THE END IS NEAR
ELECTION SURVIVAL GUIDE
STARTS P8
AN APP OF OUR OWN

I’m for unions creating apps and putting together their own businesses. They could tour them to customers as a services that provide workers economic justice. (“Apped to be Screwed,” Oct. Indypendent).

— TERRY L.

CRUDE AWAKENING

I have significant respect for Jeremy Brecher’s work (“DAPL and the Future of US Labor,” IndyBlog). I re-member using his book Striker as a basis for student teaching back in 1994. His scholarship and attention to detail is on display in this article, which is as accu-rate as anything I’ve seen on the Dakota Access pipe-line. But I think here, as in many progressive corners of the Internet, the case against the pipeline is more assumed than proven. The pipeline will hardly play a role in expanding petroleum development. Bakken crude has had no problems finding its way to market — a more dangerous and carbon-producing mode of transportation.

— GEOFF H.

FROM SANDY TO MATTHEW

Really strong reflection on the effects of climate change and Hurricane Sandy on his home by Liam Flynn-Jambeck (Hurricane Matthew, a Deadly Re-minder of Climate Chaos to Come,” IndyBlog). Well worth the read.

— RAQUEL

WAKING UP FROM A NIGHTMARE

Trump is a byproduct of our corrupt corporate media that has given him billions of dollars in free air time while censoring progressives like Bernie and now Jill Stein (“What Are They Afraid Of?” Oct. Indypendent). Both parties and their puppet candidates are two sides of the same counterfeit coin. Time to reject the two-party nightmare and support real progressive champions of democracy, human rights, peace and environmental justice. That is why, after 29 years as a Democrat, I have awakened to reject both parties.

— DAVE E.

INSANE CLOWN POSSE

Not sure adding more clowns to the circus will make the debates any more or less enjoyable. What I would really like to see is some policy talk.

— FREYA M.

PEACE WITH JUSTICE

The Colombian government of Manuel Santos and Álvaro Uribe will continue, with the assistance of the US, to carry on a program of exploitation and oppres-sion against the majority of the people in Colombia (“After 50 Years of War, a Chance at Peace,” Oct. In-dypendent). People want peace with justice which is a long way coming. The peace vote was defeated by the Right but the people of Colombia should not be blinded, the struggle continues!

— GUSTAVO M.

LET IT SNOW

Excellent review, right to the point (“The Full ScreeWed,” Oct. Indypendent). I’d like to add that Oliver Stone’s film was visually breathtaking. The color and set design were brilliantly executed. One of my favorite scenes was the aerial view of the forest where basic training was taking place. The shot of the indigo and white trees from above was like nothing I’d ever seen on film.

— CAROL L.

TELL US WHAT YOU ARE THINKING:
COMMENTS@INDYPENDENT.ORG.

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TO SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWSLETTER, NEWSLETTER@INDYPENDENT.ORG.
artists alike, this one-night fiesta celebrates witches, everyday New Yorkers and everyone in between.

**EEN COSTUME BALL**

- **VENUE:** The entire 4th floor of 126 Water St. (Lower Manhattan)
- **TIME:** 4PM
- **DRESS CODE:** Costume or formal wear
- **ADMISSION:** $20
- **CONTACT:** Contact Us

**WICKeD:** The Musical!

- **VENUE:** Threes Brewing
- **TIME:** 7:30PM
- **DRESS CODE:** Formal wear or costume
- **ADMISSION:** $20
- **CONTACT:** Contact Us

**Greenlight Bookstore**

- **THU OCT 27**
  - **TIME:** 7PM
  - **VENUE:** Greenlight Bookstore
  - **DRESS CODE:** Formal wear or costume
  - **ADMISSION:** $20
  - **CONTACT:** Contact Us

**Barnes & Noble — Upper West Side**

- **THU OCT 27**
  - **TIME:** 7PM
  - **VENUE:** Barnes & Noble — Upper West Side
  - **DRESS CODE:** Formal wear
  - **ADMISSION:** Free

**TICKET FUNDRAISER: DEMAND THE PEOPLE’S VOTE!**

- **VENUE:** 214 Starr St.
- **TIME:** 7PM
- **DRESS CODE:** Formal wear
- **ADMISSION:** $20
- **CONTACT:** Contact Us

**THE DAY AFTER DONALD TRUMP HAS BEEN ELECTED**

- **VENUE:** Trump Tower in Midtown
- **TIME:** 11AM
- **DRESS CODE:** Formal wear
- **ADMISSION:** Free

**NOVEMBER 2016**

- **LAST LAUGHS:** Trump Tower in Midtown has been the site of numerous protests this election year, including this Oct. 12 "GOP Hands Off Me" rally. On Nov. 9, a day after the polls close, New Yorkers will gather at Trump Tower once again. This time to celebrate, or mourn.

**NOVEMBER 2017**

- **NO REST FOR THE WICKED:** Join Theater for the New City as it celebrates the 40th anniversary of its raucous costume ball on Oct. 31.
THE PIPELINE COMETH

ACTIVISTS UP THE ANTE AGAINST A TEXAS-BASED ENERGY COMPANY AS IT FINISHES A ‘PIPEBOMB ON THE HUDSON’

BY WENDY SOI

They carried sleeping bags and backpacks stuffed with apples, hummus, tuna fish and bottles of water. If it were not for the PVC pipes and gallon-size buckets of cat litter in their arms, Dave Publow, a longtime anti-fracking activist, and his three friends might have looked like hikers.

The pipes were part of a lockbox the quartet designed to keep police from pulling them apart, a sort of Chinese finger trap for their arms. The cat litter? Well, there weren’t going to be any bathroom breaks during the long hours ahead.

Publow and his companions stepped into the 42-inch-wide cylinder before them and crawled approximately 200 feet through the industrial steel tubing slated to comprise a segment of Spectra Energy’s AIM pipeline. It was Oct. 10, in Verplanck, New York, on the east side of the Hudson River, and the sun had just begun to rise. They would not breathe fresh air again until well after dark.

AIM is short for Algonquin Incremental Market Project, one of a number of pipelines that are being built in the Northeast to transport natural gas from fracking fields in Pennsylvania to New England and on to markets abroad. If completed by Nov. 1, as planned, AIM will carry approximately 342 million cubic feet of gas to Boston and other ports in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. Spectra is also increasing capacity in the Northeast to transport natural gas from fracking operations.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has stated his opposition to the pipeline, too, but is probably a lost cause, says Fraczek. She notes that although Cuomo announced the state would conduct its own independent safety analysis of AIM in February, the study was not commissioned until July, and it is still underway, even as the project nears completion. HDR Inc., an engineering firm with ties to the oil and gas industry, is conducting the risk assessment.

Documents reviewed by the Public Accountability Initiative (PAI) indicate that the pipeline’s proximity to Indian Point is no longer within the scope of the review.

A Spectra lobbyist, former Republican Sen. Al D’Amato, has donated heavily to Cuomo over the past year. D’Amato, PAI notes, gave $100,000 in December 2015, as public calls for Cuomo to intervene increased; $15,000 in April 2016, a month after the study was announced; and another $5,000 contribution in July 2016.

The company has also hired lobbyist Mark Grossman, who worked for the Cuomo administration until 2013 and before that, for Cuomo’s father, Gov. Mario Cuomo. Spectra has had him on a $10,000 monthly retainer since March.

“Gov. Cuomo is being lobbied by one of his personal friends to drag his feet on the independent risk assessment,” said Fraczek. “We’ll continue to keep the drumbeat on him, but we believe Schumer and Gillibrand are much more strategic targets right now.” — particularly Schumer, who, as the third-ranking Democrat in the Senate and a contender for majority leader should Hillary Clinton take the White House, “has his fingers on FERC’s purse strings.”

When Fraczek spoke with The Independent, Sane Energy was planning a rally at Schumer’s Midtown office on Oct. 26, calling on him to protect his constituents’ safety.

