THE INDIPENDENT

THE INDY NEEDS YOUR HELP! SEE P2 & BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS

BLACK LIVES MATTER

A NEW MOVEMENT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE BEGINS, P4
EDITORIAL

I’ve worked on this newspaper for many years. My favorite month in the month-long cycle of publishing The Indypendent always occurs during the final hours before going to press. It’s when all the stories, photos and illustrations for the new issue have come in and been laid out in freshly designed pages with headlines and captions and only final page proofs to go. At this point, everyone’s individual efforts have taken shape and collectively become something larger and more powerful. The final result then goes out into the world and is read by tens of thousands of people.

That moment seems like magic, but it’s a product of hard work. The Indy started as an all-volunteer project in 2000 and has never had more than a couple of modestly paid editors who kept things running smoothly so that everyone else could plug in. This model has allowed us to excel while operating on a shoestring budget.

We worked our butts off again this year providing on-the-ground coverage from Ferguson to the frontlines of the global anti-tracking movement; from tenant union organizers in Crown Heights and storm survivors in the Rockaways to Venezuela, France and Iraq and back home to the People’s Climate March.

No other city in the United States has a left newspaper like the Indy, and keeping it aloft has been no easy task. As we enter our 15th year, we’re continuing to evolve as an organization. Happily, we’re now reaching a financial milestone where we can pay all of the core members of our team. Though long overdue, it’s a huge step forward for us. At the same time, the publication will continue to run a strong volunteer program for aspiring grassroots journalists and be open to submissions from our readers.

This transition is a big challenge but not an impossible one. It will allow us to do more of the inclusive social movement reporting and analysis for which we are already known and to publish it more frequently in print and online at indypendent.org. Call the more robust newspaper and website that emerge from this transformation Indy 2.0.

But first we need to raise $40,000. It’s double our normal fundraising goal and a crucial step in ensuring that our plans for Indy 2.0 succeed. This annual year-end fund drive will be a big part of that. But we aren’t stopping there. Supporters will be hosting house parties for us this winter and spring and we will be celebrating our 15th anniversary in a big way next fall.

This is the time to make a contribution. We’re already outpacing last year’s fund drive, but we don’t have a millionaire owner or deep-pocketed corporate investors. So whether you can give $25, $100, $200 or $1,000, it all makes a big difference. You can write a check or go to indypendent.org and make a one-time or a recurring monthly donation, which is a great way to spread your gift across the year.

“You get what you pay for,” the old saying goes. In this case your contribution will get you quite a lot. Besides helping us pay our bills and do right by our writers and artists, you will see an already outstanding newspaper continue to get better.

Thank you for your support. And we’ll see you in the streets in 2015.

— John Tarleton

UPGRADING TO INDY 2.0

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND THE INDIYPENDENT:

Below 14th St.

Seward Park Library
192 East Broadway

LES People’s Federal Credit Union
39 Avenue B

Tomkins Square Library
331 E. 10th St.

Key Food
52 Avenue A

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

Theater 80 St. Mark’s
80 St. Mark’s Pl.

Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

Mamoun’s Falafel Restaurant
22 St. Mark’s Pl.

McNally Jackson Books
52 Prince St.

Think Coffee
248 Mercer St.

Film Forum
209 W. Houston St.

Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St.

Cinema Village
22 E. 12th St.

LGBT Center
208 W. 13th St.

14th to 96th St.

Ephraim Library
228 E. 23rd St.

Tck Serve
119 W. 23rd St.

Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

Gristedes
307 W. 26th St.

Columbus Library
942 Tenth Ave.

Venezuelan Consulate
7 E. 51st St.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.

Shakespeare Books
969 Lexington Ave.

St. Agnes Library
444 Amsterdam Ave.

96th St. Library
112 E. 96th St.

Above 96th St.

Bloomingtonale Library
150 W. 100th St.

El Barrio Firehouse Community Media Center
175 E. 104th St.

Aguilar Library
172 E. 110th St.

Morningside Heights Library
Broadway and 114th St.

115th St. Library
203 W. 115th St.

Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.

George Bruce Library
518 W. 123rd St.

Mayales Cinema
345 Lenox Ave.

Countee Cullen Library
104 W. 116th St.

Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.

Uptown Sitter’s Books
156th St. & Amsterdam

Fort Washington Library
535 W. 179th St.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn Borough Hall
209 Joralemon St.

Brooklyn Museum
209 Joralemon St.

Brooklyn Museum
209 Eastern Pkwy.

Brooklyn Library
1044 Eastern Pkwy.

Cousin John’s Pizza
70 7th Ave.

Tea Lounge
837 Union St.

Key Foods
130 7th Ave.

Video Gallery
316 7th Ave.

Park Slope Library
445 6th St.

Pacific Street Library
23 Fourth Ave.

Connecticut Muffin
429 Myrtle Ave.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Wyckoff Star Coffee Shop
30 Wyckoff Ave.

Swallow Café
49 Baggart St.

Metro Community Laundromat
546 Metropolitan Ave.

Kains’ Café
146 Bedford Ave.

Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

Outpost Café
203 Parkside Ave.

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203 Parkside Ave.

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We jumped in front of traffic. Car headlights blind- ed us; we held up our hands and yelled, “I can’t breathe.” These were the last words of Eric Garner, a 43-year-old Black man who was strangled to death by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo on Staten Island. Running between cars, we slapped high-fives with drivers and held signs above our heads.

On December 3, thousands flooded the New York streets after news broke that Pantaleo had not been indicted after murdering Garner. It was the second time in 10 days that a grand jury refused to charge a white cop who killed an unarmed Black man. On November 24 officer Darren Wilson was cleared in the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. The two non-indictments, back to back, ignited our sadness into rage; again we saw deadly abuses of power go unpunished.

Even as I write this, somewhere in America a Black man or woman is being beaten or killed by the police. Most die invisibly. For a few, a rough video of their assault or death will surface and their faces will be framed in protest signs. Each new murder swells the movement that compels us to stage mass die-ins in transit hubs and malls, torch stores and block highways. The people are rising against the state, demanding justice it cannot give and the state cannot crush the protests without risking more rebellion.

A great collision is coming, driven by a question that has been asked repeatedly for nearly four centuries. It was asked by 19 Africans, enslaved in the English colony of Jamestown in 1619, and is being asked again by the protesters across the nation. Can Black life be valued in America?

WHY FERGUSON MATTERS

“Let me see your driver’s license,” the cop told me. I handed it over; he swiped it and then handcuffed me. In 2011, a warrant for a 43-year-old Black man who was strangled to death by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo on Staten Island. Running between cars, we slapped high-fives with drivers and held signs above our heads.

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WHY FERGUSON MATTERS

“We call it the snowball effect,” one of them said. “You know, it just begins small like a ticket and then another citation, some jail time and next thing you know—boom!—I dumped back in the seat, dizzy with anger and blurted, “If you have a name for how bad it is why don’t you stop it!”

“Policy,” he said and looked away. “Policy.”

And every time a cop stops and frisks us, harasses us for sleeping on the train, writes a ticket, embarrasses us in public—it traumatizes the body, fills it with combustible pain. It’s hard to understand if you don’t experience it. Remember Eric Garner telling the police officers, “Please just leave me alone!”

