused until their own pain and story has been honored. So, can we build a movement that honors the pain of the officers, creates spaces to help them see the pain that they cause, and – following the example of former Baltimore officer Michael Wood – allows them to defect from a system that doesn't serve them either?

And can we hold that level of compassion without pacifying our righteous indignation towards a system that doesn't value human life? How do we build a fierce and powerful resistance movement that addresses the individual *and* the system? What does it look like to hold individuals accountable with compassion, and systems accountable with indignation?

#AltonSterling, #PhilandoCastile and #Dallas are sobering reminders that violent institutions are causing human death on all sides. And until we find justice for all people, their spirits will be with us, nudging us to answer those questions.

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Source: *Waging Nonviolence* 7/11/16 <http://wagingnonviolence.org>



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# US police have killed nearly 9,000 civilians since 9/11

KIT O'CONNELL

Despite a number of high-profile attacks that have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans both in the United States and abroad, police continue to pose a far deadlier and more immediate threat to Americans than terrorists. At least 8,882 civilians have been killed by police since 9/11. This figure is based on government data and civilian- and media-run databases of police killings, although experts agree that the true number could be far higher. By contrast, the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, still the deadliest act of terrorism committed on U.S. soil, claimed the lives of 2,996 people and injured over 6,000 others.

Even including the “Global War on Terror,” in which about 6,879 U.S. servicemembers were killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which were a direct result of 9/11, and more recent terrorist attacks like the San Bernardino shooting (14 deaths), the Orlando nightclub shooting (49 deaths), or even Thursday’s attack on Dallas police officers protecting a Black Lives Matter march (five deaths), those who receive public funds to “protect and serve” are proving to be deadlier than terrorists. In 2012, Jim Harper, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank, tweeted a shocking figure, suggesting U.S. residents were eight times more likely to be killed by police than terrorists:

More recent Department of Justice figures, as well as civilian and media estimates of police violence, suggest the problem is far worse than experts previously believed. Unfortunately, because police violence is poorly tracked by various government agencies, including those at the federal level, the true death toll may be impossible to tally accurately.

## ‘A MATH PUZZLE WITH REAL CONSEQUENCES’

The FBI tracks “justifiable homicides” by law enforcement, but despite what the Guardian’s Jon Swaine deemed last year to be a long-running “debate about why the American government has failed so badly to monitor this issue of national importance,” police departments are not required to report details of deaths at the hands of officers to the Bureau. By contrast, police methodically report their own deaths to the government, and statistics suggest policing became safer than ever during President Barack Obama’s eight years in office, even as protests against police violence increased.

Other government agencies’ attempts to track the problem have yielded mixed results. Previous Justice Department figures suggested about 500 people a year were killed by police, but in March 2015, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, part of the DOJ, issued a new report on “arrest-related deaths.”

Based on an analysis by FiveThirtyEight, a site known for statistical analysis of the news, the BJS report suggests that about 930 people are killed by police each year. And even that figure is likely too low, according to Carl Bialik, FiveThirtyEight’s lead news writer. “It’s even higher – about 1,240 – if you assume that local law enforcement agencies that don’t report any killings have killed people at the same rate as agencies that do,” Bialik wrote on March 6, 2015.

“This is a math puzzle with real consequences,” Bialik urged. “Solving it would get researchers closer to understanding how many lives have been lost – and how many victims we’re not yet counting.” Additionally, because the government’s figures rely on voluntary police reporting, they also reflect the bias of police departments, which tend to blame civilians for their own deaths almost regardless of the circumstances.

## AN EDUCATED GUESS

To make up for the lack of accurate government data, civilian and media-backed efforts have emerged to track deaths caused by police. Killed By Police, a volunteer effort based on news reports, began in May 2013, while The Counted, a similar database maintained by The Guardian newspaper,

and The Washington Post’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Fatal Force project, which documents only fatal police shootings, began tracking deaths last year.

To calculate the number of civilians killed by police since 9/11, MintPress News began with an article published on our website written by Katie Rucke, who estimated that between 500 and 1,000 people had been killed by police each year from Sept. 11, 2001 and November 2013. Although she reported that 5,000 people were killed by police in that 12-year period, we realized that, even at 500 people killed per year, the total should not be 5,000, but 6,000. For 2014, we added the 1,111 police-related deaths recorded in the Killed By Police database, the first full year tracked by that site, and the year in which USA Today reported a disturbing spike in fatal encounters with police. For 2015 and the year to date, we averaged the data compiled by Killed By Police and The Counted, to determine that about 1,177 people died at the hands of police in 2015, and that 594 people have met the same fate so far this year.

By adding these figures to Rucke’s calculations, we arrived at a total of at least 8,882 people killed by police since 9/11. Although we used Fatal Force for background research, we disregarded its more focused database in our calculations. But by the nature of the differing available data sets, and without mandatory police reporting, the figures we arrived at and any similar calculations by other media outlets will always remain the product of educated guessing based largely on media reports.

Accusations of racial bias in policing in general, and killings by police specifically, have given rise to movements like Black Lives Matter. Although the majority of those killed by police are white, “data scientists and policing experts often note, comparing how many or how often white people are killed by police to how many or how often black people are killed by the police is statistically dubious unless you first adjust for population,” wrote The Washington Post’s Wesley Lowery on Monday. According to the Counted, after adjusting for their total percentage of the populations, police kill blacks and Native Americans at about twice the rate of whites.

## ‘POLICE ARE NOT A PERMANENT FIXTURE OF SOCIETY’

The epidemic of police violence in the U.S. has left many searching for reforms or even alternatives to police.

In August 2015, Black Lives Matter activists launched Campaign Zero, a ten-point plan to reduce police violence through concrete reforms such as mandatory body cameras, better community oversight of police (including increased transparency around police violence), and a reduction of police militarization. Since July 7, visitors to the Campaign Zero website can also track police reform legislation in state legislatures and Congress.

Some departments are voluntarily embracing some of these reforms, among them the Dallas Police Department, whose officers were among the victims of the deadly July 7 attack by gunman Micah Johnson.

Leon Neyfakh, a Slate staff writer, noted several of these reforms in a July 8 report: Among the changes the Dallas police have made since 2012: a /new foot chase policy aimed at discouraging officers from making risky decisions while pursuing suspects, new guidelines for reporting encounters involving the use of force, and a policy of //bringing in the FBI Civil Rights Division to review all police-involved shootings. Since 2014, the department has //maintained one website containing a trove of data on more than a decade of police-involved shootings in the city, and //another/ that catalogues all police encounters that result in an officer drawing a weapon, using a baton, or physically restraining a suspect. "

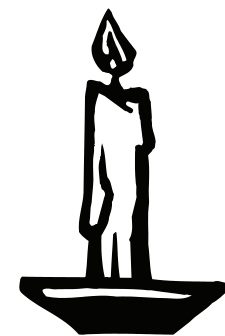
Neyfakh added that Dallas received \$3.7 million in funding for body cameras in 2015, and officers have received increased use of force training since 2014. But some activists and analysts believe the institution of policing is so broken

and inherently biased that it can only be reformed by being completely dismantled and replaced.

“[P]olice are not a permanent fixture in society,” wrote José Martín in December 2014 for Rolling Stone. His article suggests six alternatives to policing, from community patrols to mediation, often referred to as restorative justice, as well as more systemic solutions like the decriminalization of most nonviolent, victimless crimes and improved mental health care.

“While law enforcers have existed in one form or another for centuries, the modern police have their roots in the relatively recent rise of modern property relations 200 years ago, and the ‘disorderly conduct’ of the urban poor,” Martín noted. He continued: “Like every structure we’ve known all our lives, it seems that the policing paradigm is inescapable and everlasting, and the only thing keeping us from the precipice of a dystopic Wild West scenario. It’s not.”/

Source: MintPress News 7/14/16 <https://www.mintpressnews.com>



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# Democrats' refusal to challenge capitalism undermines the fight for economic and racial justice

JAKE JOHNSON

A brutal class war is being waged by the rich in the United States and, as billionaire Warren Buffett has so bluntly recognized, they are winning.

Republicans, for their part, tend to deny that such a war is taking place – except, of course, when someone observes the obscene wealth that has been absorbed by the top one percent over the last several decades. Then class war, they quickly argue, is being waged by the poor, against the rich.

And Democrats, for all their soaring rhetoric, have failed to muster more than a complacent shrug in response to the corporate assault on those they claim to represent. Indeed, far from combating the class war from above, Democrats have often found themselves on the side of the winners – that is, those who have seen their incomes skyrocket thanks to neoliberal globalization. Largely due to both their acceptance of an ideological system that runs counter to the needs of the masses and "pragmatic" commitments to the needs of organized wealth, gradually during the late 20th century Democrats abandoned the language of class, instead adopting the seemingly high-minded – but often diversionary and empty, particularly when put to use by elites – language of identity politics.

Having shifted allegiances from the working class to the professional class since the 1970s, Democrats have had to adjust their tone accordingly: No longer could they use the provocative language of class conflict; no longer could they condemn, as FDR did, the nation's "economic royalists" who "maintained" a system of "economic slavery." Their new constituency would not take kindly to such language.

And with the language of class went the politics of class – the politics that transformed the Democratic Party throughout the post-Depression years into a party that, while not entirely sympathetic to the working class, pushed through changes that improved the material well-being of millions. But now, in the face of levels of income and wealth inequality matched only by those of the year prior to the Great Depression, the "New" Democrats have proven unable – even unwilling – to confront the problem.

This lack of ability or willingness has less to do with the personal failings of individual Democrats and more to do with the ideological bent of the party they pay allegiance to. "Unwilling to fight for an ambitious social agenda in the name of 'pragmatism' and eagerly receptive to floods of corporate money... Democrats have lost both the language necessary to fight systemic economic and racial injustices and the platform necessary to resist the class war being waged from above." As Touré Reed and many others have argued, Democrats' success in separating the language of identity – race, gender, sexual orientation – from the language of class has allowed the prevailing economic order to escape unscathed, depriving the party of the means necessary to take on soaring inequality. This is a political

shift that, as Reed notes, black radicals from A. Philip Randolph to Martin Luther King Jr. wholeheartedly rejected. They viewed "economic opportunity for all – decent-paying jobs and social-democratic policies – as essential to racial equality" and believed that only a combination of anti-discrimination legislation and social democracy would be sufficient to achieve racial justice (not merely one or the other).

Many Democratic Party liberals of today recognize no such overlap between race and class. And their cynical deployment of identity politics to undermine class-conscious critiques of the American economic order is often quite startling. See, for instance, Hillary Clinton's remarks on the campaign trail in February, during which she attempted to paint her opponent, Bernie Sanders, as a "single issue" candidate. "Not everything is about an economic theory, right?" Clinton said to an approving crowd. "If we broke up the big banks tomorrow – and I will, if they deserve it, if they pose a systemic risk, I will – would that end racism?"