Direct actions against the pipeline will likely continue. “When we exited the pipeline,” Dave Publow recounted, “our supporters cheered us from the other side of the fence. The cops cuffed us and drove us away. But as we exited, we all kept looking around us, noticing where things were on the construction site, to get ready for next time.”

PRESSURING THE POLITICIANS

Others, meanwhile, are fighting on other fronts, leaning on New York State’s elected leaders to come to their aid. Kim Fraczek, of the environmental watchdog group Sane Energy, wants Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, who have already come out against AIM, to exert more political pressure on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which oversees interstate gas-pipeline developments.

Meanwhile, protests against Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) continue in North Dakota and along its route through South Dakota and Iowa and toward river ports in Illinois. The pipeline has become a flashpoint in the effort to halt fossil fuel extraction given the threat posed by climate change.

A North Dakota judge dismissed riot charges brought by the Morton County state attorney’s office against Democracy Now! anchor Amy Goodman (pictured to the right) on Oct. 17, citing a lack of evidence. The charges stemmed from a Sept. 8 protest led by members of the Standing Rock Sioux against the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL). Goodman and her team shot footage of private security guards attacking demonstrators with dogs that was viewed 14 million times on Facebook. State prosecutor Ladd Erickson, who initially charged Goodman with trespassing, said his office is still investigating the Polk Award winning journalist. “I wasn’t trespassing,” Goodman said in a Facebook broadcast, after the case was dismissed. “I wasn’t rioting. The Democracy Now team and I were there to report, to document what was happening on the ground. These charges are simply a threat to all journalists around the country. Do not come to North Dakota.”

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JOURNALISTS TARGETED FOR COVERING FOSSIL FUEL PROTESTS

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**THE IMPOSSIBLE LIFE OF A TASKRABBIT**

By anonymous

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** In our previous issue, The Indypendent published an expose on the gig economy. It detailed ways in which Silicon Valley is exploiting gaps in our labor laws, our tax system, and the precarity of the labor market to deprive workers of basic human rights. After we published the piece, an employee with Taskrabbit—a gig economy start-up that connects workers with consumers and companies offering temporary jobs—reached out to us. What follows is a letter this tasker, who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retribution, wrote to us in which he further details the strain the gig economy puts on workers.

Having recently gotten an email warning that my account will be “paused” from Taskrabbit for not performing enough tasks, I can testify to the strain the gig economy puts on a person.

Software and automation will continue to squeeze out the rights of workers and organized labor ad infinitum in the search for greater profits, more power and limited regulation. We workers and, by association, the consumer will experience more accidents, unsafe working conditions, less pay, limited rights and fewer opportunities.

The major advantage of app-based freelance work is experienced by customers. The ease of access, rating systems and lack of oversight allow for the commodification of labor in ways that previous generations never had to bear the burden of. Almost all of the profit, meanwhile, is reaped by the technology owners, with the software platform monitoring much of the communication between consumer and worker—cutting out the individuals who previously managed and negotiated this labor exchange.

Taskrabbit’s hiring system essentially forces us to accept tasks in order to promote the availability of taskers. Once we are hired we have 30 minutes to contact the customer and are basically on call until the task is complete.

Negative reviews are impossible to have stricken from one’s user profile and can verge on character defamation. I was frequently on the receiving end of job requests that were flatout unsafe. Because I was at the mercy of the customers making the requests, I would have to perform them. Measuring up to the vague and opaque standards of the rating system outweighed my own safety and welfare.

Failure to meet Taskrabbit’s impossible-to-live-up-to standards results in the total devaluation of the worker. This is to say nothing of the competition its rating system engenders. It begs for oversight and review, since it essentially amounts to an arbitrary job evaluation.

Yet, not all of the jobs that I did were terrible. I frequently worked for companies that treated us taskers and their full-time employees with a great deal of respect, offered safe conditions and positive experiences. Often I left those jobs longing to go back and have that extra security, instead of moving onto the next thing, looking at my phone and wondering when the next job will come.

This article has been lightly edited for concision and clarity.
WOODBORO, NY — On the 12th annual Woodstock Volunteers Day, residents gather in the Andy Lee Field for home-cooked food, folk songs and recognition of “what is good about [their] community.”

Two volunteers tabling for the environmental group Scenic Hudson ask for signatures and email addresses at the park entrance.

Tarak Kauff, a member of the antiwar group Vietnam Veterans For Peace, lends his name to the environmentalist cause.

When Kauff presents the volunteers with his own petition, they hesitate. The petition, written by a group of local activists known as Woodstock Peace Economy, asks aerospace and military contractor Ametek Rotron to switch over all its production to civilian use. The 70-year-old company is the largest employer in this town of about 6,000 residents.

The two volunteers seem to hate behind their table. “Rotron?” one asks. “I thought they only made fans.”

Kauff tells them about the campaign and about the fans’ essential role in the functioning of F-16 fighter jets, cluster bombs and predator drones.

They decline and continue asking for signatures, some of which likely come from Rotron employees.

MILITARY CONTRACTS

In 2015 Ametek Rotron landed $2.6 million in Pentagon contracts. Compared to Lockheed Martin — one of the largest defense companies in the world with declared revenues of $46.1 billion the same year— this number is negligible.

But for a town that came to prominence as a haven for artists and later became synonymous with ’60s-era idealism and whose council declared it “drone free” in 2014 — any Pentagon dollars are incongruous.

So say activists affiliated with Woodstock Peace Economy who have recently renewed a long-running campaign against Rotron’s manufacture of weapons parts that dates back to the 1980s.

“Located in buildings just out of sight, off Rte. 375, Ametek Rotron makes high-tech fans, balls bearings and other essential parts for weapons used to terrorize and kill people the world over,” reads the group’s latest petition. “As most of us in Woodstock support peace and not war, the signers below request that Ametek Rotron make air circulation and radar systems, both components of the Indefensible link.

According to public Pentagon contracts, Rotron produces centrifugal fans for F-16s, Military satellite systems, CV-22 Osprey helicopters, long-range navy radar and MAAS tanks.

Aimetek Rotron, in addition, is the main supplier of the fuel density probe, a critical component in the operation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) aircraft including the Predator Drone.

A leaked contract dated October 1, 2009, confirms Rotron supplied 50 fans to the Israeli Air Force that year.

The final destination of the fans remains unclear, but it is likely they operate in F-16s. In addition, a recently published Pentagon contract shows that Rotron provides a $7,365 motor to the Israeli Defense Ministry, confirming the company’s ongoing direct business with that country’s government.

Because numerous human rights organizations criticize the Israeli military for using F-16s, especially in consecutive assaults on the besieged Gaza Strip, activists insist Rotron is complicit.

A 2015 report from the human rights group Amnesty International claims “there is strong evidence that Israeli forces committed war crimes” in the 2014 assault “in their relentless and massive bombardment of residential areas of Rafah,” a town in Gaza.

The Israeli Air Force used indiscriminate force against civilians, hospitals and first responders, the report further states.

F-16s are also the aircraft of choice for Saudi Arabia’s U.S.-backed aggression in Yemen, where 10,000 people have been killed and three million displaced since March 2015 and half the population is on the brink of famine, according to a U.N. report. Recent U.S. retaliations on rebel-controlled areas of Yemen suggest the United States may be escalating its direct involvement in the war, beyond its current weapons sales, intelligence operations and refueling missions.

The Predator Drone, likewise, has been widely criticized for inflicting numerous indiscriminate civilian deaths in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism — one of the few organizations that tracks casualties as a result of Obama administration’s covert drone war — thousands of civilians in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan have been killed by drone strikes in just a few years.

Yet Rotron adamantly denies any involvement in foreign conflicts; divesting its manufacture of parts from the end systems those parts are used in.

“Rotron does not manufacture weapons,” Marie Tynan, a Rotron spokesperson told The Independent. “Our fans and blowers cool electronics. We make air circulation and radar systems, both commercial and military.”

When pressed on specific military applications, Tynan declined to provide further explanation.