Did you know he brought a civil suit against the NYPD for doing a cavity search for drugs in 2007, right in broad daylight as people walked by? Nothing was found. He wrote of the “injuries to his manhood” caused by the officer searching his rectum and genitals for “his own personal pleasure.”

Ferguson matters because every city in America has a Ferguson inside it. A people enraged at the handprints left by police on their bodies, losing money to tickets, losing jobs to jail time, burying the dead and then being blamed for it. The flames in that small town can spread across the nation. Malcolm X once joked that during slavery, when the master’s house caught fire, field slaves prayed for wind. Many of us are praying now.

THE FEEDBACK LOOP OF VIOLENCE

“Black on black crime is the reason for the heavy police presence in the black community,” former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani said on Meet the Press in November.

“White police officers wouldn’t be there if you weren’t killing each other.”

Conservatives say the high Black crime rate is the real danger, not rogue white cops. The danger is gangsta rap or single moth- ers or dumb hood drama. Biological racism in which one race is better than others has been replaced with cultural racism in which one culture is better than another. Con-
servatives believe in hierarchy, an order that keeps everyone in their proper place. Black culture is the low point in that hierarchy; it is a cauldron of icky morals, drowning everyone in it or close by.

Jason Riley, a Black writer at the Wall Street Journal who wrote Please Stop Helping Us, followed this tradition in his article “The Other Ferguson Tragedy.” He wrote, “Homicide is the leading cause of death among young black men, who are 10 times more likely than their white counterparts to be murdered. And while you’d never know it watching MSNBC, the police are not to blame.”

The Black homicide rate is part of a feedback loop of oppression. It’s the effect of multiple forces, but is framed by conservatives as a cause. The first of these forces is poverty. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ August jobs report said the Black unemployment rate is at 11 percent, compared to the 5.3 percent rate for whites. During the four decades the bureau has kept records on it, Black unemployment has always been higher, a sign that we’re dealing with intergenerational poverty. Nearly 30 percent of Black people are poor. If you do the math, it’s nearly 13 million people out of 42 million.

The image of urban ghettos that resemble warzones is a staple in the public imagination. What the protests in Ferguson show is that segregation followed people of color into the suburbs. Brown University sociologist John Logan described in a recent report, “Separate and Unequal in Suburbia,” the movement of people of color from cities into the older inner rings of suburbs, and the poverty many of them live with. It is often reflected in failing schools that are underfunded, understaffed and have low graduation rates.

And then there’s geography. Much of urban crime is public. Poor families are packed into small apartments and that density “squeezes” crime out into public space. Beefs start in the street. Drug dealing and addiction are in the street. The fight for turf is in the street. All of which makes it visible and easier to police.

Much of suburban crime, on the other
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Visit bit.ly/bfp/member or call us!

Did you miss Noam Chomsky at Pathmakers to Peace? Check out youtube.com/brooklynforpeace to see a video!
Noam Chomsky also sat down with Partha Banerjee. Check out the interview on the BFP Youtube Channel!

WEB EXCLUSIVE: LEARNING FROM THE PAST, BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

“These are movement building times,” writes Matthew Birkhold, author of the forthcoming book Growing Our Souls: Visionary Organizing to Create the World Anew. “People are coming to demonstrations, marching and blocking traffic for the first time in their lives. They feel empowered by activity, and this feeling is creating momentum. As long as this momentum grows, the movement will grow. As the movement grows, spokespersons and new leadership will develop. Disagreements will emerge over fundamental questions, issues, strategies and tactics. Younger movement builders need to know that they do not have to navigate these developments alone and older movement builders need to assume responsibility for helping younger activists navigate.”

For the rest of this article, see indypendent.org.
racy represents everyone equally. It comes from the consent of the governed.

Yet in practice the state plays an inherently conservative role. It maintains law and order in an unequal society, so the contradictions roil from inside. It must suppress the very people who are the source of its legitimacy. And it does this by shielding its own agents from public accountability while demonizing its victims. The formula is the same for the cops who shoot unarmed civilians, the CIA agents who torture detainees and the drone pilots who kill innocent people while targeting terrorists. Up and down the chain of command, an aura of untouchability obscures abuses of power.

The Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on the CIA’s use of torture exposed instances of detainees being beaten, force-fed though their anuses, chained to walls in stress positions and denied sleep for days. It also revealed that President Bush was told about the “full nature” of the torture in April 2006. Yet he said on camera in October 2007, “This government does not torture people.”

You know he won’t be indicted. The president embodies the same unaccountable violence as the cop in the street. And today, even as President Obama directs muted calls for calm toward Black people dealing with police violence, he inflicts it on people of color overseas. Obama is the Darren Wilson of the world.

CRIME AND INNOCENCE

“Killer cops must go to jail,” yelled Francilot Graham, the father of Ramarley Graham, a Black teen who in 2012 was chased by the NYPD into his grandmother’s home without a warrant and shot dead. No gun was found, just a small bag of weed. On Saturday, December 13, tens of thousands of New Yorkers came out for the Millions March against police brutality in Manhattan. “Go to jail;” Graham said, referring to the police officer who killed his son. “Go to jail!” The crowd repeated.

The call for justice is building in Black America and beyond. Players for the St. Louis Rams came onto the football field with their hands up in honor of Michael Brown. LeBron James wore a shirt on court that read, “I Can’t Breathe.” The burgeoning movement, led by young Black activists, is challenging the narrative of crime and innocence in America. It’s flipping the script, using the social consensus about the preciousness of life to challenge the hypocrisy of the state.

Occupy Wall Street exposed the guilt of elites as they waged class war on the poor. Feminists have targeted colleges and the military, exposing male supremacy and the epidemic of rape hidden from view in these institutions. Fast-food workers are calling out the economic violence they endure as their bosses make astronomical profits. Everywhere people are laying claim to universal values and marshalling them against the institutions that have exploited those values as an alibi for their power.

It begins not with ideas but experience. If you’re wondering why this new movement is happening, let me ask you to look at your hands. For a moment, please think of the person you love most in this life. Imagine holding them. Take a slow breath; exhale everything but them from your mind. Maybe you see a lover, a sibling or a parent. Can you almost feel the warmth of their skin?

Keep looking at your hands, holding the person you love. Now imagine them killed. And the murderer walking away. Do you feel helpless? Do you feel sadness weighing in your body?

The heaviness in your palms is what we lift to the sky. Cops who kill unarmed Black men go free, one after the other. It’s why we march through the streets yelling, “Hands up, don’t shoot.” It’s why we shout the names of our dead. We show our hands because we’re scared of being killed by officers who have been given license to kill Black people and go unpunished.

I’m asking you to take this weight from us. I’m asking you to hold your hands up too.
IMMIGRANTS ON ICE
OBAMA PLAN STILL LEAVES MANY WorRIED

By Alina Mogilyanskaya

O
n the evening of November 20, some 200 immigrants and advocates gathered in SEIU Local 32BJ’s Chelsea headquarters to watch President Obama announce his much-anticipated executive action on immigration in prime time. The media had been called in, pizza and beverages had been bought and American flags and art supplies had been set out. As Obama spoke, some of the children in the room made signs with messages about immigration. A pair hanging on the wall read, “Gracias, Señor Presidente.”