Putting aside the fact that this statement is a straw man from the beginning – Sanders was far from a "single issue" candidate, and he has never argued that breaking up the banks would end racism – Clinton, in one flourish, missed an opportunity to link the struggle for racial justice to the financial crisis, sparked by the very institutions that Sanders wants to break up, tax, and heavily regulate. "I think it's very cynical," historian Donna Murch said of Clinton's comment. "Saying that political economy doesn't matter to black people, I think that that is terrible. Especially when you look at the impact of what happened with the subprime crisis." As *The American Prospect* reported in 2013, people of color were disproportionately targeted by predatory lenders – and people of color were, as a result, disproportionately harmed when the system came crashing down. Here we have both clear-cut racism – as the *Prospect* noted, "some of the loan officers at Wells Fargo spoke of these subprime loans as 'ghetto loans,' and referred to their black customers as 'mud people'" – and widespread, systemic economic exploitation. But as Connor Kilpatrick has summarized the Democratic attitude, "when racism can be blamed, capitalism can be exonerated."

When Democrats refuse, as Clinton so often does, to recognize that those fighting for racial justice and those fighting for economic justice are engaged in a common project – and against a common enemy – they grant legitimacy to the economic order that has produced the profound inequities we see today.

Thus Clinton-style identity politics has become, to quote Adolph Reed, "neoliberalism's version of a left." It is a politics that places what Reed terms "antidiscrimination" at the center and often downplays or ignores economic matters that have profound effects on black and Latino communities. At its core, then, this deep commitment to identity politics is "the path Democrats have taken in retreating from a commitment to economic justice." In that

sense, as Reed has argued, identity politics is, itself, "a class politics, the politics of the left-wing of neoliberalism."

## LEGITIMIZING CAPITALISM

It is a political framework that legitimizes capitalism by separating racial justice from economic justice and arguing that fighting for the latter will do nothing to move us closer to the former; it is a framework that argues not for more equality, but for more diversity among elite sectors of the population. "So the model of social justice" for the neoliberal, Walter Benn Michaels writes, "is not that the rich don't make as much and the poor make more, the model of social justice is that the rich make whatever they make, but an appropriate percentage of them are minorities or women."

This approach ultimately harms not only poor people of color, but also the white working class – a group many Democrats now gleefully dismiss as racists unworthy of attention – by discrediting those who push for the radical changes necessary to combat the horrific economic scene at hand. "Liberals can delude themselves into believing that it is nothing more than the accumulation of individual prejudices stashed away in the minds of powerful white people that has destroyed black and brown communities in Detroit, Ferguson, and Chicago's South Side," notes Kilpatrick. "Class stratification, capital flight, and the war against organized labor are thus sidestepped completely. The liberal elite is spared from having to question the fundamental injustices of capitalism."

Often this unwillingness to question capitalism spawns pernicious, and often influential, narratives, most notably the liberal elite's nasty tendency to blame black people, and black culture more broadly, for the poverty of black communities, thereby exonerating societal and economic forces.

Now, far from simply ignoring class concerns in favor of identity politics, Democratic Party liberals have become fond of condemning and ridiculing those who dare to include a class critique in their political agenda, and have thus brought to the fore their own opposition to "even mild social democracy."

This year, the scorn has been directed at Bernie Sanders (who has repeatedly been attacked, in a variety of ways, as a class/economic reductionist) and his supporters, who have been denigrated (falsely) as angry, white "Bernie bros" who don't actually care about improving the material conditions of the population. But it is Sanders who has revitalized otherwise stale discourse by issuing condemnations of the "billionaire class" – the "economic royalists" of our time – and calling for a "political revolution" from below to fundamentally change a broken system. And it is Sanders who has exposed the now-dominant wing of the Democratic Party that favors party unity over justice and the status quo over even the most basic progressive reforms.

"Economic demands and specifically antiracist demands should not be counterposed," concludes Jennifer Roesch,

"they should be brought together." Far from being a "class reductionist," Sanders has offered a critique of both economic and political power that does precisely that.

Throughout his campaign for the presidency, Bernie Sanders repeatedly addressed issues of great concern to black and Latino communities: The fact, for instance, that "the African American community lost half of their wealth as a result of the Wall Street collapse." Or that black youth unemployment rate is at around 51%. Or that the poverty rate among minority children is staggering. Or that, in some Baltimore neighborhoods, the life expectancy is comparable to that of North Korea. "It is Sanders who has exposed the now-dominant wing of the Democratic Party that favors party unity over justice and the status quo over even the most basic progressive reforms." And Sanders has both put forward a far-reaching progressive platform and persistently fought back against a Democratic establishment that refuses to stand firm in opposition to disastrous "trade" agreements and that has, over the past several decades, consistently capitulated to the interests of the wealthy. Indeed, Democrats have in many cases celebrated policy achievements like NAFTA and welfare reform that, in the words of Touré Reed, "targeted poor and working-class people."

The Democratic Party's adoption of identity politics as an agenda entirely separate from issues of class exploitation has only served to obscure this reality, allowing the economic order that produced these trends to persist. The point, as Walter Benn Michaels has put it, is "not that anti-racism and anti-sexism are not good things." Rather, it is that, as a "substitute" for a broad progressive political project, they fail to address the "increased inequalities of neoliberalism."

Of late, Democrats have gone far beyond failing to address these inequities; they seem bent on perpetuating them. Unwilling to fight for an ambitious social agenda in the name of "pragmatism" and eagerly receptive to floods of corporate money – these two things are not unrelated – Democrats have lost both the language necessary to fight systemic economic and racial injustices and the platform necessary to resist the class war being waged from above.

Their party is now one that is content to, in the words of one commentator, use "its accumulated power to compensate for its complete lack of compelling answers to contemporary political questions." If it wasn't obvious enough already, the Democratic Party's refusal to recognize capitalism as an impediment to both economic and racial justice highlights the necessity of building coalitions and movements outside of the party system. After all, as Michelle Alexander has argued, "it would be easier to build a new party than to save the Democratic Party from itself."

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Source: *Common Dreams* 7/4/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>



# The growing case for massive taxes on the rich



"...young middle class people...have been devastated by debt and underemployment. As a result of their loss of freedom to take chances, the number of new startups in the U.S. has dropped dramatically."

PAUL BUCHHEIT

biggest cheaters.

While candidates bicker and Congress stagnates and the rest of us dwell on the latest shooting tragedy, the super-rich enjoy the absence of attention paid to one of our nation's most destructive issues. The richest Americans are takers of social benefits. Yet they complain about paying 12% to 20% in taxes, even as respected researchers estimate an optimal revenue-producing rate of 80%, and even with the near-certainty that higher marginal tax rates will have no adverse effects on GDP growth. The super-rich pay little in taxes because, as Senator Lindsey Graham said, "It's really American to avoid paying taxes, legally...It's a game we play...I see nothing wrong with playing the game because we set it up to be a game." In reality, it's a game of theft from the essential needs of education, infrastructure, and jobs.

## THE RICHEST INDIVIDUALS CHEAT THE MOST

According to a recent IRS report, an incredible \$406 billion annual gap exists between owed and paid taxes, with individuals accounting for over three-quarters of the total, and with the most egregious misreporting coming from the highest income-takers. That's about \$3,000 per U.S. household in annual lost revenue. Yet even though the IRS retrieves well over \$100 for every dollar in salaries paid to their agents, the agency has been rapidly losing staff, making the tax avoidance game a lot easier for the

## CORPORATIONS CHEAT MOST CREATIVELY

Relative to a dollar of payroll tax, corporations used to pay \$3 in income tax. Now they pay 30 cents. Exxon uses a theoretical tax to 'pay' its bill, and grandfatherly old Warren Buffett's company Berkshire Hathaway uses hypothetical amounts to avoid paying taxes. Despite having billions in profits and nearly half of its sales in the U.S., Pfizer claimed enormous losses in the United States. Each year the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) sells contracts worth about a quadrillion dollars, four times more than all the wealth in the world. Yet ZERO sales tax is paid on the purchases.

## INDEBTED YOUNG AMERICANS HAVE LOST THE FREEDOM TO INNOVATE

The richest Americans believe they drive the economy. They babble about the "freedom" they create. But experience has shown that productive new ideas, and the job creation that comes with them, are generated by young middle class people, who recently have been devastated by debt and underemployment. As a result of their loss of freedom to take chances, the number of new startups in the U.S. has dropped dramatically. Revenue lost to tax avoiders is desperately needed to educate and enable our young would-be entrepreneurs.

## DECADES OF THEFT FROM TAXPAYERS

To the uninformed, Steve Jobs started with boxes of silicon and wires in a garage and fashioned the first Apple computer. The reality is explained by Mariana Mazzucato: "Everything you can do with an iPhone was government-funded. From the Internet that allows you to surf the Web, to GPS that lets you use Google Maps, to touchscreen display and even the SIRI voice activated system -- all of these things were funded by Uncle Sam through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), NASA, the Navy, and even the CIA." It's the same story with our medicines. Pharmaceutical companies wouldn't exist without money from the taxpayers, who have provided support for decades through the National Institutes of Health, and who still pay over 80 percent of the cost of basic research for new drugs and vaccines. Yet the drug companies claim patents on medications that were developed with our tax dollars. Other businesses rely on our roads and seaports and airports to ship their products, the FAA and TSA and Coast Guard and Department of Transportation to safeguard them, and a nationwide energy grid to power their factories, while they pollute our air and water at almost no cost.

## TWO MORE VICTIMS OF TAX CHEATING: K-12 EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Most of the 50 states have cut funding for K-12 education, and they continue to cut it. Teachers haven't received a raise in 15 years. School infrastructure is crumbling, so severely in Detroit that the kids in some of the schools have nowhere to go to the bathroom. For the increasing number of Americans (one out of five!) with mental health problems, there is no place to go. The Department of Health and Human Services reports that most U.S. counties "have no practicing psychiatrists, psychologists, or social workers." In 44 of the 50 states, the majority of mentally ill people reside in jails rather than in psychiatric hospitals. There's no tax money to support the needs of society, and so people in need are thrown into prison. Society's takers, hoarders, and cheaters just ignore the injustice, and go on avoiding taxes while they blame the less fortunate for their own misfortunes.

Paul Buchheit is a college teacher, an active member of US Uncut Chicago, founder and developer of social justice and educational websites (UsAgainstGreed.org, PayUpNow.org, RappingHistory.org), and the editor and main author of "American Wars: Illusions and Realities" (Clarity Press). He can be reached at paul@UsAgainstGreed.org.