A DEBATE ERUPTS

Rotron has historically been quiet about its Pentagon contracts, but sustained pressure from activists seems to have opened an indirect line of communication in the letters page of the local Woodstock Times.

In a letter published July 21, 2016, Peter M. Stewart, general manager of Ametek Rotron, sought to dispel claims that Rotron is involved in human rights abuses across the world.

“Since Rotron was founded here in Woodstock over 60 years ago,” Stewart wrote emphatically, “to the best of my knowledge, not a single individual has ever been killed by any of its products.”

Tarak Kauff responded in his own letter: “I guess by [Stewart’s] reckoning, because Rotron makes only essential parts for drones, missiles and cluster bomb delivery systems and not the totality of these weapons, ‘no one has ever been killed’ by one of their products.”

“The cold, hard and uncomfortable facts are, however, that Rotron does make essential parts of drones, fighter planes, tanks and other weapons of destruction, which have been responsible for many deaths, mainly civilians,” wrote Kauff.

Some Woodstock residents choose to emphasize the practical benefits of Rotron’s presence.

“Rotron has all the things you want for a career: pensions, healthcare and benefits,” a Woodstock resident named Sophia told The Independent.

Describing herself as a “typical Woodstocker,” So-
phia, who declined to give her last name, added that Rotron not only makes the “fans in ambulance engines,” but it allows the local EMTs to park two ambulances and a fly car for the paramedic on duty at its facilities. Eleven of the 35 members of the town council work at Rotron.

“Good-paying jobs are hard to find,” said Sophia, who suggested that “those who object to Rotron’s weapons manufacturing must get a ‘dose of reality.’

Former vice president Stewart also addressed the jobs issue in his letter, warning that the jobs Rotron provides could easily be offshore, should the company terminate its lucrative Pentagon contracts.

“If Ametek Rotron no longer provided fans and blowers for military applications” Stewart wrote, “in all probability, the company would be relocated to Mexico or offshore due to cost considerations; and, Woodstock would lose a significant tax contributor, a good neighbor, a town supporter and hundreds of jobs.”

According to William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Project, a nonprofit that studies the effects of the armaments industry on human rights globally, “there is a general tendency within the defense industry to play the jobs card as a way to resist change.”

“Usually companies in this industry exaggerate the jobs impact and exaggerate how dependent they are on contracts as a way to kind of maintain the status quo, keep the contracts flowing, divert criticism and so forth,” Hartung told The Indypendent.

RELUCTANT TO CRITICIZE

That resistance to criticism can be found in Woodstock’s town council whose members, with one exception, are reluctant to speak out against Rotron. On more than one occasion, members have said they would vote against any resolutions requesting that Rotron switch to production for civilian use.

The only holdout is Jay Wenk, a poet, World War II veteran and member of Veterans For Peace. He has long been part of the Woodstock Peace Economy campaign, leveraging his position on the town board to this end.

“People don’t walk around the streets thinking and feeling how heart-rending it is to make parts for drones that kill innocent children and so forth. It’s the town of peace and love — it’s more comfortable to be thinking that way,” Wenk told The Indypendent. “Because the other way puts us into the position of being complicit.”

The current petition campaign is by no means the first time activists have raised this issue.

In 2009 they held the second ever “Woodstock Forum” to expose Rotron’s involvement in the weapons industry — among other social and economic justice issues — coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the famous Woodstock festival.

Organizers brought antiwar activists, writers, poets and artists such as Mary Beth Sullivan of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space; Jeff Cohen, author, professor and founder of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR); and award-winning investigative journalist Jeremy Schialli to speak at the forum.

Activists, most of whom are still involved in the campaign today, printed and distributed a satirical newspaper chronicking what an end to Rotron’s weapons manufacturing might look like.

In the short term, members of Woodstock Peace Economy seek 600 signatures, the equivalent of a tenth of the town’s population, enough, they hope, to bring company executives to the table to discuss conversion. If company officials won’t budge, however, activists will escalate their campaign, which could include engaging in civil resistance and other more militant tactics.

Broadly, “I think it’s important to open up a conversation about the way the material bases of our tenuous prosperity are bound up with war, oppression and environmental devastation,” said Laurie Kirby.

Kirby stressed that the weapons industry is so entrenched in the American landscape, not even a place steeped in the mythology of peace and love is immune.

There is a military-contracted manufacturer in every single one of the country’s 435 congressional districts. “It’s well known that the Pentagon makes sure that the largesse reaches all parts of the country,” Kirby said.

“Woodstock is really not special — Woodstock is really a microcosm of the world,” he lamented. “Despite what some people think about it being antithetical and whatever else, we’re just a typical community and every community has this.”

At $596 billion in 2015, the U.S. military budget is larger than the next seven countries combined, meaning the profit potential for private contractors like Rotron is immense.

In order to resist the Pentagon’s allure, “[Rotron] would need to see examples of peaceful production happening in other places because I feel like where they are now, they are probably making a lot more money making parts for weapons,” Sequoia Cohen, student and anti-drone activist told The Indypendent. “So they need to see that they can still be profitable making other things.”

BEING FOR PEACE

William Hartung noted that there is already precedent for lucrative defense contractors to convert their production.

“There’s been big waves like after Vietnam, after the Cold War, tens of thousands of companies had to reorient their business and some do and some don’t. But usually the ones who are successful think ahead a little bit about what their options may be,” Hartung said.

“Not just dig their heels in and focus on getting more military contracts.”

In downtown Woodstock on a sunny August afternoon, Tarak Kauff continues asking locals and tourists for petition signatures.

A man in his 20s, garbed in peace signs and colorful beads, politely declines the petition, but not before saying he closely identifies with the antiwar movement.

“This disparity between a peaceful lifestyle and actual peace, Kauff later noted, is a familiar response.

“You claim you’re for peace, so for peace we have to look at all the elements that go towards destroying the peace,” Kauff said. “It’s one thing to know the truth, it’s another thing to act on what you know.

“You can’t be for peace and do nothing to achieve it.”

THESE ARMS ARE NOT FOR HUGGING

Saudi airstrikes killed 140 mourners and wounded 500 more at a funeral in Sana’a, Yemen, on Oct. 8. With U.S. support, the kingdom is waging a bloody air campaign across its border against Iranian-backed Houthi insurgents that began in March of last year. More than a third of the targets it has struck are civilian.

“U.S. security cooperation with Saudi Arabia is not a blank check,” said White House spokesman Ned Price, who expressed “serious concerns about the conflict in Yemen and how it has been waged.”

But the latest massacre comes less than a month after the U.S. Senate rejected a measure, 71 to 21, that would have blocked a $1.15 billion arms deal between the Obama Administration and the Saudis. The arms package follows a $1.3 billion deal in November of 2015. Both are part of a $22.2 billion sales bundle authorized with Riyadh since the war began, most of which is still to be delivered.

While Price says the White House is reviewing its support for the Saudi campaign, documents published by the Reuters news organization this month show from the start State Department attorneys fretted the U.S. could be considered a “co-belligerent” actor in the conflict and be held liable under United Nations war crimes statutes.

Human rights organizations estimate 3,800 civilians have died as a result of Saudi bombardments, so far.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF
VOTING FOR JUSTICE

PAYBACK TIME
IMMIGRANT VOTERS PREPARE TO THUMP TRUMP

By Eliza Relman

When Mayra Aldás-Deckert moved to the U.S. from her home in Ecuador in 2005, she, along with the rest of her family, was undocumented. “We moved here, like everybody else, with a hope that my sisters and I would have a better future, a better education...better economic opportunities,” she said.

For seven years, Aldás-Deckert lived in the shadows. In 2012, she married an American and got a green card, which gave her permanent residency status. Last December, at the age of 31, she became a citizen. She cast her first vote in an American election in the New York State primaries in April.

“It was so empowering...because I come from a country that as soon as you turn 18, you have to vote. I’ve always wanted to do that...now I can,” Aldás-Deckert said. “I can do it for my sisters, I can do it for my family, I can do it for the rest of the undocumented community that are still waiting for comprehensive immigration reform that will benefit them.”