After Obama finished describing his offer to provide temporary relief from deportation for some 4 million of the nation’s estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants — so long as they “get right with the law” — he proclaimed, “We were strangers once too.” The line prompted scattered applause from the crowd, but the mood was uncertain.

It reflected the ambiguous nature of Obama’s reforms. He is extending temporary relief from deportation to undocumented immigrants with U.S. citizen or legal resident parents, and leaves them — along with more than 13 million green card holders and countless future immigrants — even more vulnerable to the vagaries of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

“Those who aren’t eligible for deferred action will face a harsher enforcement regime,” said Alisa Wellek, co-director of the Immigrant Defense Project. “That’s what we’ve seen every time there’s been some kind of reform at the national level: the people who are left out of it are then left with a system that’s really lacking in due process and human rights.”

In New York City, about half of the city’s estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants stand to benefit from deferred action. Obama’s move also comes on the heels of multiple immigrant-friendly policy changes in the city: the municipal ID program, funding for legal representation for low-income immigrants in deportation proceedings, and, effective mid-December, a pair of laws that will further limit law enforcement’s cooperation with ICE.

“If there’s been any kind of reform at the national level: the people who are left out of it are then left with a system that’s really lacking in due process and human rights.”

“New York City has put into place as much as I can think of, enforcement to hold suspected immigration violators. But it remains to be seen.”

IT’S A BAND-AID

“We’re going to keep focusing enforcement resources on actual threats to our security. Felons, not families,” Obama declared in his November 20 speech. “Are we a nation that accepts the cruelty of ripping children from their parents’ arms?”

That night, Khalil A. Cumberbatch watched the speech from his living room in Springfield Gardens, Queens, with his 7-year-old daughter. He had been reunited with his wife and two young children in October after being arrested by ICE and spending five months in immigration detention.

“The Obama action is a band-aid. It doesn’t get at the heart of the problem, which is the need for these policies to constantly criminalize and punish a group of people,” said Cumberbatch.

Obama’s offer of deportation deferral comes with a revised set of guidelines for federal immigration agencies, including ICE. Directives issued by the Department of Homeland Security instruct ICE officials to use discretion and prioritize resources for the removal of immigrants with a previously established range of criminal convictions, newly arrived immigrants and those with prior deportation orders. The contentious Secure Communities program is to be replaced with what is being called the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), and more resources will be funneled toward enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“These new enforcement priorities are really not very different from the old enforcement priorities,” said Wellek. “For the most part, PEP is probably just a rebranding of the Secure Communities program.”

Cumberbatch recalls that in the early morning of May 8, his wife, Chamika, saw what looked like police officers outside the couple’s apartment window. The agents, sporting vests marked “police,” came to the Cumberbatchs’ door, said they were conducting an investigation and asked to be let inside. Once in the apartment, they arrested Cumberbatch, took him away in an unmarked car and, after processing, transferred him to immigration detention at the Hudson County Correctional Facility in New Jersey.

“I was totally sidetracked by the fact that they had total disregard for how long I had been here, everything positive that I had done, the fact that I had a family, I had two young children. They didn’t care about any of that,” Cumberbatch said.

Cumberbatch has been a legal permanent resident since he immigrated to the United States from Guyana at the age of 4. ICE targeted him because of a felony conviction on his record from an armed robbery he committed when he was 20 years old.

Since coming out of prison, Cumberbatch, now 33, has completed two degrees, started his own company and worked on a range of prisoner reentry and criminal justice projects. He was able to win his release from immigration detention with help from his family, advocates and community organizers, and based on what he calls “a moral, not legal argument” that he is a positive force in the community and not a threat. But Cumberbatch falls into the category of first priority for deportation under PEP, which means mandatory detention and placement into deportation proceedings. Apart from the legal precedent of his previous release, there is little to protect him from another visit by ICE agents.

“I feel anxious, because they granted what is called prosecutorial discretion,” said Cumberbatch. “Basically it means that they can come back at any time to do the same process all over again.”

RAIDS ON THE RISE

Cumberbatch’s experience being picked up at home isn’t unique. New York City passed “ban the box” laws in 2011 and 2013 limiting law enforcement’s cooperation with ICE. The agency saw its access to potential deportees in city jails restricted, and adapted.

“Over the past year we’ve seen a real uptick in home raids and probation arrests,” said Wellek. She and other advocates also describe anecdotal evidence of immigrants being arrested in public spaces such as city courthouses and homeless shelters, and of ICE going after people with years- or decades-old criminal convictions who have not had subsequent contact with the criminal justice system.

As outlined in the recent National Day Laborer Organizing Network report, “Destructive Delay,” similar ICE tactics — including agents coming to people’s homes in
vests marked “police,” as they did in Cumberbatch’s case — have been observed around the country in the run-up to Obama’s immigration enforcement reforms.

That has been particularly noticeable in the more than 250 locales that have passed detainer bills. Now that a new round of such laws was passed in New York City, ICE is being forced to shutter its office at Rikers Island and the New York Police Department and Department of Corrections are prohibited from detaining most people at ICE’s request or notifying the agency about someone’s release. The city’s Department of Probation, notably, has also agreed to amend its policy in accordance with the laws.

Immigrant rights advocates widely expect that ICE will continue to evolve its tactics.

“[The detainer legislation] puts a further barrier to ICE’s easy access to people who they want to remove,” said Donald Anthonyson, an organizer with Families for Freedom, a Manhattan-based organization that fights deportations. But he was less than optimistic about what will come next. “They’re going to use a lot of dirty tricks,” he predicted.

“They could be making regular visits to the jail [Rikers], and trying to get more access to people as they might be coming out,” said Alina Das, co-director of New York University’s Immigrant Rights Clinic. “They might be trying to figure out other ways to increase their presence in courts and other offices, even without city agencies notifying them that they have someone who is potentially deportable.”

Neither the city’s detainer laws nor the Obama administration’s revised enforcement guidelines disrupt the data-sharing mechanisms that allow ICE to identify potential targets in the first place. The agency will still have access to fingerprint data that is collected as soon as any arrest happens and to other information sources.

More than that, ICE’s budget and the “bed mandate” quota, which compels the agency to have more than 30,000 people in detention on any given night, remain unchanged.

“It’s the same detention and deportation machine,” said Wellick. “This is just going to be changing the mechanism by which people are going into it.”

“The detainer legislation” is an absolute outrage that Chelsea Manning is currently languishing behind bars whilst those she helped to expose, who are potentially guilty of human rights violations, enjoy impunity.”