Source: Common Dreams 6/2016  
<http://www.commondreams.org>



## Mainstream Media = Truth? Check out the Alternatives and Find out for yourself!

If you tap in to some of the alternative media, you will get a very different perspective on events. Especially now, when the mainstream media often acts as a cheerleader for whatever the administration does, it's necessary to go a little further to get your news. An internet connection is helpful.

**Firedoglake** <http://firedoglake.com>

**Emptywheel**  
<http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>

**Calitics** <http://www.calitics.com/>

**Eschaton** <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>

**Huffington Post**  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

**Hullabaloo** <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>

**Daily Kos** <http://www.dailykos.com>

**Talking Points Memo**  
<http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>

**TPM Muckraker**  
<http://www.tpmmuckraker.com/>

**FiveThirtyEight.com**  
<http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/>

**Congress Matters**  
<http://www.congressmatters.com>

**Think Progress** <http://thinkprogress.com>

**Down With Tyranny**  
<http://downwithtyranny.blogspot.com/>

**Crooks and Liars**  
<http://www.crooksandliars.com>

**Media Matters** <http://mediamatters.org/>

**Common Dreams**  
<http://www.commondreams.org/>

**Truth Out** <http://www.truthout.org/>

**Raw Story** <http://www.rawstory.com>

**Open Left** <http://www.openleft.com/>

**AlterNet** <http://www.alternet.org/>

**Independent Media Center**  
<http://www.indymedia.org>

**The Nation** <http://www.thenation.com/>

**Hightower News**  
<http://www.webactive.com/hightower/>

**Mother Jones** <http://www.motherjones.com/>

**In These Times** <http://inthesetimes.com/>

**The Guardian**  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/>

**Corporate Watch**  
<http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>

**KPFA (94.1 FM)** provides excellent coverage on many issues. You can listen on the internet at <http://www.kpfa.org>

**Democracy Now!** on KPFA, 94.1 FM and KVMR, 89.5 FM or on the web at: <http://www.democracynow.org>

**People's World** <http://www.peoplesworld.org>



# Heirloom non-GMO corn is helping sustain Mexico's heritage and farmers

KEN ROSEBORO

It's not often that a conversation inspires an idea leading to a project that improves people's lives and potentially transforms an industry. But that's what happened to Jorge Gaviria, founder of Masienda. While serving as a host and translator at the G9 Chefs Summit at Blue Hill at Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York in 2013, Gaviria heard chefs discuss responsibly sourced ingredients. This inspired him to travel to Mexico and learn about the country's rare heirloom corn varieties. He got the idea to work with smallholder farmers there to buy their corn, import it to the U.S. and supply restaurants, which would make delicious tortillas using the corn. In 2014, Gaviria founded Masienda, which is a combination of the words "masa" or corn flour and "tienda" or store, to accomplish his goal.

## SOURCED LANDRACE NON-GMO CORN VARIETIES

"I gained an appreciation for the storied history of corn," Gaviria said. "The more I learned the more I wanted to create opportunities for farmers and to connect chefs to them." Mexico, particularly the southern state of Oaxaca, is known as the birthplace of corn. "Mexico has been producing corn for 12,000 years," Gaviria explained. The country has as many as 59 landraces or locally adapted, traditional varieties of corn, according to Martha Willcox, Maize Landrace Improvement Coordinator at CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center), who has helped Gaviria with his project. "Maize is the culture in Mexico," she said. "Everyone eats maize every day and there are 2,000 culinary applications." Within those 59 landraces, Gaviria says there are "tons of varieties" of corn, including many colors such as white, blue, red and yellow. "There is a huge amount of diversity in the landraces," Willcox said.

Masienda sources its corn from Oaxaca, whose corn varieties are among the most rare and diverse in Mexico. Gaviria buys the corn from the region's smallholder farmers who have been growing these corn varieties for generations. "These farmers are custodians of a very precious commodity," said Alan Tank, former assistant vice president of the National Corn Growers Association and an adviser to Masienda. "The

value it represents to them and to the world is nothing short of phenomenal." As an Iowa farmer, Tank appreciates the value of Mexico's corn heritage. "Being part of family farm, I understand the need for biodiversity and preserving it," he said.

## PROVIDES NEEDED INCOME TO FARMERS

The average size of the smallholder farms range from about 2 to 12 acres. Oaxaca's farmers are poor with 62 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Masienda's purchase of the farmers' excess corn—most of the corn they need for food—provides the farmers with income they would not otherwise receive. "We are providing a fair price to the farmers for growing the corn and having a big impact on rural communities there," Gaviria said. "It's a way to provide markets with good prices for farmers who have continued to grow these landraces," Willcox said. This year Masienda is working with 1,200 farmers after starting with 100 in 2014. Willcox and CIMMYT helped Gaviria identify the best corn varieties, connect with the farmers, source the corn and pay the farmers. Masienda imports 10 to 15 different landraces. According to the company's website, this is the first time in history these corn varieties have been available outside of the remote, indigenous communities of Oaxaca.

Masienda supplies corn to about 100 restaurants, mostly in the U.S. with a few in Canada. One of those restaurants is Taquiza in Miami, Florida. Owner and chef Steve Santana uses blue and white bolita corn varieties to make masa flour, which is then made into tortillas and chips. Santana is enthusiastic about Masienda's corn. "Visually it's really cool looking and the flavor is unmatched," he said. Santana could buy much cheaper U.S. domestic corn but he prefers the heirloom varieties. "I like knowing that farmers are getting treated well throughout the supply chain," he said. "We are preserving a little history; this is pure food in its natural state."

## NON-GMO MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Masienda is growing exponentially. In just two years, the company's corn imports grew from 40 tons in 2014 to 80 tons last year and 400 this year. The company is also co-branding tortilla products with Chicago-based restaurant Frontera Grill

and plans to sell its own branded products. Gaviria says the market potential for the landrace corn is huge. According to the Tortilla Industry Association, the U.S. tortilla market is worth \$12.5 billion.

Most tortillas in the U.S. are likely made from genetically modified corn since more than 90 percent of the corn grown here is GMO. But with the soaring demand for non-GMO foods, there is great market potential for Mexico's heirloom non-GMO corn. Mexico has not approved production of GMO corn, but last August a Mexican judge overturned a September 2013 ban on plantings of GMO corn, paving the way for field trials of the controversial crop. The concern is that GMO corn production could cross pollinate and contaminate Mexico's landrace corn varieties. In 2001, University of California scientist Ignacio Chapela published a paper documenting GMO contamination of some of Oaxaca's landrace varieties. Willcox thinks this may have occurred when Mexican migrant workers brought back GMO seed from the U.S. and planted it. However, she said: "I haven't seen evidence (of GMO contamination). I worry about it. It's still not legal in Mexico." Gaviria sees GMOs as a threat to Mexico's corn biodiversity. "GMOs could have a fundamental impact on the tradition and scope of preservation," he said.

## PROVIDES VEHICLE TO PRESERVE LANDRACE CORN

Gaviria has ambitious plans for Masienda. "We want to educate consumers on what corn can and should taste like and provide an alternative supply chain to what we've conventionally known in the U.S. for the last 50 plus years," he said. In the process Masienda aims to support smallholder farmers, sustainability and biodiversity. "What Masienda does and represents is nothing short of essential," Tank said. "It provides a vehicle to ensure landrace genetics can be preserved and protected. It allows farmers to capture value. What better way to preserve the landraces than to create a market for them so they are preserved for history." Willcox says Masienda is an exciting project with a lot of potential: "It's a conservation effort, a development effort and a research effort."

Source: EcoWatch 7/18/16 <http://www.ecowatch.com>

# California solar generates electricity for 6 million homes, a record

LORRAINE CHOW

California has hit a new solar generation record, thanks to this week's triple-digit heat wave. SF Gate calculated that on Tuesday, the Golden State's solar power plants briefly generated enough electricity for more than 6 million homes. According to figures from California's Independent Solar Operators Corporation (ISO) which operates most of the state's grid, a whopping 8,030 megawatts of large-scale solar power was generated at 1:06 p.m. on July 12, nearly doubling the amount of solar energy produced in mid-2014 and nearly 2,000 megawatts higher than in May 2015.

"This solar production record demonstrates that California is making significant strides forward in connecting low carbon resources to the grid in meeting the state's goal of reaching 33 percent renewables by 2020," ISO President and CEO Steve Berberich said. "California continues to lead the nation in adding clean resources to the

system and writing a playbook for operating a low carbon grid." The ISO noted that at peak electricity demand on Tuesday at 5:54 p.m., almost 29 percent of electricity needs were met by the state's vast renewable energy portfolio that includes solar, wind, geothermal, biofuels, small hydro-electricity and energy storage.

Renewables have incredible potential for the state as evidenced this past May 14 and 15, when renewables fulfilled an impressive 54 percent and 56 percent of demand, respectively. When it comes to solar energy, the sun-spoiled state is head and shoulders above the rest. The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) has consistently ranked California as the nation's top solar state, and reported in April that California has more solar jobs and installed more megawatts of solar capacity last year than any other U.S. state. Its 13,241 megawatts of cumulative installed solar capacity is capable of powering an estimated 3.32 million homes. And according to the U.S. Department of Energy,

"for both utility-scale solar PV and solar thermal, California has more capacity than the rest of the country combined, with 52 percent and 73 percent of the nation's total, respectively."

"Solar power generation is just growing astronomically, and it is less expensive," Anne Gonzales, an ISO spokeswoman told the Sacramento Business Journal. Indeed, solar costs and prices are continuing to drop as solar installations soar. However, there have been some roadblocks. The Ivanpah plant in California's Mojave Desert—a 392 megawatt concentrated solar power tower and one of the world's largest solar plants—famously caught on fire in May. Forbes also pointed out that on especially sunny days, "the state's energy sources (nuclear, gas, renewables) produce more energy than it needs, which has resulted in the grid operator telling solar farms to shut down." Officials are now looking into connecting with nearby states to share excess energy, Forbes said. Still, this shining week proves that California

is making incredible strides towards its ambitious renewable energy goals of 33 percent by 2020 and 50 percent by 2030.

Last year, on the day Gov. Jerry Brown was sworn in for his fourth term in office, he boasted that California has "the most far-reaching environmental laws of any state and the most integrated policy to deal with climate change of any political jurisdiction in the Western Hemisphere." Brown listed a multi-pronged approach to achieving the state's renewable energy targets, including more distributed power, expanded rooftop solar, micro-grids, an energy imbalance market, battery storage, full integration of information technology and electrical distribution, and millions of electric and low-carbon vehicles.