Almost a million people have applied for U.S. citizenship since the beginning of 2016. This marks a 23 percent increase over the same period in 2015. Citizenship applications are historically higher in election years, and this year, between October 2015 and June 2016, applications were up 8 percent over the same period in 2012. Many immigration advocates across the country tie Donald Trump’s anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric to the rise in applications.

Aldás-Deckert is now a community engagement coordinator at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), an advocacy organization that represents over 200 groups working with immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. She says that fear of a Trump presidency has motivated many of New York’s Latinx residents to become citizens and voters.

“I know personal stories of people who had the green card for 10, 15 years — they kept renewing it, thinking ‘I’m fine with the green card, I’m afraid of the test, I don’t speak English, I don’t have the money,’” Aldás-Deckert said. “This is pushing them, this immigrant rhetoric is pushing them to become citizens, to say, ‘no, you don’t get to talk about my community like that.’”

A combination of her admiration for Hillary Clinton and her deep dislike of Donald Trump motivated Patricia Pavez to become a U.S. citizen and register to vote in this election. Pavez, who has lived in New York City since moving from her native Chile in 1978, said that the stakes in this presidential election are higher than she’s ever seen them, both for the U.S. and the rest of the world.

“Everybody in Chile, everybody in Latin America has their eyes on the United States, the whole world is looking at this election,” Pavez said. “That is maybe why I’m motivated to participate. I feel my country and family is sitting there and watching.”

BACKLOG

Due to the spike in citizenship applications and a lack of preparedness at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), almost 500,000 residents nationwide are currently awaiting answers on their applications.

New York City’s Public Advocate, Letitia James, is calling on President Obama to provide emergency support to USCIS to speed the review of applications, 60,000 of which belong to New York City residents.

“Not only do these individuals deserve their citizenship, their absolute, indisputable right to live in this country, but they deserve the right to vote,” James said at a press conference on October 5.

NYC communications manager Tharu Yakupitiyage called the backlog “disheartening” and hypocritical, noting that the White House Task Force on New Americans has actively encouraged lawful permanent residents to apply for citizenship.

“USCIS has the power to hasten these applications,” Yakupitiyage said. “The White House itself were the ones who called for immigrants to become citizens, and so they really need to do something.”

Meanwhile, Trump has accused the federal government of fast-tracking citizenship applications before the election to get more immigrants to the polls to vote for Democrats. In early October, he told a meeting of the National Border Patrol Council, “They’re letting people pour into the country so they can go and vote.”

POWER OUTSIDE OF VOTING

While the majority of New York City’s three million foreign-born residents are citizens, about 500,000 are undocumented. Roksana Mun is an organizer with DeSisi Rising Up and Moving, a group with almost 3,000 predominantly South Asian and Indo-Caribbean members, the majority of whom either have green cards or are undocumented. Mun says that much work remains to be done to help non-voting residents play more active roles in shaping policy.

“Organizing becomes the way our communities are able to have a voice and get their power, outside of being a voting bloc,” Mun said. But she added that many, particularly undocumented individuals, do not have the time or resources to be civically or politically engaged, “Pretty much all of our members work ten, fourteen hour shifts, seven days a week.”

Mun noted that many struggle to see meaningful differences between candidates and political parties in their policies surrounding immigration, racial justice, and workers’ rights.

“Regardless of Trump’s rhetoric and Clinton’s rhetoric, the practice is that deportations are still continuing even under a progressive president like Obama,” Mun said. “For them, rhetoric is one thing, but they understand the practice of that is already happening.”

Aber Kawas, the youth lead organizer at the Arab American Association of New York, works with undocumented individuals to engage them in policy advocacy efforts. The Association holds workshops on the fight for the $15 minimum wage, immigrants’ rights while interacting with law enforcement, and how to be involved in the public education system.

“We don’t want voting to be the primary focus for people. We want to talk about the many ways that you can be politically engaged,” Kawas said.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

In July, Mayor Bill de Blasio expanded the number of languages that voter registration forms are translated into from 11 to 16. Eighty percent of citizens with limited English proficiency should now have ac-

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VOTE SWAPPING
NEW APP BRINGS TOGETHER VOTERS ACROSS STATE LINES

By Bianca Fortis

Vote swapping is one method progressive voters are using to help ease their consciences this election. It allows them to be pragmatic without entirely surrendering their progressive principles.

The idea of strategic vote swapping debuted during the 2000 election, when “Nader Trader” websites popped up on the internet. The legality of websites was challenged but the courts ruled that vote pairing is protected as a form of free speech.

The goal of the Nader Trader sites was to help Ralph Nader, running on the Green Party line, secure the 5 percent of the popular vote required to be eligible for federal matching funds without pulling votes away from Al Gore in swing states.

It didn’t work — but it’s worth trying again, according to John Stubbs and Ricardo Reyes, who are behind the #NeverTrump app. They’re also the brains behind Republicans for Clinton, a group whose sole goal is to defeat Donald Trump.

Although they’ve been encouraging conservative voters, particularly those inclined to vote for Gary Johnson, to use the app, Stubbs said they’re interested in “anyone and everyone who believes that Donald Trump should not be president” — including disillusioned millennials and Green Party supporters who favor Stein.

“It’s about recognizing that in an election when it’s going to come down to two people, voting for Stein or voting for Johnson... does the same thing — nothing,” he said.

In Canada, vote swapping may actually have swung the vote last year in favor of now-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a hard-fought three-way race, Stubbs said. Voters don’t need to use the app or find a stranger to swap votes with, Stubbs added. If they connect with individuals they already know who happen to live in swing states, that works too.

One of the main challenges to vote swapping is that it relies on the honor system. In theory, a swapper could renege on a promise to vote for a certain candidate, or even trade votes with multiple unsuspecting individuals, resulting in even more votes for his or her candidate of choice.

New York City author and activist Gan Golan published a tongue-in-cheek article on the blog site medium.com that advocated for a more extreme version of vote pairing, which he coined the “VOTE-4-ACTION Swap,” and which requires liberals to actively protest in exchange for a Clinton vote cast by a radical.

“To fulfill their oath, the Liberal has to actually get beaten and/or arrested while protesting so please be patient as it may take more than one try,” Golan writes. “To ensure the integrity of this agreement, the Radical gets their new Liberal BFF’s personal phone number, email and home address and is granted the full legal right to harass them until they show up in the streets.”

Golan said the idea was borne of frustration when he saw Hillary voters using the threat of a Trump presidency to blackmail Bernie Sanders supporters into supporting her — essentially asking progressives to vote for Hillary without giving anything in return.
ELECTION VIEWS

For many on the left, the upcoming presidential vote marks the grim conclusion to a once-promising election season that saw a self-described socialist win the support of millions of Americans. The two remaining major party candidates are a Wall Street-friendly corporatist who would be the first woman to sit in the Oval Office and a man who has been called “abhorrent”, “a malignant clown” and “utterly unqualified” and that’s just by members of his own party. To help us make sense of the moment, we invited several guest contributors to share their thoughts.

SUPPORT HILLARY, THEN FIGHT LIKE HELL
IT’S HARD TO DO, BUT IT’S THE RIGHT MOVE

BY ETHAN YOUNG

Bernie Sanders supporters got some bitter lessons in Democratic Party politics in 2016. The first was that the primaries could be used as a platform for left politics. Sanders’ amazing success in reaching millions of people with a strong left-populist message almost made political revolution look easy.

Then we found out that concessions don’t get handed out like goody bags. The Democratic National Committee leadership’s ties to big capital are strong. Even those assumed to be friendly, like Donna Brazile (strong black woman!) or Barney Frank (gay pioneer!) preferred to bust our balloons than favor us over powerful corporate interests.

But concessions were made, because we made it clear that we wouldn’t go away. Those concessions were words on a platform, barely promises. But for fresh-out-of-nowhere campaigners, even making the DNC blink was no little feat.