Erika Guevara Rosas
Americas Director
Amnesty International
30 July 2014

Learn more about heroic WikiLeaks whistle-blower former US Army intelligence analyst PFC Chelsea Manning at

www.chelseamanning.org

Ad designed and published by the Chelsea Manning Support Network
ELDERLY VICTIMS
ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENTS REFUSE TO MAKE WAY FOR LUXURY CONDOS

HOW LANDLORDS HARASS OLDER PEOPLE

By Steven Witten

Landlords trying to oust rent-regulated tenants generally use the same harassment methods against the elderly as they do against tenants generally – mostly by using very lengthy and complex leases, often with no signing date. This lets them do virtually anything they want with no legal repercussions. The methods are used on all tenants, but can affect the elderly more acutely. It’s harder to go to court to defend yourself against a bogus law-suit and the utterly merciless protocol by failing to help residents relocate and by shutting off services for residents who don’t live in their apartments any longer. The court order becomes the facility’s law, which is upwards of $4,000 a month. Residents' family members say it has contributed to the demise of the building.

“Some of the residents,” one family member said that the deteriorating conditions and the threat of eviction have caused disorders to almost all of the elderly residents who live in the building since the owner wanted to shut it down. Mogill’s neighbor, Jack Truk, died in the building in 2010, that it was an unlicensed facility. It has been found that the building operated for years without a license and a subpoena obtained by The Indypendent.

DUPED BY THE LANDLORD

Resident and family members say that Dutch pressures them in early 2013 to quickly sign an agreement to accept the DOH services. Unlike a standard lease agreement, which requires the owner to provide a copy of a property in order to view a tenant, the Dutch pressures agreements allow the operator to close the facility, require the residents to sign a new lease, and then evict them.

“We were told, ‘Your mother is going to have to keep your lawn. Your son’s lawn.”’ said Singer. “I think it’s just plain that the plans go to the department of health, which is upwards of $4,000 a month. It’s mindboggling,” said Joyce Singer, who at 90-year-old is one of the eight remaining residents. “It’s like one is ruin in the multiplex.”

In May, Singer, the landlord and the holder of the building and the building was not what it was supposed to be. Dutch’s claim that he was operating the building at a loss caused many of the family members to question whether he applied in 2012 for a license to operate the building as an assisted living facility. The health department, and local politicians have complained about the Department of Housing’s “buildamping” of both the facility and the residents.

The landlord, and the holder of the Department of Housing’s “buildamping” of both the facility’s license and the request to renew their leases automatically, get

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The Indypendent


business model: Buy a rent-regulated building,

mittee on the Lower East Side. The elderly “are

well. They are more likely to have been living in

homes. Their battle with their landlord, Haysha Deitsch, and local politicians have expressed an interest in operating the building as an assisted living facility. The health department, and local politicians have complained about the Department of Housing’s “buildamping” of both the facility’s license and the request to renew their leases automatically, get

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The Indypendent


business model: Buy a rent-regulated building,
In general the left-liberals defended the law, which was a large fraction of the population and enlarged the power of affordable Care Act, when they bothered to do so at all. The formidable right-wing base.

When Barack Obama successfully campaigned for the White House in 2008, he raised the hopes of millions of his supporters that he would bring sweeping change to Washington. Three weeks after his election and with the economy in free fall, Time Magazine’s cover famously depicted Obama as FDR, down to the jaunty smile and the cigarette holder clenched between his teeth. The headline read, “The New New Deal.”

There’s been no such thing. Obama quickly filled key administration posts with retirees from the Clinton years. And six years later exhaustion with Obama’s tepid liberalism found expression in the 2014 midterm elections, which saw the Democrats lose control of the Senate and get trounced across much of the country.

The Republicans are no more popular than before as they continue to play to an aging, white and conservative voting base. However, with the exception of African-Americans, groups that lean Democrat, such as young people, union members, single women and Hispanics, stayed away in droves and voter turnout for a national election plummeted to the lowest level since 1942.

LONGBING FOR THE NEW DEAL

There is a recurring proposal heard among left-liberals: radicalize the Democratic Party by restoring it to its New Deal glory days. The genius of the New Deal was to have shifted the locus of political power to a federal center that promised, and partially delivered, the elements of security: unemployment benefits, Social Security, low-cost post-secondary education and a state-sponsored workers’ right to organize unions. This final right was codified into law following an epic wave of industrial strikes and factory occupations in the mid-1930s.

The past 40 years have brought a reversal of state paternalism. While successive governments strengthened the military and urban police departments in the wake of the 1960s-era urban uprisings among blacks, the social welfare functions of government have been considerably weakened, leading to a widening gap between the very rich and the rest of us. While the Democrats enacted programs that created a relatively large black middle class, their passivity and at times aggressive support of the deindustrialization of America that began in the 1970s has left in its wake massive poverty in black, Latino and industrial Southern white communities. After six years in office, the Obama administration still reluctantly to embrace it out of fear they will be tarred as “soft on crime.”

Here in New York, vibrant movements opposing fracking and the growing corporate attacks on our public school system helped spur the Green Party gubernatorial campaign of Howie Hawkins and Brian Jones, which received almost 5 percent of the vote running against incumbent Democrat Andrew Cuomo, the best any independent third party campaign has done statewide in more than 80 years.

Building a third political party that can seriously challenge the major party duopoly is extremely difficult in this country for a number of reasons. Ultimately the spark for successful third party politics as well as a host of other changes we urgently need to see will come from independent left movements or from nowhere at all.

Stanley Aronowitz is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is the author of more than two dozen books, including The Death and Life of American Labor: Toward A New Workers’ Movement (Verso, 2014).
By Alex Ellefson

Season's greetings! It's time to open up those wallets and hand over your credit cards to the hackers who have been robbing some of America's largest banks and retailers.

You may remember that around this time last year, when Americans were out doing their holiday shopping, Target, one of the country's biggest retailers, was the victim of the then-largest retail data heist in history. Hackers broke into the company's servers and siphoned off 40 million credit card numbers.

Since then, reports of massive data breaches have piled up like presents under a Christmas tree. Neiman Marcus, Kmart, Dairy Queen, SuperValu and UPS experienced hacks this year. In September, it was revealed that 56 million credit card numbers were stolen from Home Depot's servers, an operation that was even larger than the one that occurred at Target.

Part of the reason these hacks keep happening is that retailers just don't seem to take cybersecurity seriously. An investigation of the Home Depot and Target breaches found the companies missed several red flags that provided opportunities to prevent or reduce the damage.

Craig Spiezle, executive director of the Online Trust Alliance, told The Indypendent that many companies do not have the proper alarms and response plans in place to catch the hackers and then react quickly to halt the attack.

"From a security perspective, you recognize that you need to take steps to prevent a breach from happening. But you also have to have steps in place to catch when it happens and then [know] what to do about it," he said. "In the case of Target, it became like the Titanic. They could go from one data hole to another and then ultimately bring the company down."

In an analysis published in January of 500 data breaches, the Online Trust Alliance found that 89 percent of them could have been prevented.

According to a recent Ponemon Institute report, which was sponsored by the information service company Experian, 27 percent of companies don't have a data breach response plan in place, even though cyberattacks increased by more than 10 percent from 2013 to 2014.

But even if you do everything right, breaches can and will happen. Despite having one of the most sophisticated and expensive security systems on Wall Street, banking giant JPMorgan Chase announced in September that hackers had penetrated its defenses and extracted the emails, phone numbers and addresses of more than 76 million households and 8 million businesses. However, more recent reports suggest that the hack may have affected other banks and that the full scale of the heist is still unknown.