Source: Ecowatch 6/15/16 <http://www.ecowatch.com/>



# EPA flawed process for approving pesticides

## - mixing not considered



The Environmental Protection Agency has approved nearly 100 pesticide products over the past six years that contain mixtures that make them more poisonous and increase the dangers to imperiled pollinators and rare plants, according to an investigation by the Center for Biological Diversity. These "synergistic" combinations have been widely overlooked by the EPA in its approval of pesticides for food, lawns and other uses. The Center's new report, *Toxic Concoctions: How the EPA Ignores the Dangers of Pesticide Cocktails*, involved an intensive search of patent applications for pesticide products containing two or more active ingredients recently approved by the EPA for four major

agrochemical companies (Bayer, Dow, Monsanto and Syngenta).

"The EPA is supposed to be the cop on the beat, protecting people and the environment from the dangers of pesticides," said Nathan Donley, a scientist with the Center and author of the report. "With these synergistic pesticides, the EPA has decided to look the other way, and guess who's left paying the price?" Synergy occurs when two or more chemicals interact to enhance their toxic effects. It can turn what would normally be considered a safe level of exposure into one that results in considerable harm. Pesticide mixtures are ubiquitous in the environment and also present in many products for sale on store shelves.

In late 2015, in preparing to defend itself against litigation on the registration of a pesticide product called Enlist Duo, the EPA discovered a new source of information on the product: the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Database, which contained a patent application indicating the two ingredients in this product, glyphosate and 2,4-D, resulted in synergistic toxicity to plants. This discovery ultimately led the agency to ask the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to vacate its approval of Enlist Duo because it had not properly considered the potential adverse effects of this synergy on nontarget plants. It also highlighted a previously unknown source of much-needed mixture toxicity data:

patent applications. Among the key findings in the examination of approvals for the four companies:

- \* 69 percent of these products (96 out of 140) had at least one patent application that claimed or demonstrated synergy between the active ingredients in the product;

- \* 72 percent of the identified patent applications that claimed or demonstrated synergy involved some of the most highly used pesticides in the United States, including glyphosate, atrazine, 2,4-D, dicamba and the neonicotinoids thiamethoxam, imidacloprid and clothianidin, among others.

"It's alarming to see just how common it's been for the EPA to ignore how these chemical mixtures might endanger the health of our environment," Donley said. "It's pretty clear that chemical companies knew about these potential dangers, but the EPA never bothered to demand this information from them or dig a little deeper to find it for themselves."

The EPA can only approve a pesticide if it will not cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment. When a chemical company develops a new product,

in addition to seeking approval for that product from the EPA, it will often apply for patent protection on the mixture. Such an application is typically accompanied by data that demonstrate synergistic toxicity to the organisms that are going to be targeted by the chemicals. The EPA frequently claims it cannot evaluate potential synergistic impacts because it lacks data. But this report finds that the patent database contains substantial data on synergistic effects that can be used to fill some of the data gaps that exist on mixture toxicity to plants and animals. The fact that the EPA claims it just recently became aware of this data source indicates that pesticide companies are collecting information about the synergistic effects of products for submission to the U.S. Patent and Trademark office that they are choosing not to share with the EPA.

"The EPA has turned a blind eye for far too long to the reality that pesticide blends can have dangerous synergistic effects," said Donley. "Now that we know about all the data that are out there, the EPA must take action to ensure that wildlife and the environment are protected from these chemical cocktails."

*Source: Center for Biological Diversity 7/19/16 <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>*

## Food and biotech industries win: Congress passes DARK Act 2.0

ANDREA GERMANOS

President Barack Obama is poised to sign the so-called DARK Act, a GMO labeling bill critics say notches a win for the food and biotech industries but will still leave consumers in the dark about whether or not their food contains genetically modified ingredients. After the legislation easily passed in the U.S. House on Thursday, the *Wall Street Journal* described it as "a victory for food companies," noting that it "will supersede tougher measures passed by one state [Vermont] and considered in others."

As *The Hill* reports: "The bill, which passed by a 306 to 117 vote, directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to create a national labeling standard that allows food producers to choose how they want to disclose the presence of genetically modified ingredients. Under the legislation, manufacturers will be able to use text, symbols or a QR code that consumers must scan with a smartphone to relay the information."

As such, *BloombergPolitics* reports, "Under the legislation, which has been pushed for by companies including Monsanto Co., Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and groups including the National Corn Growers Association, consumers may still find it hard to figure out if the food they are buying is genetically modified, leading opponents to dub the bill the DARK Act." It passed the Senate last week, and now heads to President Obama, who's indicated he will sign it—against the wishes of many food transparency advocacy groups.

Gary Ruskin, co-director of pro-labeling group U.S. Right to Know, urged Obama to veto the legislation, saying in a press statement that it "is a sweetheart deal for the food and agricultural industries, who want to keep consumers

guessing about the contents of their food." Similarly criticizing the legislation on Thursday was Ronnie Cummins, international director of Organic Consumers Association, who said in a statement, "Congress trampled on consumer and states' rights, choosing instead to serve the interests of Monsanto and the Grocery Manufacturers Association."

"This bill was written bought and paid for by corporations who clearly have something to hide," he continued. "Replacing clear, on-package labels with a system that is convoluted, inconvenient, and discriminates against the elderly, the poor and anyone without a smartphone or internet access is inexcusable, especially when consumers in 64 other countries have the right to that same information."

There's also the fact that the majority of Americans support labeling of GMOs, Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch, says. She added, "If this bill becomes law, the food and biotech industries win what are essentially voluntary requirements. This so-called 'compromise' does not mandate recalls, penalties or fines for noncompliance, and many loopholes in the bill will likely leave many GMO ingredients exempt from any labeling requirements. The bill gives companies the option to use discriminatory and cumbersome QR codes that require a smartphone to access basic information about the food on store shelves."

"We urge President Obama to remember his campaign promise to let consumers know what they are eating by rejecting this bill. This is his final chance to get it right when it comes to food policies that protect people over corporations. He can do just that by vetoing the DARK Act," Hauter said. Civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson added his voice to the

chorus of opposition by sending Obama a letter on Thursday urging him to veto the measure.

Echoing some of Cummins and Hauter's concerns, Jackson writes that the "law's principal thrust is to rely on QR codes which shoppers will scan to gain product information relative to GMOs. However, 100,000,000 Americans, most of them poor, people of color and elderly either do not own a smart phone or an iPhone to scan the QR code or live in an area of poor internet connectivity."

"As someone who, like yourself, has traversed the rocky upward path to social and economic justice on behalf of those at the other side of society's great divides, racial, social and economic," he added, "I want to call to your attention serious inequities on GMO labeling legislation coming soon to your desk."

Carey Gillam, journalist and research director for U.S. Right to Know, reported last month on how the legislation has "blown wide open deep divisions running through the U.S. organic industry." The Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA) announced Wednesday that it withdrew its membership from the influential Organic Trade Association (OTA), decrying the "duplicity towards organic farmers and consumers" when OTA signed off on the bill, despite the fact that it "would immediately preempt existing strong state GMO labeling laws that are widely supported by the organic community and ninety percent of consumers."

*Source: Common Dreams 7/14/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>*



# Stifling free speech in California: AB2844

GLORIA FEARN

Since January the California Legislature has been dealing with a piece of legislation designed to silence activists for exercising their right to participate in boycotts. The activists in question are churches, unions, peace groups, academics, students and Palestinian solidarity groups, including Jewish Voice for Peace. The techniques they are employing, boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) are as American as the United Farm Workers grape boycott, the Montgomery bus boycott and the boycott divestment and sanctions movement to end Apartheid in South Africa.

The issue is the call for an end to the well-documented violations of human rights and international law being committed by the Israeli state against the Palestinian people. These abuses include home demolitions and invasions, a brutal military occupation, extra judicial killings of adults and children, stealing of Palestinian land for illegal settlements, apartheid laws that discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel, refusal to respect refugee rights, to name a few.

BDS, first called for by Palestinian civil society in 2005, has been rapidly gaining strength around the world. In 2009 Palestinian Christians, taking a page from their brothers and sisters

in South Africa, published "Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth" and appealed for help from people of faith around the world. Since 2009 votes to divest from and/or boycott corporations that support the occupation of Palestine have been debated and passed in church assemblies and on college campuses. Oakland Longshoremans even refused to off-load an Israeli ship.

As a result of global pressure, Soda Stream moved its facilities out of the occupied West Bank. Veolia, the giant French conglomerate was targeted by BDS and lost billions of dollars in contracts around the world before selling most of its holdings in Israel. G4S the world's largest security firm is now being targeted and is saying it will withdraw from Israel where it is intimately connected with the Israeli prisons that hold Palestinians in violation of international law.

This success has led to a wave of anti-BDS legislation in over 20 states, where proponents are seeking to legislate away any criticism of Israel. New York Gov. Cuomo recently implemented draconian anti-boycott rules by executive order. Thousands are protesting, and he'll soon be challenged in court.

In the California legislature the hotly debated and much amended AB2844 would force any entity wishing to enter a contract of \$100,000 or more

with the State to certify, under penalty of perjury, a felony, that their "policy" is not a "pretext for discrimination."

Illegal discrimination by state contractors is already prohibited under laws named in AB 2844. So this new law would be utterly redundant except for the fact that it would open the door for a witch-hunt. Precious tax dollars would be required to review complaints and state employees would be forced to act as policemen. Who would be affected? Companies and non-profits, including unions, schools, universities, churches and social service providers and any organization that has voted to divest from or boycott corporations that profit from the occupation of Palestine. Some of these non-profits service children, elders, sick and poor people. Through it all, the purpose of AB2844 has remained the same: to punish, silence and intimidate citizens who participate in or support the BDS movement. AB2844 is blatantly unconstitutional and a shameful waste of legislators time. AB2844 is before the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 1st.

GLORIA FEARN IS THE SECRETARY OF THE ISRAEL PALESTINE TASK FORCE, CA/NV ANNUAL CONFERENCE, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND A PJN BOARD MEMBER.

## Six richest countries host less than nine percent of refugees

The six wealthiest countries - which make up more than half the global economy - host less than nine percent of the world's refugees while poorer countries and territories are shouldering most of the responsibility, Oxfam said today. Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, South Africa as well as the Occupied Palestinian Territory host over 50 percent of the world's refugees and asylum seekers but account for under 2 percent of the world's economy.

Oxfam's analysis shows that collectively the United States, China, Japan, Germany, France and the United Kingdom hosted 2.1 million refugees and asylum seekers last year - just 8.88 percent of the world total. While Germany has recently welcomed far more refugees than the other richest nations, there still remains a major gap with poorer countries providing the vast majority of safe havens for refugees.