Then came the bitterest drop of reality; Hillary Clinton was the nominee. That meant her election was all that stood against Donald Trump. And THAT meant we would be forced to choose someone we didn’t want, even hated, to head off a result that would open the floodgates of a fascist insurgency.

Some of us refused to accept that last drop. We pressed our mouths tightly shut and shook our heads. No lesser evil. Vote for what you want, even if you won’t get it. Show the two-party system we’re not quitters. Those parts of the left that have always been ideologically committed to the view that real progressive politics only begins with rejecting all Democrats used this turn of events to feather their various political nests.

Most of us have absorbed this reality, as nasty as it tastes. We will have a very hard time surviving if the Trump campaign becomes a government-backed armed movement. We will not build a stronger left, and come out of our decades-long state of decrepitude, fragmentation, and political incoherence, if things get radically worse as a result of Trump taking over. More likely, we will be reduced to long-term defensive action, as whole communities, labor unions, and religious assemblies come under physical attack. This is what happens when a party in crisis – the post-W Republicans – reverts to a default mode of full-on white supremacy.

The left is broader than revolutionaries and hardcore activists. We also include liberals and pacifists, union members and feminists, by spirit if not action. Some of them supported Clinton from the start, either as the gender groundbreaker or as the anti-Trump. The problem, though, is that Clinton’s record shows a governing style that involves big favors for big money, and small carrots and sticks for everyone else. Ignoring that reality, or permutation for the sake of campaign spirit, leads to broken hearts and futility.

The Sanders campaign raised basic, crucial issues and made them plain for everyone to consider. His excellent political instincts took him to the social movements that had come together and promoted solutions for them. Every one of those issues remains on the table. Now it’s our move. The left must grow up fast and get it together before the next extreme winter. This requires several improvements in our approach to politics.

• United fronts are necessary, but hard to build. They mean more than just putting names on a leaflet or agreeing on a list of demands. Leaders need to drop fights over turf and funding or old scores, and figure out how they can work together for common goals. Activists have to share ideas, information, and skills with each other, and interact across lines of geographic distance and area of work. Political and movement leaders won’t automatically take this position. They must be won to it.

• Having a united front means coordinated political action by people involved in both social movements and electoral campaigns. It’s not about this or that candidate, but about the real solutions that came forward during the 2016 campaign. Sanders supporters are well acquainted with these. But we need to turn to Clinton supporters, many of whom agreed with Sanders’ positions but opposed him for pragmatic reasons. They have no objection to single-payer health care, free higher education, a $15 minimum wage now, defending black lives, ending neoliberal free trade pacts, and so on. After the election, Clinton supporters’ attention can be shifted to joining the fight for these demands.

• By building off public demand for these reforms, united front action can pressure those in power and work to unseat Republicans and corporate Democrats. This can be accomplished through independent campaigns or local Democratic clubs, depending on the circumstances.

• We have to organize not as ideologues for our favorite doctrine, but with outreach as our number-one priority. Every street is full of people who would welcome an honest alternative. They don’t need missionaries, but small-d democrats. This kind of organizing is already happening every day, but not in the context of a broad united front, and not with the shared goal of both pushing for change and electing agents of change.

• We don’t have television, but thank the tech gods for the Internet. We can utilize social

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VOTE JILL STEIN FOR PRESIDENT AND BREAK WITH THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

By Ursula Rozum

Why should people vote for Jill Stein for President instead of choosing the “lesser evil,” and why is this an effective way for the Left to build power?

“It is better to vote for what you want and not get it than to vote for what you don’t want and get it,” as Eugene Debs said. My vote for Stein, the Green Party candidate, is a simple choice to support the candidate whose values and positions overwhelmingly represent my own. But I realize the choice isn’t so easy for those who are weighing whether to vote for Stein or choose the lesser evil of Hillary Clinton in order to defeat Donald Trump, the boorish incarnation of society’s most disgusting and violent attitudes.

A few polls taken in mid-September found that overwhelmingly, voters on both sides of the aisle are choosing the lesser evil. The main reason respondents cited for supporting Trump or Clinton was dislike of the other major-party candidate. Given the high level of dissatisfaction with the choices put forward by the corporate duopoly, 2016 could be the year that independent parties, in particular the Green Party, make strides.

Voters are increasingly sick of the policies of war and Wall Street embraced by corporate Democrats like Barack Obama, and Hillary and Bill Clinton. Yet there is tremendous propaganda pressuring leftists to swallow their pride and vote for Hillary Clinton, despite her political record.

The most belated meme is that Green Ralph Nader cost Democrat Al Gore the 2000 election, electing George W. Bush and leading to the Iraq War. This scare tactic ignores many important factors. A media review a year after the election found that a full recount would have resulted in a Gore win, but the Gore campaign demanded only a partial recount; that the Supreme Court stopped the recount by a 5-4 decision along party lines; that Bush is estimated to have won the votes of more than 300,000 Florida Democrats; and that half of all registered Democrats did not even bother voting. As it does with Jill Stein today, the Democratic Party made Nader and the Greens into the scapegoats.

Why vote for Stein and the Greens instead of a lesser-evil Clinton vote in order to stop the “fascists”? Because we must stop giving legitimacy to the political-elite status of two corporate parties, including the Democrats. Their policies have created the crises that surround us — the climate crisis, the jobs crisis, the student debt crisis that has 43 million of us trapped in endless monthly payments, and militarized policing instead of anti-poverty policies.

While social change won’t happen solely through elections, they serve as a measure of popular will, and can be a tool for bringing issues and solutions into the public discourse. Though third parties in the U.S. face a political Mount Everest, competing under conditions and rules designed to exclude them, the Green Party has learned to navigate and challenge the undemocratic nature of the electoral system.

The Sanders campaign demonstrated that there is a mass base for progressive policies. The higher the vote for Stein and the Green Party, the more leverage progressive movements can have against the political establishment, because it will not be able to take our support for granted.

The Greens’ infrastructure needs to catch up with the public demand for a progressive alternative. If Stein wins 5% of the vote, the party would qualify for general election public funding in 2020 that will be worth over $10 million, which would significantly boost its organizing capacity. In 57 states, the results will also determine whether the Greens get an automatic ballot line for the next two or four years, though in New York the ballot line is determined by the results of the governor’s race which will next be held in 2018. Those lines would enable the independent left to run competitive and winnable races at the local level, which is how it can develop into a national electoral force.

What will it mean if the only third party that wins 5% is the Libertarian Party? If popular discontent with the status quo of corporate rule is consolidated in the growth of a party that has made Nader and the Greens into the scapegoats.

I have decided to write in my niece’s cat for President. I would obviously act differently if I lived in Ohio or North Carolina, but Hillary Clinton will almost certainly do next to nothing to fix the biggest problem facing the United States: The economy is broken, twisted in favor of the rich. For millions of Americans, there is no longer any relationship between having the desire and skills to work and being able to make a living. There is no longer any security that working will make you able to afford a place to live.

Clinton offers only vague, token solutions to those problems—mostly initiatives to give a few more people the chance to enter the upper-middle class, and a slightly higher floor under the lower-working class. The $12-an-hour minimum wage she supports might reduce the number of hours of work needed to afford a one-room apartment in New York’s poorest neighborhoods from 120 to 100. She represents the “responsible” wing of the 1%. The main argument to vote for her is the traditional “if you don’t, the horrible evil Republicans will pack the Supreme Court!”

Donald Trump really is that horrible and evil, though. He represents the irresponsible wing of the 1%. His wife-beater style of debate, indiscriminately spraying accusations, insults, and politically slanted lies like a man with a piece of lint stuck in his urethra, is so ignorant and obnoxious that it actually makes me want to vote for Clinton. Yes, I would rather drink corporate-Democrat urine than the toxic waste of a racist blowhard con artist’s personality cult.