The incident highlighted the inadequacy of U.S. cybercrime regulations. Currently, there are no federal laws that define what type of information needs to be stolen in order for a company to report a breach. Banks are only required to notify customers if the incident caused them a financial loss. Hence the confusion and difficulty in determining the scale of the JPMorgan hack.

Several bills have been introduced in Congress that would establish data breach notification requirements to protect consumer data, but none of them have garnered much support.

Instead, companies must comply with cybercrime-related laws in 47 different states that set different definitions of what constitutes a data breach and how a company is supposed to respond. Because the Internet has no borders, Spiezle said that it is time-consuming and enormously expensive for companies to hire law firms to navigate the different regulations.

However, in what appears to be a sign that private industry is starting to take cybercrime more seriously, more than 40 trade associations representing retailers and merchants sent a letter to Congress in November demanding federal legislation that would address data breaches.

The letter urged lawmakers to "act to standardize reasonable, timely notification of sensitive data breaches whenever and wherever they occur."

While Spiezle said he agrees that federal data breach legislation should be a priority and that it would make sense for a federal law to preempt state laws, he worried that the trade associations behind the letter would try to set the bar so high that a company would not have to report a data breach unless it affected 100,000 customers or more. In contrast, a bill co-authored by Democratic Senator Edward J. Markey would require companies to report a breach that affected more than 5,000 customers. California law, meanwhile, requires companies to notify the state attorney general if a breach compromised the personal information of more than 500 Californians.

"The devil's in the details," said Spiezle. "The trade groups want to minimize the ability of anyone coming after them so they don't want to have state rights enforced. So this is where the rub comes in."

"We need to look at what's the right thing and get it done and get past this gridlock and the special interest groups that really want to have it so watered down that it becomes ineffective," he added.

According to another Ponemon Institute study, which was sponsored by IBM, the cost of data breaches in the United States was $201 per person in 2014. While banks protect customers against fraudulent credit card charges, that doesn't mean the public won't eventually pick up the tab.

"If there is more fraud, costs go up," Jeffrey MacKie-Mason, dean of the School of Information at the University of Michigan, said via email. "Some of that price increase will likely be in annual customer fees or interest rates affecting cardholders; some of it will likely be in higher merchant fees, affecting retailers. Everyone is affected by the higher cost of doing business, regardless of where the law assigns liability."

But the cost of cyberfraud is insignificant compared to what could be on the horizon. The JPMorgan attack demonstrated that hackers could be capable of infiltrating the United States's largest financial institutions, with potentially serious consequences.

"We could see a financial collapse and resulting great depression — or worse — from a sufficiently serious cybercrime. Such crimes might, for example, be perpetrated not just by profit-seeking criminals, but by nation states who want to bring down the economy of other countries," said MacKie-Mason.

And it's not just the financial system that's at risk. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has issued several reports indicating that hackers could cause enormous harm to all aspects of the country's critical infrastructure. The GAO has repeatedly recommended that the federal government make cybersecurity a national priority.

Despite these warnings, in 2012 John McCain led a group of Senate Republicans in defeating a bill that would have created new standards to oversee cyberthreats to America's infrastructure. They argued that the law imposed too much of a financial burden for companies to follow.

"In general, if we look at just our Congress we seem to have the inability to do anything," Spiezle said. "It's incredible that we can't get together on this issue."
MEXICO CITY — “One, two, three, four ... forty-three!”

Students of the Polytechnical University count methodi-
cally as they march down the central avenue of Mexico
City’s financial district. On “43” they cry “justicia!” and
break into a run.

Forty-three is the number of students forcibly disap-
ppeared on September 26 from the southern Mexican city of
Iguala, in the state of Guerrero. It has become the battle
cry of a youth-led protest movement frustrated by years of violence, lawlessness and collusion between drug cartels
and officials at all levels of government.

The faces of “Los 43” now stare out from banners car-
rried in the marches, from handmade signs held up by pro-
testers, from university walls, from social media posts and
from newspaper pages. The fate of the students has gripped
Mexico for more than two months and the impact of this incident on Mexican politics and society is likely to be far-
reaching for years to come.

The students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ Col-
lege were last seen being taken away by police. According
to the federal government, the students were subsequently handed over to a local drug gang with close ties to Iguala’s
mayor, José Luis Abarca, and murdered. Why the police
abducted the mostly first-year students remains unclear.

Though there has been much speculation that Abarca was
angered that the students might try to disrupt a speech his
wife was scheduled to give that night, survivors say they
didn’t even know about the event until later.

MEXICO’S NARCO STATE

Killings and “forced disappearances” are commonplace in
Mexico. More than 100,000 people have been murdered
since the drug war began in 2006 and some 30,000 people
disappeared. The launch of the drug war also saw a rise
in other crimes, including kidnapping, torture, extortion,
rrape and other forms of sexual violence.

Amid so much carnage, the September 26 killings in
Iguala of six people and the related abduction of the 43
young men shocked Mexico because the direct involve-
ment of the local police in the attacks, if not new, thrust
the problem of collusion between government authorities
and organized crime into full view. It also struck a nerve
because it revealed the vulnerability of youth, frequently
the victims of both state and criminal abuse, and the stark
divide between the modernizing Mexico President
Enrique Peña Nieto has portrayed and the dirt poor Mexico that these mostly indigenous rural college students come from.

Most important though, the protesters believe this was a political crime of the state. The rural teachers college of Ayotzinapa was found-
ed in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution
of 1910-1917. Located on a former hacienda where students work in the fields to grow food
for the school, the campus’s walls are covered in revolutionary slogans and painted with murals of Che Guevara, Karl Marx and Lucio Caba-
ñas, a school teacher-turned-guerrilla leader
who was killed by the Mexican army in 1974.

The school is one of 17 rural teachers colleges still op-
erating in Mexico that give the children of poor, peasant,
mostly indigenous families access to an education and a
career. It also serves as a place to inculcate the values of
social justice and peasant and labor rights.

The students regularly participate in national protests
against government policies and engage in highway block-
ades and other forms of direct action in defense of their
school, which the government has repeatedly attempted
to defund and shut down. Many Mexicans see the Ayotzinapa
school and its students as a living symbol of the revolu-
tionary ideals that Mexico’s neoliberal leaders have tried
so hard to erase from the national character over the past
three decades. For them, the attack on the students was an
attack on the opposition to Mexico’s current path.

The scenario presented by Mexico’s attorney general,
Jesús Murillo Karam, denies a political motive, aside from
the mayor’s supposed tantrum. Murillo Karam posits that
the Iguala police, allegedly under orders from the now-
jailed Abarca, captured the students and turned them over
to local police in the nearby town of Cocula, and they in
turn delivered the students into the hands of the ruthless
drug cartel Guerreros Unidos, or Warriors United.

Murillo Karam claims, based on confessions from gang
members arrested a few weeks after the attack, that the
cartel assassinated the students and burned their bodies.
On December 6, a team of forensic anthropologists from
Argentina announced that the remains of one of the 43 stu-
dents — Alexander Mora Venancio — had been identified.