Ahead of two major summits about refugees and migrants in New York in September, Oxfam is calling on governments to not only host more people in need of safe havens, but to commit to do more to help the developing countries sheltering the majority of refugees and protect all people on the move.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International said: "It is shameful so many governments are turning their backs on the suffering of millions of vulnerable people who have fled their homes and are often risking their lives to reach safety. Poorer countries are shouldering the duty of protecting refugees when it should be a shared responsibility, but many richer countries are doing next to nothing. "The international displacement we are seeing is an unprecedented and complex challenge requiring a coordinated global response. The richest countries need to be part of the solution and do their fair share by welcoming and protecting more refugees."

Over 65 million people have fled their homes because of conflict, persecution and violence; the highest level since records began. A third of these are refugees and asylum seekers, while the majority have been internally displaced. The conflict in Syria has been a major factor, but people are also fleeing violence in South Sudan, Burundi, Iraq and Yemen, and elsewhere.

This is happening as the mood for offering safe havens to people on the move is darkening. The recent deal between European governments

and Turkey has left thousands of men, women and children detained in Greece in often appalling conditions and in a legal limbo. The Kenyan government - when announcing the closure of the Dadaab refugee camp - said that if Europe could turn away Syrians, Kenya could do the same for Somalis.

"Too many people who have taken treacherous journeys to reach safety end up living in degrading situations littered with abuse, hostility and discrimination, and too few governments are doing anywhere near enough to help or protect them. We must stand as one with the millions of people who have been forced to flee as they need our help. For more information, contact Oxfam International.

*Oxfam International is a confederation of 13 like-minded organizations working together and with partners and allies around the world to bring about lasting change. Oxfam works directly with communities and that seeks to influence the powerful to ensure that poor people can improve their lives and livelihoods and have a say in decisions that affect them.*

Source: Oxfam International 7/18/16  
<http://www.oxfam.org/>



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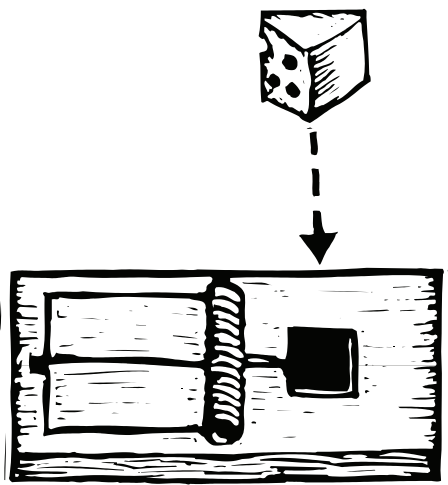
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# "Free" trade? fraud alert



DAVID KORTEN

It is rare these days to hear the words “market” and “trade” without the word “free” attached—especially on corporate media. I even hear colleagues who are pursuing a more localized economy use these terms without realizing that by so doing they are subtly and unintentionally promoting a political agenda they oppose.

Words have power, and corporate spin doctors choose them carefully to develop positive emotional associations with their agenda.

The corporatist website Investopedia.com explains what is meant by a free market: “A completely free market is an idealized form of a market economy where buyers and sellers

are allowed to transact freely (i.e., buy/sell/trade) based on a mutual agreement on price without state intervention in the form of taxes, subsidies, or regulation.” Thus, the term “free market” joins two positive words—freedom and markets—and associates them with the corporatists’ ideal of freedom for corporations to maximize short-term profits free from public oversight, taxes, or responsibility for public consequences.

For me, the term “market” evokes the image of a local Saturday morning farmers market like the one where I go to buy fresh produce from my farmer neighbors. Such markets fit perfectly the dictionary definition of a market as “an open place or a covered building where buyers and sellers convene for the sale of goods; a marketplace.” These markets feature life-sustaining person-to-person exchange, often while enjoying each other’s company and the offerings of food vendors and musicians. These are living markets organized by the people who use them. Most of us love them—and properly so.

The many community markets I have visited around the world are beautiful celebrations of local life and culture, much like street parties. Our Saturday morning farmers market on Bainbridge Island is tiny by comparison with many I’ve visited. Even so, it draws a vibrant crowd and is an important contributor to building the relationships of trust and caring essential to healthy community function. It is easy to buy into the idea that such markets should be “free” from the heavy hand of government—though, in fact, even these markets have and could not long function without rules, including rules that exclude non-local businesses.

The “free market” of the corporatist ideal is the polar opposite to such community-nourishing living markets. The

corporatists’ free market is populated and organized by transnational corporations that spurn attachments to people, place, and community. Of course, corporations employ people, but their primary relationship is not to each other. It is to the corporation. And that relationship preempts the direct relationship they might otherwise enjoy with one another and the place they call home.

There is a similar deceptive branding at work in the corporatists’ preference for the term “free trade” over simply “trade.” For most of us, trade and freedom are both good. “Free trade” connects these associations with the corporatist agenda of trade unconstrained by national boundaries and interests. These set up a positive association with international agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) that are routinely referred to as “free trade” agreements. In fact, they are not about freedom and only indirectly about trade. Filled with thousands of pages of detailed rules, their primary purpose is to strip countries of control of their own borders and transfer that control to global corporations.

Perhaps the most striking “free market” contradiction is that the corporatist neoliberal agenda supports corporate mergers and acquisitions that build concentrations of monopoly power and reduce the market competition that is normally assumed to be a defining feature of a market.

So the next time you hear the term “free market” or “free trade,” treat that as a fraud alert. Ask yourself, what are those warm-sounding words trying to sell? And remember, a living Earth economy features living markets, not the “free market,” and it engages in fair trade, not “free trade.”

Source: YES! Magazine 7/16/16 <http://www.yesmagazine.org>

# Latest leak shows how TTIP puts US-EU clean energy goals in 'mortal danger'

DEIRDRE FULTON

A new leak provides further confirmation that the corporate TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the U.S. and European Union would result in “a giant leap backward in our fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground.” As the 14th round of TTIP negotiations started in Brussels on Monday, the */Guardian/* reported that the latest draft of the agreement “could sabotage European efforts to save energy and switch to clean power.”

The draft energy chapter obtained by the */Guardian/* “shows that the EU will propose a rollback of mandatory energy savings measures, and major obstacles to any future pricing schemes designed to encourage the uptake of renewable energies,” wrote reporter Arthur Nelson. According to a Sierra Club analysis of the leak, the TTIP proposal would:

- \* Require the U.S. and the EU “to eliminate all existing restrictions on the export of natural gas in trade between” the two parties;

- \* Undermine clean energy policies, such as renewable portfolio standards or feed-in tariffs, by stating that electricity utilities in the U.S. and the EU shall not discriminate “between types of energy” in granting access to the electrical grid;

- \* Obligate the U.S. and the EU to “foster industry self-regulation” on energy efficiency rather than using mandatory requirements that oblige corporations to boost the energy efficiency of their products; and

- \* Threaten protections against destructive extraction of fossil fuels and natural resources in countries outside of the U.S. and EU.

“This leaked document goes farther than any past leaked or publicly available TTIP document on energy to reveal the

threat that the deal poses to our efforts to protect our climate by fully transitioning to clean energy,” said Ilana Solomon, director of the Sierra Club’s Responsible Trade Program. “For example,” she said, “never before have we seen a more explicit and sweeping assertion that all gas export restrictions in the United States should be wiped out under TTIP—a nightmare that would be a giant leap backward in our fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground.”

Paul de Clerck of Friends of the Earth Europe concurred that the language of the proposal would lead to “more fracking in the U.S. and more imports of American fossil fuels to Europe.” To that end, he said, the leaked chapter “is in complete contradiction with Europe’s commitments to tackle climate change, and the Paris agreement.” What’s more, he added, “It will flood the EU market with inefficient appliances, and consumers and the climate will foot the bill. The proposal will also hinder measures to promote renewable electricity production from wind and solar.”

Greenpeace told */Deutsche Welle/*, for instance, that German legislation giving renewable energy preferential access to the national grid would be regarded as illegal under the TTIP as written. Earlier this year, Germany produced so much energy from its solar, wind, hydro, and biomass plants that power prices went into negative territory for several hours—a milestone credited at the time to a people-powered “energy revolution.”

“Should this proposal become part of the free trade pact, Germany’s shift to renewable energy is in mortal danger,” Greenpeace spokesman Christoph Lieven said in a statement. And Green MEP Claude Turmes told the */Guardian/*: “These proposals are completely unacceptable. They would sabotage EU legislators’ ability to privilege renewables and energy efficiency over unsustainable fossil fuels. This is an attempt to undermine democracy in Europe.”

Monday’s revelations are just the latest to suggest that the TTIP—like other so-called “free trade” deals currently under negotiation—would negatively impact the environment,

human rights, and democratic principles on both sides of the Atlantic.

But opponents have hope. The latest round of negotiations comes as the TTIP is on increasingly shaky ground, a fact that did not go unobserved by Global Justice Now executive director Nick Dearden. “With senior political figures from France and Italy signaling that the deal is dead in the water, surely [European Commissioner for Trade Cecilia] Malmström should call time on this failed corporate coup,” Dearden said on Monday.

“The toxic trade deals being pushed by Brussels would only benefit tiny financial elites, while the ordinary people of the EU would be stripped of legal protections of labor rights, consumer standards and public services,” he continued. “If the EU is going to prevent further disintegration after Brexit, it needs to stop prioritizing corporate power grabs and start addressing issues such as rising inequality and social exclusion.”

At *Ars Technica*, Glyn Moody writes: “Meanwhile, another TTIP leak has been published today by the German investigative site Correctiv.org. Ironically, one of the issues it mentions is how to stop further leaks about TTIP, which apparently continue to annoy the US negotiators. According to the leaked document, the commission apparently plans to bring in more controls for MEPs when they visit the official TTIP reading room. This includes “better control of electronic devices, especially with hidden cameras, a second attendant [that is, guard] with six or more people present, and only giving out three documents at a time.”

According to Friends of the Earth Europe, this week will see yet more public demonstrations against the deal, as part of TTIP Game Over <<https://ttipgameoverblog.wordpress.com/>>, a citizen’s initiative calling for direct, non-violent action.

Source: Common Dreams 7/11/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>



# Bernie's 7 legacies

ROBERT REICH

Bernie Sanders's campaign is now officially over, but the movement he began is still just beginning. He's provided it seven big legacies:

First, Bernie has helped open America's eyes to the power of big money corrupting our democracy and thereby rigging our economy to its advantage and everyone else's disadvantage. Polls now show huge majorities of Americans think moneyed interests have too much sway in Washington. And thanks, in large part, to Bernie's campaign, progressives on Capitol Hill are readying a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United, and bills requiring full disclosure of donors, ending gerrymandering, and providing automatic voter registration. None of these will get anywhere in a Republican-controlled Congress, but they will give progressives a

powerful theme for the upcoming election. It's called democracy.