Trump taps into the anger of people screwed by the economy of the last generation, such as those told by the Clinton Democrats of the ‘90s, “your job being shipped to low-wage countries is the price of progress, but we’ll bring you into the future by giving you an eight-week class in Microsoft Excel.” But his few actual policy proposals are the well-worn scam that cutting taxes and regulations on the rich will bring unprecedented prosperity to America. He has a long record of stifting people who worked for him, from the undocumented Polish laborers who erected the Trump Tower to the architects and contractors who designed and built his casinos. Thinking Trump will really help working people is as stupid as believing that not vaccinating your kids for diphtheria will make them healthier.

There are millions of people in America who are just that fucking stupid. Not all of Trump’s supporters are bigoted bullies, and it is usually unfair to judge a political cause by its most extreme supporters. It is still highly unlikely that an obvious heterosexual showing up at an “LGBT for Hillary” rally would get punched in the face by someone screaming, “F*ck you, breeder!”

The only reason to vote for Trump would be out of a nihilistic-hedonist fantasy, like that if a nuclear missile were heading for New York, you could load up on an LSD OxyContin cocktail and watch the fireworks with an appropriately don’t-give-a-toss attitude.

Speaking of drugs, Libertarian Gary Johnson is one of the few American politicians with an honest stance on the issue. He doesn’t talk evasive rubbish about having “experimented” with marijuana; he says, “I smoked it.” Getting drunk in a bar is legal, he argues, but driving drunk isn’t—so why shouldn’t the law be the same for pot?

On the other hand, the Libertarian party platform is like a Yiddish curse for aging potheads. Yes, you’ll be able to buy weed legally, but you won’t be able to afford it, nor without Social Security you won’t. (Johnson personally advocates just shrinking Social Security, by converting it from a universal entitlement to a means-tested welfare program and raising the retirement age.) And when you get pneumonia from sleeping outside (no rent controls or subsidized housing either) and go to the emergency room without Medicare, all you’ll get is a lecture on “personal responsibility.”

Green Party candidate Jill Stein has one brilliant idea: A “Green New

CAT’S OUT OF THE BAG
I CAN’T SUPPORT ANY OF THE TWO-LEGGED CANDIDATES

By Steven Wishnia

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Green Party candidate Jill Stein has one brilliant idea: A “Green New

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The Independent

TRUMP’S BEST CHANCE OF AN UPSET VICTORY LIES WITH WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES LIKE THIS ONE

A TRADITIONALLY DEMOCRATIC NEIGHBORHOOD

Port Richmond has traditionally voted Democratic in national elections, but the area is in early October with local education activism, it was apparent that what is at stake is that there is about to change. Though the activists knocked on doors of registered Democrats, they were not in the area strong that the white working class also illustrates the challenge that the Democratic Party for the past 30 or 40 years has been facing.

A Republican and charter school advocate, Joe Hohenstein, who stopped by to glad-hand the canvassers, said he supports local control of schools. While he is more on the subject of education, he added that he supports “the neighborhood, while traditionally voting Democrat at the top of the ballot, has been shut down, replaced by charters or sold off as real estate.

Legal Barnett’s famous irony, “Behind every lie is a fact faced revolution,” comes to mind. Rutgers, which is a public school, has a number of views not to be ignored. Some see the neighborhood as anti-establishment, not caring about the public schools. Basically, he considers himself an educator. After all, he’s held onto his seat through a "no-ride" vote, which has led Sanders and Trump’s populism to take root. People of Port Richmond or the working class have the means to have a say in how their children are educated. Board members have said they do not want the city’s area code. They’re seeking to wrest control of their public schools from the widely-loathed School Reform Commission (SRC), established to run Philadelphia’s school district by the state in 2001. "There’s a lot of things wrong in the neighborhood that need work and this is a good way to get things started," 25-year-old Shana Razzi told me. Like many in the community, she has been drawn to someone who says, “I want to make this the right thing for myself and my children.”

"I just watched a rally of Hillary’s where she talked about her plan for the neighborhood," said the SRC's chief lawyer, Kenneth Roundy, who's been shut down, replaced by charters or sold off as real estate. Bill Clinton, who was on the subject of education, she added that “there isn’t any ticket splitting,” Holloway, who stopped by to glad-hand the canvassers in Powers Park, told me.

"With Trump being such a divisive figure, we’re working on a local campaign that shows up the Democratic base so that there isn’t any vote splitting," Holloway, who stopped by to glad-hand the canvassers in Powers Park, told me.

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By Nicholas Powers

“Y”ou’re not listening to me,” he gripped the steering wheel. “What the hell am I not hearing?” I stared at my friend Terrence, who stared at the road as we drove in silence. He blurted, “White guys feel like they’re always wrong. I’m white. Listen to me. I know. We’re being yelled at by everyone.”

I drew a line down my cheek, “White tears.” The quiet in the van grew as a gasoline bubble. Just one spark. He parked, looked at me and said, “Boo hoo,” mock crying. We laughed. But our epic talks on race and politics took a turn when Trump went on a winning streak. I began to listen to his warning. A huge swath of White America was scared, cornered, cheated, insulted and left behind. When they looked in the mirror, they saw white as the new black.

THE STRONGMAN

The Strongman cometh. He’s Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. He’s Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt. He’s lurking in the ranks of the nationalist parties rising in France and Austria. Here, he is Donald Trump. The Cinnamon Hitler, the Groper. He was a joke, until he wasn’t.

Terrence and I watched him on TV. His pucker-d face and excuse-me-waitress forefingers. Trump soaked fire and spewing it from his lips like a circus fire-breathing face and excuse-me-waitress forefingers. Trump soaked fire and spewing it from his lips like a circus fire-breathing face and excuse-me-waitress forefingers. Trump soaked fire and spewing it from his lips like a circus fire-breathing face and excuse-me-waitress forefingers. Cinnamon Hitler, the Groper.

“I’m tired of feeling guilt. It’s like someone took a ship and sank it over me,” he said as we stood in his apartment, which overlooked the road as we drove in silence. He blursted, “White guys feel like they’re always wrong. I’m white. Listen to me. I know. We’re being yelled at by everyone.”

“You may have it backwards,” he said. “Trump lovers think he’s saving them from you. For his supporters, you’re the monster.”

CRACK PARK

“White people are really conscious about being white,” he said as we stood in his apartment, which overlooked a tiny patch of green called “Crack Park” where homeless people slept in tents. They stumbled out each morning to get liquor from the store. By noon, they were passed out on the sidewalk like thrown-away dolls. I stepped over them when opening the door. Drug dealers stood nervously at corners. Prostitutes waved at passing cars. Everyone was black. Terrence was one of the few whites in the neighborhood. They watched him as he walked to the store, always asked him for money and sometimes heckled him.

“I get it, I really do,” Terrence said, “Everyone thinks I’m the problem. Out here, I’m seen as part of the system that ruined their lives. They don’t know me. They just see white. They don’t know I’m struggling too. And I am. But it’s not the same. I have things they never had. You know, one of the ladies out there said to me, ‘you must have really disappointed your family to end up here with us.’ I was really hurt.’

‘Damn bro,’ I shook my head. ‘Damn.’

I looked at my friend. I’d known him almost 20 years. He knew me when I had 4-foot-long dreads. He has these large feel-your-soul eyes and endless energy. He was a metal worker and his hands were often dark from soldering metal at his shop. He drummed, live looped and deeejayed at parties. He protested Republicans. Total Bay Area man.

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“Damn bro,” I shook my head. “Damn.”

I was safer than most. Safer than my friend. A month after he crashed, I stayed up thinking about politics. How Trump was causing a feminist reaction, how it would clean America of some of its sexism. After he crashed, I stayed up thinking of what I needed to be cleansed of and thought of Mark the waiter and another white man I met who slept in a tent in Central Park. Or the white woman I talked with on a bus who was sexually harassed at work and quit. Or the white cab driver I met in upstate New York who juggled four jobs and never saw his family. On and on.