While the drug cartel practice of incinerating their vic-
tims’ remains is common in Mexico, many parents believe
their sons are alive and accuse the authorities of not really
looking for their children. The father of one of the 43 —
weary-eyed, with a newborn asleep on his shoulder — told
me that whether the students are dead or not, “The govern-
ment knows where they are.”

The Iguala mayor’s wife, María de los Ángeles Pineda,
also apprehended, is said to be a member of the family
that runs Guerreros Unidos, a splinter group of the Bel-
tran-Leyva cartel, which was decimated by attacks in the
Mexico-U.S. drug war. As the government and mainstream
media have spotlighted the couple, the movement in sup-
port of the Ayotzinapa students refuses to accept the “few
bad apples” version of events.

U.S.-BACKED DRUG WAR

Since search teams set out into the hills around Iguala
to find the students, they have unearthed more than 30 cadav-
ers — and still counting — in clandestine graves. While the
international media considered the bodies a bombshell, the
fact that the gently rolling hills hid a narco-cemetery sur-
prised no one in Iguala. Many families immediately went
down to government offices to sign up for DNA testing to
see if the bodies belonged to their disappeared loved ones.

Mexico’s bloodbath can be traced back to the U.S.-im-
posed drug war. While the official goal of this highly militarized initiative is take down the major drug cartels and their leaders, it also serves to pull Mexico more firmly into the U.S. security orbit. This strategy has fragmented many cartels but did not eliminate them, setting off bloody turf wars among rival groups.

Deploying Mexico’s military against the cartels did more to cor rupt the former than eliminate the latter. Police, which have always had relationships with the cartels in major production and transit zones, have now inflamed the violence. Drug war violence covers up brutal crimes of all kinds, especially against women, and the rule of law has eroded to the point that some 94 percent of reported crimes are not punished in a justice system that works like a sieve.

The United States, which has spent nearly $3 billion to fund the Mexican government’s drug war, insists that institutional efforts to vet police, provide training in procuring justice and increase military and intelligence capacity will eventually defeat the cartels. Mexican government officials say they’re fighting the cartels and corrupted officials. They claim Iguala is an example of a lack of state control over organized crime.

“Iguala is not the Mexican state,” Murillo Karam affirmed at his November 8 press conference — the same one in which he cut off questions by saying, “I’m tired now,” and setting off a Twitter scandal under the hashtag #YaMeCanse, later brought to the United States as “#USTired.” Peña Nieto has produced a 10-point plan reaffirming the war on drugs strategy and has sent the military in to take over local security forces.

These efforts are far from convincing many people that the Mexican government is their protector. On the night of September 26, the Mexican army, as well as state and federal police, were stationed nearby and did nothing as the local police shot at the students and took the 43 away. It begs the question of how the local police thought they could get away with such a crime and reinforces the belief of protesters and survivors that the government works with organized crime and not against it, and that — whether planned exactly in this way or not — the state wanted to get rid of the Ayotzinapa students.

STUDENT REBELS

“Business as usual” has changed in Mexico and the rise of the cartels and cartel violence is just a part of it. The country has been roiled by a new wave of neoliberal reforms since President Peña Nieto came into office two years ago. His education reform — which scraps many teacher rights and rolls back liberal arts education in favor of more narrowly focused vocational instruction — sparked widespread protests in which the Ayotzinapa students participated. The recent privatization of the nation’s oil and gas resources and other changes in taxes, labor and telecommunications laws have chipped away at the post-revolutionary constitution and laid the final stones in the neoliberal restructuring of Mexico.

In an economic system made for the few, many people fall through the cracks. And some — the rebellious, the brave, the outspoken — are pushed. The government had many reasons to push the students of Ayotzinapa. Not only did they block highways to demand that their school remain open and commandeer construction company favored by government contracts. “All the injustices committed against our communities, we feel that. So when they carry out actions to demand justice, we partici pate,” notes Carlos Perez Diaz, a second-year student at the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College and a survivor of the attacks. “It seems that what bothers them the most — that there are students who have left this rural college, who have gone out and raised awareness among the people to organize, to demand their rights. We think this is why they attacked on the 26th, to silence all these voices of social protest in the state of Guerrero, and not just in Guerrero — in the whole country.”

Marco Granados, a student at a rural teachers’ college in the neighboring state of Michoacan and head of the Federation of Peasant Socialist Students of Mexico, agrees. Julio Cesar Mondragon, one of the Ayotzinapa students in Iguala during the initial attacks on September 26, was found murdered with his face stripped off and his eyes gouged out. Granados sees it as a message.

“This, for people who protest, for us rural college students, is a very strong message. Because it says to us, ‘this can happen to any of you,’” Granados said.

BREWSING DISCONTENTS

The case of the Ayotzinapa 43 has united powerful undercurrents in Mexican society into a single voice. The discontent with a drug war that had been brewing for years boiled to the surface, along with opposition to the economic reforms. Teachers who protested the education reform are back in the streets; unions fighting rollbacks of labor rights and small farmers who oppose the land expropriation clauses of the oil privatization reform march alongside rebellious youth. The result is a multi-sector movement that demands the safe return of the students — and a complete and total overhaul of the political system.

As the demonstrations continue, protesters have not put forward the long list of demands and grievances that usually characterizes Mexican protest movements. If you ask the students or parents from Ayotzinapa, they insist their only demand is the return of the missing students alive.

For now, that’s enough, because that simple demand poses a fundamental challenge to the state. It’s also enough because, although the movement may not have a roadmap for where it’s going, it has a very clear idea of what it wants to leave behind — the entire corrupt political system of alliances between politicians, big business and organized crime.

All three major political parties — the ruling PRI, the conserva tive PAN, which started the drug war when it governed the country from 2006 to 2012; and the PRD, the party of both the mayor of Iguala and the governor of the state of Guerrero — are widely dismissed. “PRI+PAN+PRD=Nato-gobierno” is a common slogan on protest banners.

On December 1, a 15-day campaign began to take over multiple principal governments throughout Guerrero and form citizen assem blies. And lately, the movement is coalescing around the demand for Peña Nieto to resign. Two years into his administration, the president’s approval levels have hit a low at 39 percent, according to a poll by the Mexican newspaper Reforma. Peña Nieto also faces conflict of interest and corruption scandals based on revelations of a multi-million dollar presidential mansion under the name of a construction company favored by government contracts.

Still, the demand for resignation is a long shot. One protest banner reads, “When those below move, those above fall.” Does that mean this anti-systemic movement can take down a corrupt and entrenched political class? For now, there are no scenarios or predictions and no recent precedent, as Mexico’s political system has remained remarkably stable for the past 80 years despite passing through other moments of intense crisis like this one. The movement relies on the national and international momentum it has generated as it seeks to push forward.

Regardless of what happens, even Peña Nieto acknowledged, in a November 27 speech, that “Mexico can’t go on like this. After Iguala, Mexico must change.” He then presented a list of measures, many of them proposals made by his predecessor and all of them designed to strengthen the drug war and push his neoliberal economic policies forward.