Second, Bernie has shown that it's possible to win elections without depending on big money from corporations, Wall Street, and billionaires. He came close to winning the Democratic nomination on the basis of millions of small donations from average working people. No longer can a candidate pretend to believe in campaign finance reform but say they have to take big money because their opponent does.

Third, Bernie has educated millions of Americans about why we must have a single-payer health-care system and free tuition at public universities, and why we must resurrect the Glass-Steagall Act and bust up the biggest banks. These issues will be front and center in every progressive campaign from here out, at all levels of American politics.

Fourth, the Sanders campaign has

brought millions of young people into politics, ignited their energy and enthusiasm and idealism.

Fifth, the movement Bernie ignited has pushed Hillary Clinton to take more progressive positions on issues ranging from the minimum wage to the Trans Pacific Partnership, the XL Pipeline, Wall Street, and Social Security.

Sixth, he's taught Americans how undemocratic the Democratic Party's system for picking candidates really is. Before Bernie's candidacy, not many people were paying attention to so-called "super-delegates" or whether independents could vote, or how primary elections and caucuses were run. From now on, people will pay attention. And the Democratic National Committee will be under pressure to make fundamental changes.

Seventh is the real possibility Bernie has

inspired of a third party – if the Democratic Party doesn't respond to the necessity of getting big money out of politics and reversing widening inequality, if it doesn't begin to advocate for a single-payer healthcare system, or push hard for higher taxes on the wealthy - including a wealth tax - to pay for better education and better opportunities for everyone else, if it doesn't expand Social Security and lift the cap on income subject to the Social Security payroll tax, if it doesn't bust up the biggest banks and strengthen antitrust laws, and expand voting rights.

If it doesn't act on these critical issues, the Democratic Party will become irrelevant to the future of America, and a third party will emerge to address them. Bernie, we thank you for your courage, your inspiration, your tireless dedication, and your vision. And we will continue the fight.

Source: Robert Reich's Website 7/18/16 <http://robertreich.org>

## You don't live in a democracy anymore

JOHN ATCHESON

Within the last 30 years, while we've chased bogeymen overseas and here at home, our Democracy has fallen. We have been taken over; defeated; our voices neutered; our freedoms trampled; our democracy vanquished. No invading force accomplished this; no jackboots echoed across our republic; no alien flag was raised above our lands. Not a single shot was fired by our vaunted military to halt this takeover. No, this was a quiet coup, accomplished from within, and conducted in stealth. In the cult film classic, *The Usual Suspects*, Roger "Verbal" Kint says, "The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." Just so, has the Oligarchy taken over the US.

Many of us continue with the delusion that we are free. We celebrate Independence Day. We vote. We express ourselves openly. We are not jailed for our opinions, at least not usually. We live where we want. We pursue the work we choose. We get our news from a "free" press. We engage in the pursuit of happiness.

And while all this seems true, we are not free. Our votes carry no weight. Our news is a hollow monoculture in which six corporations own 90% of the outlets with most of the rest controlled by elitists who can no longer relate to the average person; in which infotainment has replaced information; in which a modern day version of bread and circuses keeps us distracted from the increasingly grim reality we are everyday immersed in. The jobs open to us are becoming increasingly exploitative. And the pursuit of happiness is marred by a lack of choice, increasingly desperate economic straights for the majority of us, and a feeling of impotence as we watch the American dream shrink before our eyes.

### CONSIDER:

\* When 91% wanted to strengthen rules on clean air and protection of drinking water, Congress – led by the Republican majority – proposed weakening them;

\* When 90% wanted to protect public lands and parks; the Republicans proposed putting them on sale or otherwise privatizing them;

\* When 74% of Americans favored ending subsidies to big oil, Congress retained most of them;

\* At a time when the majority of citizens favored allowing tax cuts for those earning over \$250,000 to expire, the best Congress could do was to compromise on \$400,000;

\* When 70% of Americans said climate change should be a high priority issue, Congress took no action;

\* Some 80% of Americans favor shoring up Social

Security even if it means higher taxes and a similar number support retaining Medicare as is, but the Obama administration has twice offered cuts to both programs as part of a "grand bargain" and Republican budgets routinely seek to privatize them;

\* Or take this gem ... more than 80% of Americans want to clamp down on Wall Street but the best we could get was weak-sister legislation that doesn't even address too-big-to-fail or restore a Glass Steagall provision limiting the risks these big banks can take with your money. And even this slap-on-the-wrist legislation is being completely eviscerated as it is translated into regulations.

\* After Orlando, 92% of the people supported a bill expanding background checks to online purchases of guns, but Congress has been unable to pass it;

\* And when 85% of citizens supported a bill barring people on the terrorist watch list from buying guns, Congress couldn't pass the it;

Dwell on these last two bits of political pornography for a moment: Congress denied the vast majority of the people's perfectly reasonable – in fact, bare minimal – desire to keep assault rifles and weapons out of the hands of potential mass murders because a few special interests opposed it.

But it's not simply a list of specific issues where the Oligarchy defeats the will of the people. Their victory has been complete.

Even as we spend tens of trillions on "Defense," ostensibly to protect our freedom, we quietly relinquished it; not to an invasion from without, but to a silent coup by the rich and powerful from within. As Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page pointed out, in their landmark study on the influence of money and special interests in politics: "When the preferences of economic elites and the stands of organized interest groups are controlled for, \*the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy\*."

They went on to note that "... \*the majority does not rule—at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes\*." Take a moment to consider this, too. We the people have no say and almost zero influence in our governance. Forget about the land of the free and the home of the brave – we've become the land of the duped and the home of the indentured.

The system which enabled this coup is the pay-to-play politics that Trump and Clinton and virtually all politicians subscribe to. This contention isn't hyperbole; it can't be written off to the excess exuberance of the young, or the unrealistic reveries of ideologues that the Establishment Media would have you believe. It's data. It's reality. And it's the logical

end-point of the pay-to-play PACster politics that reached its apogee with the Citizen's United Decision.

It costs about \$1.7 million dollars to win a seat in the House, and \$10.5 million to win a Senate seat according to a study by maplight.org . Daily News reporter David Knowles spoke with Maplight president Daniel Newman for an article on a recent study they conducted, and Newman told him that no shortage of this money came from corporations. He went on to say:

"Most industries give money to members of Congress because it buys them access and influence. And now, with Citizens United, corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money on these races. The result is that members of Congress are fearful about voting against corporate interests because there's so much money at stake."

Much of the rest of the money a candidate needs to run for Congress comes from uber-rich individuals such as the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson, and George Soros. They too, have an agenda, and it isn't usually aligned with the interests or the wishes of the American people. Even liberal contributors like Soros, favor members of the establishment elite such as uClinton over "revolutionaries" like Sanders, who want to completely change the system that gives them influence.

This is why we can't enact meaningful gun control legislation when the vast majority favor it; this is why we can't enact effective climate change policies when majorities in both parties say they want to; this is why we let the people founder but bailed out the banks when they crashed the economy in 2008; this is why politicians from both Parties still favor job-wrecking trade agreements when most citizens from both Parties are against them; this is why the uber rich and corporations can easily discharge debt and renege on promises to their employees using bankruptcy laws, but students and the poor cannot; this is why we can't break up the too-big-to-fail banks or reinstall Glass-Steagall or pass a tax on securities trading, again, even though the majority of Americans favor all of these measures. This is why we are engaged in never-ending wars nobody wants and that nobody can explain or justify at a cost of tens of trillions of dollars that the people don't want to spend. Quite simply, the United States is no longer a Democratic Republic; it is an Oligarchy.

JOHN ATCHESON IS AUTHOR OF THE NOVEL, *A BEING DARKLY WISE*, AN ECO-THRILLER AND BOOK ONE OF A TRILOGY CENTERED ON GLOBAL WARMING. HIS WRITING HAS APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WASHINGTON POST, THE BALTIMORE SUN, THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS AND OTHER MAJOR NEWSPAPERS. ATCHESON'S BOOK REVIEWS ARE FEATURED ON CLIMATEPROGRESS.ORG.

Source: Common Dreams 7/16 <http://www.commondreams.org>





# The alternative to fervent nationalism isn't corporate liberalism—it's social democracy

JAKE JOHNSON

In his 1946 essay reviewing former Trotskyist-turned-reactionary James Burnham's book *The Managerial Revolution*, George Orwell made several observations that resonate just as powerfully today as they did when they were first published. "The real question," he wrote, "is not whether the people who wipe their boots on us during the next fifty years are to be called managers, bureaucrats, or politicians: the question is whether capitalism, now obviously doomed, is to give way to oligarchy or to true democracy."

Orwell recognized what many today fail to perceive: That free market capitalism is, in the words of Karl Polanyi, a "stark Utopia," a system that does not exist, and one that would not survive for long if it ever came into existence. But for Orwell, the question was not how (or whether) the crises of capitalism that rocked both Europe and the United States in the 20th century would be solved – the question was: what would take the place of an economic order that was clearly on its way out?

Read today, his prediction of the world to come emanates prescience: "For quite fifty years past the general drift has almost certainly been towards oligarchy," Orwell argued. "The ever-increasing concentration of industrial and financial power; the diminishing importance of the individual capitalist or shareholder, and the growth of the new 'managerial' class of scientists, technicians, and bureaucrats; the weakness of the proletariat against the centralised state; the increasing helplessness of small countries against big ones; the decay of representative institutions and the appearance of one-party regimes based on police terrorism, faked plebiscites, etc.: all these things seem to point in the same direction."

This year has in some ways marked the peak of these trends – trends that are currently being exploited (as they always have been) by both genuine nationalists and political opportunists looking to capitalize on the destabilizing effects of the international economic order.

Globally, the concentration of income at the very top is obscene: As a widely cited Oxfam report notes, 62 people own the same amount of wealth as half of the world's population. The report also found that as the wealth of the global elite continues to soar, "the wealth of the poorest half of the world's population has fallen by a trillion dollars since 2010, a drop of 38 percent."

And such trends have not just inflicted the poorest. The middle class in the United States, for instance, has been steadily eroding over the past several decades in the face of slow growth and stagnant wages.

Meanwhile, top CEOs have seen their incomes rise by over 900 percent.

People are reacting. From the rise of Donald Trump and right-wing nationalists throughout Europe to the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union, people are using the influence they still have to express their contempt for a system that has failed them and their families.