What if I didn’t think — white? What if I just thought human? We’re all human and we’re trapped in a history we can’t see and trapped in a system we can’t stop? After growing up around whites who didn’t see their privilege, I was grateful that whiteness was becoming easier to call out. But I didn’t like how it was now so bright for me that I was objectifying it, unable to feel the human being locked inside its burning visibilility.

And I wasn’t alone. Poor whites were an intellectual fad. Books about the white working class line the shelves, like Strangers in Their Own Land, White Trash, Hillbilly’s Eulogy, and Evicted. Now that a large slice of poor and working-class white America nearly made Trump president, the elites were scrambling to understand them.

Poor and working-class whites are scared and wanted a strongman to rescue them. But Trump has already lost. The election will be a wave, immense and fast. When it hits, liberals will yell and do mock touchdown dances. And the next day, capitalism will keep grinding along and more people will slip, slip some more and then fall into the streets.

I was safer than most. Safer than my friend. A month ago, he was evicted. He was allowed time to get everything cleaned out. This morning, I got a text from him saying that he had left his home. He sent me photos of the open road. I didn’t know where my brother was going but he was on his way.

Nicholas Powers is a professor of African American literature at SUNY-Old Westbury.
IMMIGRANT VOTING
Continued from page 8

cess to registration forms in their native language, according to the Mayor’s office. City polling places will also be required to have ballots translated into these 16 languages.

While this is a step towards greater enfranchisement — and legally mandated under the Voting Rights Act — many advocates say it is not enough to get immigrant citizens actively engaged in the political process.

“We need to ensure that the voter materials that are mailed to people, the voter guides, are in those languages,” Murad Awawdeh, NYIC’s director of political engagement, said. “We need to ensure that when people get to the polls, they can speak to someone who speaks their language.”

But Awawdeh thinks the most significant barrier to political engagement in immigrant communities is a lack of civic education. “This is all about education, if you can’t educate people about why this is super important for them to do, then you’re failing,” he said.

Mun doubts the expansion of language access will make a substantial difference in voter engagement this fall.

“I wouldn’t imagine voting would necessarily change just because the number of languages that are available has increased,” Mun said. “To me, the question is: is there active outreach on the ground that goes out to community members, day to day, informing them? It takes way more steps than just registering somebody to vote.”

Kawas says that many individuals in the communities she works with have never participated in the political process before, either in the U.S. or their home countries.

“A lot of times, immigrants who are coming in are coming in as refugees,” Kawas said. “They might not believe in the political system [or] they may have lived under a political system that didn’t work for them. I think that population of people are people we need to have conversations with.”

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Immigration advocacy and organizing groups have worked hard throughout the fall to register and educate as many new voters as possible and are planning aggressive get-out-the-vote efforts leading up to Election Day.

Mohammad Razvi, executive director the Council of Peoples Organization, told The Indypendent that his team has registered more voters, most of whom are South Asian immigrants, than ever before in the organization’s 14-year history.

James Hong, who directs the MinKwon Center for Community Action, said that his coalition is knocking on thousands of doors and calling tens of thousands of people. The 19 organizations that the MinKwon Center works with expect to collectively contact over 100,000 Asian-American voters by November 8.

“We’ve been training other organizations, refining a message that will speak to our communities,” Hong said.
I design the Indy.
I design for change.
I can design for you.

I design for change.
I design the Indy.
WHAT’S A WOMAN TO DO?
TRUMP IS TERRIBLE BUT CLINTON LEAVES ME COLD

By Maria Muentes

During the second presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, the Republican nominee lurred menacingly behind Clinton, his orange face scrunching up in hatred as she calmly answered questions from audience members.

As women, we’ve all been there — forced to deal with terrifying jerks who feel entitled to inflict themselves on you just because they can. This was happening on national television in front of 67 million people. For the first time in this seemingly endless campaign, I felt a sense of commonality with Clinton.

Trump has run a campaign of racial and gender-based hatred, making turning on the television or going online a mental-health hazard for people of color and women. I fear that he will internalize the message of Trump's hate-propaganda campaign.

This is a man who has publicly lusted after his own daughter and a 10-year-old girl he met in an elevator. In 1989 he called for the death penalty for the five black teenagers accused in the Central Park Jogger rape case — and continues to insist that they were guilty, even though their convictions were overturned after another man’s confession to the crime was confirmed by DNA evidence, and they received a $41 million legal settlement from the city.

It’s very painful to see poor whites embrace Trump for one simple reason: He makes it acceptable for them to express white nationalism openly. He will not help the white working class. He is anti-unions. He has made it very clear that he is only interested in his own personal profit. Believing that he will help the white working class is as ludicrous as believing in the Easter Bunny, yet his base has not abandoned him, because he has made it okay to be racist again.

Nonetheless, Hillary Clinton’s claim to be a scrappy champion of progressive ideals still rings false to me. She was an active partner in her husband’s presidency. In that role, she helped pave the way for mass incarceration, more detention and deportation of immigrants, trade deals that disempowered workers, and a sacking of the safety net that turned poverty into destitution for millions of women and children. More recently, she has made millions of dollars speaking to Wall Street firms for six-figure fees. And who are the people most likely to suffer from the regime-change wars and coups she has helped to fan across the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America? Women and children, of course.

These facts are painful to admit. I had recently graduated high school when I voted for Bill Clinton, the first time I cast a ballot in a presidential election. I actually believed the Democrats to be the party of the people. What I know now is that Republicans and Democrats are both just the enforcement arm of corporations and banks. Both parties protect the interests of the very wealthy. These are the tragic circumstances we find ourselves in.

New York is a safe state for Hillary Clinton, so I’m voting for the Green Party. If I lived in one of the handful of hotly contested swing states that will determine which candidate wins 270 electoral votes, I would certainly vote for Clinton, out of very a credible fear.

I have never had to make such a dismal choice in any election before. We as a country should be deeply ashamed. When this is all over, we need to ask ourselves how we came to such a sorry place.

Maria Muentes is a native New Yorker of Dominican and Ecuadorian descent. She has been involved in the immigrant rights, educational equality, and housing justice movements.

THE INDYPENDENT

November 2016 THE INDYPENDENT
ECHOES OF TRUMP

Donald Trump’s rise to political prominence has surprised and unsettled many Americans. But the United States is not alone in seeing an upsurge in far right political figures who espouse a toxic mix of bigotry and authoritarianism.

WE HAVE BECOME A MEANER, POORENDER PLACE

By Hazel Healy

It was the stuff of nightmares (mine, anyway). The night last August of Donald Trump and Nigel Farage together on a platform, pleased as punch. “What the Brexit campaign did,” said Farage, whose nationalist UKIP party campaigned hard for Britain to exit the European Union last June, “is we reached the people who’d been let down by modern corporatism.” Trump looked on, smiling and nodding approvingly. The crowd whooped.

There are clear parallels between Trump and Farage. Both men hail from the elites but have cast themselves in a populist mold, claiming to speak for the working classes who have lost out to globalization. The craven, spotlight-hungry Farage has even stooped to defending Trump’s gloating about sexually assaulting women as “alpha male boasting.” That drew criticism from his own party, which is not known for its defense of women’s rights.

The “Brexit” referendum freaked out Wall Street commentators who thought it indicated that Trump might ride a similar wave of populism to victory. While I honestly doubt that little Britain’s decision to leave the European Union has much impact on how Americans will vote, there are some similarities in the reckless “fuck you all” attitudes of those who would vote for these men or support their causes.

The motivations of the Brexiteers were widely varied. Hyped-up fears of immigration, a harking back to a sense of England-lost (the elderly were much more likely to vote to leave), and people who had nothing to lose. What was the EU to them? They didn’t speak foreign languages and were strangers to an elite world of university exchanges, research, cultural exchange, and exploratory travel. There were also those in the “Leave” camp, who voted Leave in protest against a neoliberal Europe—a tragic miscalculation.

So as America teeters on the edge of a possible Trump election, what can progressives share from across the Atlantic?