The protesters responded with their characteristic combination of indignation and mockery. They may not have a 10-point plan, but it’s clear they aren’t going to settle for Peña Nieto’s list either.

Lara Carlsen is director of the Mexico City-based Americas Pro gram of the Center for International Policy. For more, see cip america.org or follow @cipamericas.

The protests demonstrated with their characteristic combination of indignation and mockery. They may not have a 10-point plan, but it’s clear they aren’t going to settle for Peña Nieto’s list either.
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There's a scene in the latest installment of the Hunger Games films in which Katniss Everdeen, the movie's reluctant heroine, stands awkwardly stoic, decked out in custom-tailored armor, breastplate and all. "Everyone is either gonna want to kiss you, kill you or be you," declares her escort Effie Trinket, priming her as if for prom.

A friend and I sat at a bar at the end of November discussing how amazing it would have been for a Katniss character to have starred in the action blockbusters of our early teens. I grew up playing princess. When I was about five, my dad used to blast Susan Lake on the speakers while I pranced around our living room, tiny arms flapping. I made him play both villain and prince. And as Tchaikovsky's ballet neared the end, I'd run into my father's arms, a wounded little bird, and with an Oscar-worthy sigh, I'd die.

Then came Indiana Jones. I was nearing 11 by the time I first watched the trilogy, and Indy had been around for almost two decades. Playacting changed: I no longer twirled but instead dodged giant rolling boulders and jumped over snake pits. I was captivated by Harrison Ford and everything he did. At times I wanted to kiss him, at others kill him, but mostly I wanted to be him. Not the actor but the hero. Had Katniss been around I surely would have played her in my make-believe adventures.

Alas, my heroine came 16 years too late. Jennifer Lawrence is now the only twenty-something allowed to unabashedly pretend she's bow-and-arrow-wielding Katniss. And pretend well she does. Which is why the little girl in me, teeming with excitement as I watched her on screen, forgave the film its flaws: the Hollywood camp, the exhausting exposition, the young men.

Let's talk about the young men, shall we? In the last movie, Catching Fire, the former tributes are forced back into the kill-or-be-killed Hunger Games by the leader of the Capitol, President Snow, played by a fittingly off-putting Donald Sutherland. The games are cut short by the rebel forces of District 13, long thought extinct, who take Katniss to make her the face of their revolution. Peeta Mellark, played by Josh Hutcherson, is left behind and taken by the Capitol, where he is tortured into becoming their propagandist. What is left is the shell of a young man who left me wondering whether it was the character or the actor who had given up.

Then there's Gale Hawthorne, played by Liam Hemsworth. He's good at doing an American accent and being handsome. Gale and Peeta are overshadowed by Katniss just as Hutcherson and Hemsworth are upstaged by Lawrence. Part of me was bored. They weren't solely responsible for losing my attention. Much of the action of the first two films is replaced in the third with Katniss walking around looking conflicted, then sad, then empowered, then conflicted again. A lot. While Lawrence has the acting chops to make her inner struggle worth watching, the writing isn't strong enough to make it quite worth staying awake for. Part of this is because there isn't enough meat in the story to stretch what should have been a solid three-hour film into two shorter ones. But the four-part trilogy is profitable. And this is Hollywood, after all.

And, as proven by the late Philip Seymour Hoffman in the role of Plutarch Heavensbee, the public relations mastermind behind the revolution, Hollywood has its advantages. Delightfully understated, Hoffman delivers every line with ease. He is a welcome constant through the film's ups and downs.

Panem is a dystopian society in which the population has given up freedom for the semblance of security and an ultra-rich minority rules over the starving masses with an iron fist. The most effective way to jolt the populace into action is through advertising, the agitprop of the day. "Propos," as Heavensbee calls the commercials. "A little on the nose," he says of one of them. "But, of course, so is war."

The whole movie is a little on the nose. Which isn't to take away from Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games novels. Written for young adults, the series successfully tackles an array of topics, from class inequality to the commercialization of war. The latter is Mockingjay's main focus. Heavensbee hires a film crew to follow Katniss as she tours the districts that have been ravaged by the Capitol. Played by Natalie Dormer, Cressida, the crew's director, doesn't miss a chance to milk despair. Like an experienced war photographer, she goes for the money shot, tact be damned. What results is a grimmer version of the Army Strong ad campaign.

Katniss grapples with being the poster girl for the rebellion. She cringes at the mendaciousness of it all, while we do the same at director Francis Lawrence's lack of subtlety. Much of her character is bound to disappoint. Katniss's tunnel-vision love for Peeta leads her to prioritize him over everyone else and the revolution itself, and she falls short of embodying a straight-up feminist or revolutionary heroine.

But while at times she's frustratingly on the fence, and annoyingly obsessed with rescuing Peeta, it is her unwavering conviction to those she loves (and her badass archery skills) that make her a character worth rooting for. Even if she isn't willing to kick ass and take names and take credit for every victory as we've been conditioned to believe action heroes should.

Katniss is earnest, never naive. When the revolution's leaders argue over the perils of recording the propos on the battlefield and the president of District 13, played by Julianne Moore (whose performance is as gray as her hair), warns Katniss that she could be killed, our heroine retorts: "Make sure you get it on camera." Gotta love her.

Mockingjay, Part I left me longing for more. Which was, I suppose, its purpose and its flaw. But I expect many a young girl (and boy) to grow up playing Katniss. And the movie theaters are sure to be packed with expectant audiences ready for battle this time next year.
Ho, Ho, Ho!
Bratton & his
“Broken Windows”
have got to go!

DON’T SHOP! RESIST!
#ThisStopsToday
#EricGarner #AkaiGurlay
#VisionZero #FTP

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Hrant Fanon, the Caribbean psychiatrist-turned-revolutionary, knew a little bit about sampling. As the main theorist of the Algerian liberation movement, he dug into the crates of Marx, Hegel and Freud to recast the darker nations as the center of the revolutionary process. Fanon saw a dialectical interplay between fulfilling the egalitarian ideals of the Enlightenment and the affirmation of Black and brown people. This dedication led him to spend his last years in Africa struggling against colonialism and writing the seminal texts Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth.

Funnily enough, his echo is reverberating not in Algeria, but in Sweden. While the Swedes never got into the colonial sweepstakes, a number of them documented liberation movements all over the world, thanks in part to a 1960s anti-imperialist government and the availability of 16mm cameras. The result is Göran Hugo Olsson’s archival-footage classic Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975 and his latest release, Concerning Violence. Concerning Violence — titled after the first chapter of Wretched — covers the socialist-led liberation movements in Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Olsson has given us a gift with the archival footage alone. With the dominant and development-driven vision of NGOs, we can forget that African liberation started with Africans. Not only did they free themselves, but they also broke South African apartheid, brought democracy to Portugal and inspired the Black Power movement in North America. (Take that, Bono.)

The stirring images of Black freedom fighters are accompanied by Ms. Lauryn Hill reading Concerning Violence. Hill took on the project after serving jail time for tax evasion, and listening to the clarifying anger in her lilt, it sounds like she took Fanon’s words to heart.