Some of the discontent is undoubtedly motivated by racial animus and anti-immigrant sentiment, both of which have been preyed upon by charlatans across the globe. But it has also been motivated by class antagonism, by a general feeling that economic and political elites are making out like bandits while the public is forced to scramble for an ever-dwindling piece of the pie.

Responses to these developments by apologists for elites and by elites themselves have been varied, but all have had a common core: The United States and Europe are, contrary to popular perception, suffering from too much democracy.

The leash restraining the people, the argument goes, has been excessively loosened, and, consequently, the "ignorant masses" have wreaked havoc. More or less, the proposed solution has been to tighten the leash.

In a recent piece for *Foreign Policy*, James Traub calls on "elites to rise up against the ignorant masses." They must put the people in their place with facts and reason, with the

decent sense that "the mob" lacks by definition.

Traub's was perhaps the most explicit and aggressive call to action, and, as he notes in his latest work for the same outlet, he has reaped a storm of criticism.

With a hint of regret, Traub insists that his point was misunderstood. The notion, Traub explains, that "people who take issue with the forces of globalization, whether from the left or the right, should defer to elites" is "repellent."

This latest piece was, when it was first published, provocatively titled "Liberalism Isn't Working." The title has since been altered, but the core point remains: Europe and the United States, Traub argues, are experiencing "the breakdown of the liberal order."

In Traub's view, irrationality is prevailing over reason – noticeable in, for instance, popular disdain for "experts" – and illiberal democracy is taking the place of what was previously liberal democracy. Intolerance is replacing tolerance. Those who "can't stand the way the world is going and want to return to a mythical golden age where women and Mexicans and refugees and gays and atheists didn't disturb the public with their demands" are defeating those who favor diversity and free thought.

It is heartening to see Traub walk back his elitist war cry, and he is correct that liberalism in its current form – that is to say, corporate liberalism, or neoliberalism – has failed to muster an adequate response to the various crises facing global society.

But this is not because liberals have no desire to do so; it is because their ideological system is utterly bankrupt, divorced from the needs of the masses and subservient to the needs of organized wealth.

Traub notes, perhaps correctly, that President Obama's "remote, cerebral manner has...whetted the public's appetite for a snake-oil salesman like Trump."

More than his "manner," though, Obama's ideological bent – largely shared by Hillary Clinton and other corporate Democrats – has left a vacuum into which phony populists like Trump have emerged.

And this is what Traub fails to consider: The alternative to Trumpism is not more smug, corporate liberalism that manages the decline and tempers the expectations of the masses; it is, rather, an ambitious social agenda that utilizes mass politics to create an economic and political order that is responsive to the material needs of the population.

Contrary to the urgent warnings that we are suffering from an excess of democracy, the United States and Europe have for too long been gripped by a democratic deficit.

"If we want to avert the sense of powerlessness among voters that fuels demagoguery," writes Michael Lind, "the answer is not less democracy in America, but more."

Traub and others like him have succeeded in putting forward critiques of the movements responding to the discontent of the masses, but they have failed to criticize the economic order whose failures have sparked this discontent. As a result, they have failed to offer a compelling alternative to the surging nationalism they profess to fear.

And as Luke Savage notes in a recent piece for *Jacobin*, the self-styled experts have often done much worse than that.

He points to the fact that "beyond a few largely anecdotal comments about globalization, Traub offers no real analysis of the causes driving the polarization he so detests. In familiar tones, he conflates the populist right and the populist left, and characterizes anti-establishment sentiment as the product of sheer, mindless democratic stupidity."

In effect, the expert class has – predictably – erased from view the agendas of figures like Bernie Sanders, figures who represent an alternative to both fervent nationalism and neoliberalism.

And far from putting forward radical and unworkable proposals, the ideas on which the Sanders campaign has been based have far-reaching appeal.

Ultimately, Savage concludes, "the real political schism of our time" is "not one between 'the sane and the mindlessly

angry,' but between democrats and technocratic elites."

It is, for instance, elite opinion, not public opinion, that stands in the way of the implementation of single-payer healthcare.

Most of the public, furthermore, believes that "major donors sway Congress more than constituents," but it is elites – including self-styled progressives – who stand in the way of campaign finance reform.

The so-called "ignorant masses" understand that "there is too much power concentrated in the hands of a few big companies," and that "the government doesn't do enough for older people, poor people or children." But it is elites whose entrenched interests undercut any attempt to remedy these trends.

There is, in short, an appetite for social democracy in the United States, but it is elites – economic and political – who stand in the way and insist that such an appetite is the result of excessive imagination.

Conservatives – including Trump – continue to fight unabashedly for the needs of corporate America, while neoliberals like President Obama and Hillary Clinton insist that progressive initiatives must be curbed in the interest of "getting things done." But such a commitment to "pragmatism" is, in reality, a lack of commitment to the systemic change necessary in the midst of unprecedented inequality, horrific levels of child poverty, an intolerably high rate of infant mortality, neglected communities, and other crises that require radical action.

Interestingly, in his essay James Traub cites George Orwell as one of the "great exponents" of liberalism and anti-totalitarianism.

But he fails to mention what Orwell, himself, wrote about his own political motivations, which he expressed in his 1946 essay "Why I Write."

"Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936," Orwell notes, "has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it."

Needless to say, Orwell's vision was not a hierarchical one that placed technocratic elites and self-proclaimed experts at the helm; it was one that warned of totalitarianism of all forms and proposed a more egalitarian alternative.

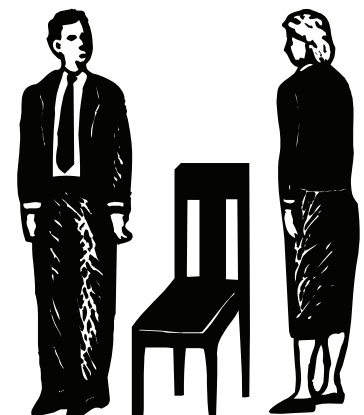
By ignoring this – deliberately or otherwise – and by establishing a status quo of austerity, intolerable inequality, environmental degradation, and endless war, elites have fostered the reaction they are now attempting to beat back.

But their proposed alternative is, effectively, more of the same. That, as much of the world's population recognizes, is not enough.

"It's not about the EU," notes Mark Blyth in an assessment of the European economy that applies just as well to the United States. "It's about the elites. It's about the 1%. It's about the fact that your parties that were meant to serve your interests have sold you down the river."

JAKE JOHNSON IS AN INDEPENDENT WRITER. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER: @WORDSOFDISSENT

Source: *Common Dreams* 7/11/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>





Sunday, September 18

# Celebrate International Day of Peace in Stockton

## *Music and Sound Meditation*

Join us Sunday, September 18, for the third annual celebration of the UN International Day of Peace in Stockton brought to you by Friends for Peace, a Stockton group committed to cultivating inner peace to bring harmony into the world.

The theme of this year's event is Music and Sound Meditation. We will explore different types of music and sound meditations – some ancient, some new.

Sound has been used in various cultures for thousands of years as a tool for healing and creating inner peace. Whether through the use of mantras as with the Hindus, the Icaros (medicine melodies) of various Indigenous peoples from Central and South America, the shaman's trance drum or Pythagoras' use of interval and frequency, these various techniques all have the same intention: to move us from a place of imbalance to a place of balance.

Some sounds make us feel better; some make us feel worse. As an example, for most people listening to a jack hammer is disruptive and listening to a beautiful melody is calming. September 18 we will explore several types of sound based meditation that have been determined to promote healing and create inner peace. You can decide for yourself what is most effective for you.

### **Our program will include 4 different meditative sound styles:**

Musical meditation sound journey

Interactive Chanting Experience

Crystal Bowls

Drumming

The specific schedule of events on the 18th will be posted on Facebook soon at Friends for Peace. Like us and you'll get our updates. Pick the styles you want to hear or join us for the whole afternoon. We look forward to seeing you there!

### **ABOUT THE MUSIC AND THE MUSICIANS**

#### *Ember Sound Collective's Musical Meditation Sound Journey*

Ember Sound Collective takes you on a cosmic journey through harmonic frequencies that promotes deep listening and positive interactions. Native American flutes, hand drums, blossom chimes, tong drums, rain sticks, harmonium and sruti box overlay the base sound of the didgeridoo to send forth its sweet harmonic sounds. The didgeridoo's drone sound is said to align consciousness with energy and patterns of nature; animal sounds, the sounds of the wind, trees cracking, running water and thunder.

#### **Ember members are:**

**Tony Kiser**-The didgeridoo came to play Tony in the summer of 2005 and it "ain't let him loose yet". This guy plays what he feels; funky and straight from the heart. He allows the creative force of the cosmos into him and out of his didgeridoo. Tony also plays Native American flute, hand drums and percussion.

**Ata Toth-Fejel**- While attending Soulfest 2005 in Northern California, a vendor was selling didgeridoos and a 'Walloby didj' spoke to him. He took it home and ever since then has been mesmerized and intrigued with its sounds, vibrations, and frequencies that resonate in his soul. Ata also play blossom chimes, sruti box, harmonium, tong drums, overtone flutes, gongs and rain sticks.

**David Molina**- Multi-culture instrumentalist since 1980 plays; Guitar, keyboards, hand percussion, and world instruments. His style ranges from alternative rock originals

to meditative journeys. His purpose for playing music is to spread peace and love. D.P.M. - "Musical expression of Positive energy, esoteric sonic notes, and rhythm patterns will always leave you with a full cup of music to drink."

#### **Interactive Chanting Experience**

Chanting is a centuries-old technique that connects humans with themselves, the universe, and Spirit. Chanting raises vibrations of the individual practicing and as a result, people who chant feel alive, peaceful and centered. Studies have revealed that while chanting, our heart rate and blood pressure dip to its lowest in the day; even listening to chanting normalizes adrenalin levels, brain wave patterns and lowers cholesterol levels.

#### **Crystal Bowls with Israel Hurtado**

Crystal bowl healing provides certain vibrations that will adjust to each personal vibration bringing an energy alignment and creating a flow of inner energy and universal flow movement.

This energy alignment with the crystal singing bowls goes deeper to lift inactive energy that in some cases is the root of the manifestation of emotional, physical or mental ills.

#### **About Israel**

Israel Hurtado is a spiritual and self-growth healer, speaker and self-published author. He uses his gifts of channeling, shamanism and clairvoyance to assist and serve people on their spiritual quests. His mission:

"To be an instrument and vessel of divine spirit to bring insights for self-awareness, spiritual healing and touch the hearts of as many souls as I am able to reach, so together we are cultivating a heart consciousness of unconditional love."

#### **Drum Circle led by Israel Hurtado and Joy Hope**

Rhythm is everywhere! The rhythm of the planets, the rhythm of the seasons, the rhythm of our hearts beating ... and each one is unique. Drumming enables us to connect with our own rhythm and the circle allows us to enjoy our many rhythms together in harmony.

#### **About Joy**

Joy Hope was called by her first frame drum in 2001. Since then she has studied and practiced shamanic drumming, Reiki drumming, Middle Eastern drumming, HealthRhythms® and drum circle facilitation. And her drum collection continues to grow!



## Mental health and wellness self-help meetings

BARRE STADTNER

If you or someone you know is struggling with: stress, anxiety, mood disorders, anger, fears or depression you are not alone! Recovery International can help. RI provides weekly meetings which are a safe place to talk about life's challenges, receive support for self-help efforts, and learn new methods of handling life's problems.

The RI method is a system of cognitive behavioral techniques developed by neuropsychiatrist Abraham Low, MD, used to change thoughts and behaviors; changes in attitudes and beliefs follow. The techniques apply to any number of emotional or behavioral conditions.

During RI meetings participants learn to describe events from every day life that caused distress. They explain how they used the RI techniques to address their discomfort and control their responses. Attendees then offer comments ('spots') that highlight the example-giver's successful use of the techniques and suggest other techniques that could have been used. This is a practical guide of what to do in a particular situation.

You are not alone! 1 in 4 Americans will face a mental health challenge. 60% of adults with a mental illness received no mental health services in the previous year.

RI meetings offer reassurance and fellowship, understanding of your situation, a safe place to express feelings, hope from others who have bettered their lives, support and acceptance, help and encouragement. Even people without serious emotional issues have found help dealing with life's adversities.

All meetings are confidential, and there are no required fees. RI is a non-profit, non 12-step program, and not faith based, but a practical guide of what to do in every day life.

*Mental Health and Wellness Self-Help Meetings*  
Friday's 6:30-8:30 PM  
St. John's Church Office  
316 N. El Dorado Street, Stockton, CA 95202  
Information: 209-684-8204

## Welcome back, ad rep Ava Simpson!

We welcome back Ava Simpson as the Connections Advertising Representative. She last served in that capacity in 200, but then went off to work in Dallas, TX and Sacramento from 2001 to 2015. She officially retired last August and has immersed herself in an intense one-year effort to get re-acquainted with Stockton and the surrounding area.

In the last year Ava took up kayaking, became a Certified Tourism Ambassador with Visit Stockton, completed docent training at the San Joaquin County History Museum and now serves as curriculum co-chair with Stockton Institute for Continued Learning (SICL) at Delta College. She has been active in the planning of the Arts Expressions Souper Supper, Stockton is Magnificent and Earth Day events.

Ava is ready to come out of retirement to assist the newspaper in building its advertising revenue and to work with you to promote your business or organization. She has a broad range of experience working in the non-profit and private sector in marketing, graphics, and event coordination. She is creative, smart, funny and prides herself on her ability to find common ground with people easily. We think you'll like her. You can reach her at [ava.simpson.as@gmail.com](mailto:ava.simpson.as@gmail.com) or on her mobile 916-320-2672.



# PROGRESSIVES RAISE EXPECTATIONS; DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO LOWER THEM

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

had won."

Much of this defensive stance has been based on a key assumption: That the United States is a conservative nation, and that to continue to win elections, Democrats must adopt swaths of the Republican agenda to prove, for instance, that they are "tough on crime" or that they aren't "soft on terrorism." They must also, in the interest of "getting things done" in the face of an intransigent opposition, lower the expectations of voters.

Broadly, the results of this decades-long shift have been what you would expect: Democrats often accuse Republicans of being beholden to corporate interests – they are – but they conveniently omit the fact that their coffers are also overflowing with corporate cash. In the face of economic trends that have further enriched the wealthiest at the expense of everyone else, Democrats have proven utterly feckless, putting forward tepid reforms and refusing to question the economic order that produced these trends. And it is perfectly obvious why: As historian Lily Geismer has noted, "A party without a working-class core can't be expected to improve the prospects of the working class."

Bernie Sanders and the movements that have supported his candidacy have fought hard to change this dynamic. By running a campaign fueled by grassroots organization and small donations, Sanders has, in the words of the *New York Times*, "put the lie to Democrats' excuses that they, too, must play the big money game to win." Despite being portrayed as a radical and an idealist, Sanders has articulated a worldview that is, in fact, quite mainstream, from his attack on soaring – perhaps unprecedented – inequality to his focus on the power and influence exerted by some of America's largest corporations. "Bernie Sanders has shifted the goal posts for the Democratic Party," writes George Goehl. "From trade to wages, the environment to infrastructure, tuition-free college to health care for all, Sanders's platform has raised expectations and electrified the nation."

His opponent, by contrast, has filled the role played by Democrats over the last several decades: She has done her best to lower expectations, to temper goals, and to insist that

nothing will get done without compromising with the right. And loyal Democrats have largely followed her lead, not just by defending the status quo, but also by attacking any attempts to alter it. Single-payer healthcare will "never, ever come to pass," Clinton declared. Criticism of Clinton's Wall Street fundraising, said Clinton supporter Barney Frank, is akin to "McCarthyism." Sanders's healthcare plan is, according to pundit Ezra Klein, "vague and unrealistic."

Perhaps the most egregious attempts to discredit the Sanders agenda, though, have been those that have accused Sanders, either implicitly or explicitly, of running a racist and sexist campaign. Joan Walsh of *The Nation* has been a persistent peddler of this narrative, arguing at one point that Sanders, his commitment to economic justice for all aside, has risked becoming "the messiah of an angry white male cult."

Smears of this kind are telling: They are an attempt to obscure the fact that Sanders has been winning among young women and young people of color, and is favored by those who make less money. This demonstrates that the divide between Clinton and Sanders supporters is largely about age and class, not race and gender.

Sanders, despite being deemed by some a class reductionist, has countered the "Bernie Bro" narrative by offering a critique of the American economic order that highlights racial and gender disparities while also condemning the greed and recklessness of today's "economic royalists." By blending racial and class politics rather than separating them, Sanders has offered a more expansive alternative to the elite identity politics deployed by Democratic Party liberals, and he has exposed the Democrats' refusal to fight back against the class war being waged by the rich. And the Sanders campaign has brought to the fore what Luke Savage calls "the real political schism of our time": The schism "between democrats and technocratic elites."

Despite his campaign's significant and unexpected successes, on Tuesday, Sanders did something that many believe tarnished his legitimacy: He endorsed Hillary Clinton for president. While this was an understandably disappointing moment for many progressives, this year was never about Sanders. As Matt Karp has noted, Bernie's endorsement of Clinton does nothing to negate the fight for economic justice

that his campaign brought to the national stage. And left politics is, after all, about improving the material conditions of the population; the successes of social movements do not depend on the successes of individual politicians.

There is, of course, much work left to do. The Democratic platform is better than it would have been without Sanders; but it is far from adequate. It is "to the right of George W. Bush" on Israel-Palestine. It fails to confront climate change with the necessary urgency. It doesn't endorse a single-payer healthcare system at a time when thousands die each year due to lack of coverage. And it favors loyalty to the president over working families by not opposing an agreement shaped by some of the nation's largest corporations.

Sanders has raised the expectations of millions, particularly the young, the future of progressive politics in the United States. And Democrats have, per usual, done their best to lower expectations, to insist that the goals of the Sanders campaign are unreachable, that the best we can hope to do is manage the decline. The job of the left is, and always will be, to combat this perception.

Democrats, including Hillary Clinton, have long insisted that incrementalism is the only plausible approach to change, and that we must adjust our expectations to fit the arbitrary political limits set by those closest to the centers of power. This notion has an air of rationality, but it is false. "Unlike elected officials who preoccupy themselves with policies considered practical and attainable within the political climate of the moment, social movements change the political weather," write Mark and Paul Engler. "They turn issues and demands considered both unrealistic and politically inconvenient into matters that can no longer be ignored; they succeed, that is, by championing the impractical."

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## Our Revolution: what's next on Bernie Sanders' horizon

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The next phase of Bernie Sanders' political revolution starts now. The Democratic presidential candidate and U.S. senator, who endorsed one-time rival and presumptive nominee Hillary Clinton on Tuesday, told *USA Today* in an exclusive interview published Friday that he plans "to launch educational and political organizations within the next few weeks to keep his progressive movement alive."

Additionally, according to the newspaper: "Sanders plans to support at least 100 candidates running for a wide range of public offices—from local school boards to Congress—at least through the 2016 elections. And he'll continue to raise funds for candidates while campaigning for them all over the country. He said he probably will campaign for Tim Canova, a progressive primary challenger to Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, who chairs the Democratic National Committee."

These efforts will be organized under the new Sanders Institute; the Our Revolution political group; and a third organization that *USA Today* writes, "may play a more direct role in campaign advertising."

*USA Today* reports: "The Sanders Institute will focus on elevating issues and ideas—through media and documentaries—that Sanders said the "corporate media" fails to focus on, including the disappearing middle class, "massive" income inequality, horrific levels of poverty and problems affecting seniors and children. Jane Sanders, Sanders' wife and political adviser, said the organization will help address issues that came into sharp focus on the campaign trail, such as "heartbreaking" issues facing Native Americans, and possible solutions the campaign discovered to address their health care needs. "It would be ridiculous for us to learn and not convey that information," she said."

Former Sanders aide and deputy senior advisor to his campaign Shannon Jackson will

head up Our Revolution. Sanders told the paper: "If we are successful, what it will mean is that the progressive message and the issues that I campaigned on will be increasingly spread throughout this country. The goal here is to do what I think the Democratic establishment has not been very effective in doing. And that is at the grassroots level, encourage people to get involved, give them the tools they need to win, help them financially."

Sanders' statements are in keeping with a lengthy email he sent to supporters following Tuesday's announcement, in which he declared: "In the coming weeks, I will be announcing the creation of successor organizations to carry on the struggle that we have been a part of these past 15 months. I hope you will continue to be involved in fighting to transform America. Our goal will be to advance the progressive agenda that we believe in and to elect like-minded candidates at the federal, state and local levels who are committed to accomplishing our goals."

Meanwhile, as Clare Foran reported Thursday for *The Atlantic*, "Sanders supporters are also actively working to carry on the revolution. Brand New Congress is one example" However, she said, "all this points to a central tension of the Sanders campaign. Sure, Bernie said it wasn't about him. But for so many of his loyal followers, he has been the source of inspiration for political engagement. Sanders is poised to continue agitating for a revolution. But it remains to be seen how much the so-called revolution's energy and enthusiasm can be sustained once the campaign has reached an end."

St. Martin's Press also announced Thursday that the democratic socialist is writing a book—*Our Revolution: A Future to Believe In*—to be published November 15, 2016, one week after the general election.

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