Whereas Black Power Mixtape was giddy in its anticipation of the first Black president (Obama, not Chris Rock), Concerning Violence comes at time when the audacity of hope has turned into a time of fear. Violence is being perpetrated around the world by multinational corporations exploiting workers and land. Stateside, violence is more than a metaphor; its naked force is being unleashed against Black people in record numbers.

For Fanon, armed struggle was not just a tactic but an assertion of humanity. If you get anything from reading Concerning Violence, it is that “violence is a cleansing force of the oppressed.” But Fanon wasn’t a fatalist or a proponent of propaganda of the deed. He was in the deepest sense a man who believed and practiced collective action. So what would Fanon do about Ferguson and Eric Garner? I think he would have been impressed with the use of social media (Fanon wrote extensively on the liberating uses of radio). And he would likely have been hopeful upon seeing the multiracial youth-led demonstrations taking place and the participations of street organizations (his fondness of the “lumpen proletariat” influenced the Black Panthers greatly).

He may, however, have struggled with “Black life matters.” Contrary to Black Power activists, Fanon was not interested in racialism; he was a Utopian thinker who sought to undermine the very idea of race as a category. He would also have warned us against the “wily intellectuals” (and activists) who are looking to use this moment for personal gain. Just saying.

Most importantly, Fanon would have shut down the hypocrisy of the state’s calls for nonviolence in the face of naked repression. This repression is not just at the demos, but in everyday life. The most striking scenes in Olsson’s film are not the gunplay of the guerrillas but the colonialism of the veranda: the whites on the golf course and the Black servants in the background, the Liberian worker and his family who are forced out of their home by police for organizing a strike. These scenes remind us that the police are not an isolated entity but represent the interests of the rulers. And wherever the police are, they negate any history or place we may inhabit, whether in Gaza or the deepest part of Brownsville. Olsson aids in the decolonization of our collective imagination, unearthing an oft-negated history and reminding us that resistance is about finding place and standing ground.

Concerning Violence is playing at the IFC Center in December. For more, see ifccenter.com.
Walking down Broadway, I saw a bus sporting a giant ad for *The Interview*, an upcoming comedy film about two Americans’ misadventures in North Korea. Seth Rogen and James Franco are shown gazing, stultified, into the unknown, flanked by red-tipped missiles and an angry Korean guy with a machine gun. The ad is meant as a tongue-in-cheek pastiche of overwrought propaganda art; it reads as a joke, because it’s so clearly a fish-out-of-water scene. The world in which James Franco and Seth Rogen are movie stars is not compatible with the stone-faced, marching-parade dogma of dictatorial Communism. Inside “Assenting Voices,” currently on view in the Shiva Gallery at John Jay College, I saw more of the same: more bright red letters, more guys with machine guns — only here, it was no joke.

“Assenting Voices” includes paintings and illustrated propaganda posters from North Korea and, yes, the posters look pretty much exactly how you’d expect. In 1948, while under Soviet occupation, North Korea became the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), adopting a sort of homegrown Stalinism under its new leader, Kim Il-sung. And that’s where it stayed: now widely regarded as the last bastion of Stalinism, the DPRK is currently in its 67th year of Kim family rule.

Just as Western art and design have undergone profound changes since 1945 — reflecting a rapidly and tumultuously shifting culture — the static formism of these posters reveals a society deeply resistant to change. Indeed, even the Soviet Union tried to update its propaganda for the times: Soviet posters from the 1970s and 80s use minimalistic composition, expressive line work, silly cartoons. There’s none of that here. Instead, North Korea has stayed true to “socialist realism,” the brightly lit, protagonist-driven, polemically motivated style that had been Soviet state policy under Stalin. Viewers may be surprised at how similar a DPRK poster from, say, the early 1950s is to one produced in the late 1980s (the exhibition doesn’t include any posters made after that).

Also surprising is how little there is of Kim Il-sung himself. Though North Korea is famous as a place that profoundly mythologizes — even apotheosizes — its leaders, the imagery here is mainly focused on common, hard-working citizens. Many of the posters feature individual, ordinary Koreans, heroically foregrounded in the center of the frame, displayed against sweeping, technologically imposing backdrops. One image shows a female factory worker smiling proudly as the stenciled “MADE IN D.P.R.K.” onto a roll of wooden crates; behind her are massive hydraulic lifts and solid shipping vessels already at sea.

Another shows a young soldier, stoically clutching his assault rifle before a towering factory of giant, belching pipes. Another has a schoolboy diligently studying science, dreaming of airplanes, monorails and beeping radio towers. Almost every image shows at least something — a skyscraper, a tractor, a missile — that couldn’t exist without advanced industrial technology.

But this exhibition has more than just propaganda posters; there are recent paintings, too, and that’s where it gets really tricky. Each painting features lushly rendered human subjects — almost all beautiful young women — against slightly out-of-focus backgrounds. These works also seem to valorize the daily efforts of dedicated citizens, but their stark compositions and muted colors betray a sort of foreboding melancholy, a sadness that’s nowhere to be found in the zippy, propulsive posters. One painting — *Performance II* (2011) — shows a woman singing into a microphone, while behind her looms the massive gray-brick Monument to the Foundation of the Worker’s Party. The scene is dark and lonely: the woman seems to be plaintively singing into the middle of the night, with no one around.

Another work — *Ballet* (2011) — shows a dancer hunched on a stool in the corner, with most of the canvas given over to a sun-dappled white wall. The piece becomes almost an abstract painting, reminiscent of J.M.W. Turner’s apocalyptic late works. Due to the constraints of showing North Korean art outside of North Korea, the paintings are presented here without much provenance: we don’t know exactly who made them, or why. But, assuming that these are state-sanctioned works, they seem to be using the concept of romantic beauty — as embodied by women, autumnal landscapes and musical performance — similarly to how the posters utilize ideas of labor and technology: as a continual reaffirmation of the state’s (supposed) vast resources and power.

Here in New York City, all this stuff reads as occasionally beautiful, but generally silly, self-parodying kitsch. We like to laugh at the bluntness of this straightforward propaganda. But we have propaganda here, too; it’s perhaps more subtle, but it’s there. With image-memes entreating us to honor “the troops” regardless of the war and sunny political campaign commercials in which every candidate is a true man or woman of the people, we’re surrounded by media that tug at our emotions in honor of the state. All media contains messages, after all, and in the right hands, anything — up to and including monorails, microphones and ballet dancers — can become propaganda. You can choose whether or not to laugh.

“You set out on foot to find things that can be found no other way: your country, yourself, your sense of direction. . . . Rory Fanning, a young soldier back from the wars, shares the results of his odyssey with those of us who have not walked 3000 miles through wild places and rough weather. His encounters with Americans who might be described as ordinary but are often extraordinary and with himself and the places and their historical backstories make great reading.”

—Rebecca Solnit, author of *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*

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WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OUR PLANS FOR 2015? SEE P2.

With a gift of $75 or more, you’ll receive a choice of beautiful T-shirts from the We Will Not Be Silent project, similar to those modeled by Indy staffers Rebeca Ibarra and Nicholas Powers above. With a gift of $150 or more, you’ll receive both T-shirts.