Post-Brexit Britain was recently characterized by the Economist as a meaner, poorer place. Whether those that voted Leave were racists or not (I tend to think yes), the result emboldened racists who felt legitimized by a campaign that scapegoated immigrants. Flyers reading “No more Polish vermin” were stuffed into immigrant families’ mailboxes, and in late August, a Polish man, Arek Jozwik, was beaten to death by a mob of teenagers in a London suburb, apparently after they heard him speaking Polish. Reported homophobic attacks more than doubled in the three months after the vote. A group of men marched in London with the slogan “First we’ll get the Poles out, then the gays. But the far right has not benefited from the result. Support for Farage’s UKIP party has dropped slightly, according to an ICM poll released Oct. 10. Rather than ram home the horror of the Conservatives’ disastrous decision to hold the Brexit referendum, the left has been busy ripping itself apart with internecine struggles over Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership of the Labour party. It has been the Conservatives who have somehow risen like a phoenix, victorious, from the Brexit mess that they created.

New Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May is now deftly easing her party into the populist space crystallized by Brexit. She is attempting to draw a line between herself and the elitist Eton-educated cabal that proceeded her, recasting the Tories as a party for the common people. Party leaders have floated such pleasant ideas such as Home Secretary Amber Rudd advocating that companies should be forced to declare how many foreign workers they have. (Rudd backtracked after her idea was compared to Adolf Hitler’s.)

How has all this gone down with the people? The ICM poll put the Conservatives 17 points ahead of Labour. But at the same time, Jeremy Corbyn, re-elected as leader at his party’s conference in September, now finds himself at the head of the largest political party in Western Europe, with a membership of over 500,000.

Corbyn contends that he will bring out new voters, inspired by his honest, pro-worker approach to politics. Is he right? We’ll see if the Labour party can stay in one piece. But it may be that the Brexit buzz will wear off quickly when people discover that leaving the EU or limiting immigration will not improve their lot.

Corbyn’s anti-austerity message may be getting through. Meanwhile, “movement people,” those who might have described themselves as anarchists just a few years back, are joining Labour.

These are people as tired of out-of-touch elites as Bernie Sanders supporters in the U.S. Maybe a new generation will be invigorated to take their country back, not from Europe, but from a xenophobic tide that sits ill in a nation whose capital is more diverse than New York.

What have we learned from this — apart from not giving up our seats for old people on public transport, or is one young person wrote on Twitter? It’s time to reengage with politics. We need to game back stronger with the anti-austerity message to focus discontent on the true drivers of inequality and find better, stronger ways to challenge the scapegoating of immigrants.

Hazel Healy is a co-editor of the U.K.-based New Internationalist.
THE LESSER-EVIL SMOKESCREEN

By Farah Belagoune

I

n the spring of 2002, progressive French voters like myself were confronted with an awful choice in the final round of that year’s presidential election.

The incumbent, Jacques Chirac, was a slippery career politician who had been a prominent figure in France for 30 years. He supported conservative economic policies and would play on voter hostility toward immigrants when it suited his purpose. His opponent was Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder and leader of the far-right Front National (National Front) and a notorious racist and Holocaust minimizer.

The candidate of the Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) had unexpectedly come third in the first round, leaving those of us on the left with nowhere to go. Since having a far rightist come to power would be unacceptable, leftists were urged to cast a vote for a centrist candidate, a “useful vote,” despite our misgivings. So we rallied in support of Chirac. One popular slogan was “vote for the crook, not the fascist,” and another was “vote with a clothespin on your nose.” Does this sound familiar?

When Election Day came, the French people voted overwhelmingly against Le Pen, electing Chirac with 82% of the vote. The National Front had been overwhelmingly repudiated and once again relegated to the fringes of public life. Or so we thought.

Fourteen years later, the National Front is in a stronger position than ever. It won regional elections across the country last December. According to recent polls, the party’s immigrant-bashing leader, Marine Le Pen (Jean-Marie’s daughter), would win by a landslide if next year’s presidential election were held today.

The roots of how this came about go back to the 1980s, when the Socialists saw the birth of the National Front as an opportunity to drain the votes of the traditional right and keep it out of power. This worked for a while, but then the worm got into the fruit.

Over the past 30 years, the extreme right has managed to hijack the French political discourse on issues like immigration, government spending, social issues, high taxes, national security, and the degree of France’s sovereignty in a globalized world. Instead of building a proper response to the National Front or just ignoring it, the Socialists and the traditional conservatives decided to follow the its sheet music and rhetoric.

He is now running again, with the same strategy. His idea is now that to be considered French, one’s ancestors must be Gauls. On the contrary, Marine Le Pen’s new slogan is “a patched France,” putting a veil on FN’s racist origins. France’s political system is upside down.

Both sides failed to comprehend that in a context of brutal economic insecurity, people were desperate for a shelter. Many found it in the National Front’s moral universe, with its simplistic appeal to old and idealized values wrapped in “law and order” populist rhetoric.

To many French, far-right activists were the only ones who even pretended to be concerned about improving peoples’ lives before going on to secure a comfortable seat in office. They knew the population and its fears. They gave people a sense of belonging and didn’t deny their difficulties. Many of the discontented are seeking something new, observing that their living conditions keep getting worse while the two major parties—the Socialists and Sarkozy’s Republicans (Republicans, changed in 2013 from the Union for a Movement of the People)—alternated in power without changing anything.

Both major parties have been blinkered by their never-ending race to the next local or national election. All that has mattered to them was the short-term strategy for garnering more votes. They were unwilling to take the time to analyze the deeper reasons for the National Front’s growing success.

The more politicians and journalists comment on and take on the Front’s issues and grievances, the more legitimized those ideas become. Voting for “lesser evils” that are always ready to abandon their principles and move further to the right only makes the situation worse.

On November 8, don’t waste your energy on the lesser-evil smokescreen. Step back and see the whole picture. It is not too late to stop the Trumpization of American minds and media. Your salvation might come from your left, which appears to be on the upsurge, unlike ours in France. Continue organizing and mobilizing for the kind of world you want, and you just may get it.

Farah Belagoune is a Paris-based educator and Fullbright Scholar who is studying the U.S. Left and independent media.

SEEKING SHELTER IN A TERRIFYING FATHER FIGURE

By Tracy Llanera

P

hilippines President Rodrigo Duterte makes Donald Trump look like a spineless brat. On Sept. 30, Duterte said he would be “happy to slaughter” the nation’s estimated 3 million drug users, much like Adolph Hitler exterminated Jews. Since he took office in June, more than 3,500 alleged addicts (and a few innocent bystanders) have been killed by police, vigilante groups, or unknown assailants. That number doesn’t include the more than 1,400 people slain by the Davao Death Squad, a vigilante group linked to Duterte during the 22 years he was mayor of Davao City, the nation’s largest city outside the Manila metropolitan area.

Like Trump, Duterte has a reputation for being crude with women, bragging about his two wives and two girlfriends. After Australian missionary Jacqueline Hamill was raped and murdered during a 1989 prison riot, he joked that he “was mad she was raped,” but that he, the mayor, “should have been first.” He got away with it.

Despite this, recent polls show Duterte enjoying an unprecedented 91% “trust” rating and a “very good” net satisfaction rating in this nation of 102 million people. His militant machismo is what makes people either worship or despise him. But unlike Trump, Duterte has a long record in local politics. In 1988, when he became mayor of Davao, a city of 1.6 million on the southern island of Mindanao, it was one of the nation’s most violent places. He transformed the city into a peaceful, prosperous commercial and tourist hub by becoming as ruthless and as frightening as the criminal forces that plagued it, with hundreds of petty criminals liquidated. He has denied ties to the Davao Death Squad, but said in 2005 that the best way to deal with criminals was “summary execution.”

As president, Duterte promises the Philippines the same discipline and security. These are clear and simple successes that Filipinos, their lives long beset by injustice, poverty, and crime, are happy to welcome. He has also said the United States is hypocritical to complain about human rights violations when its army massacred more than 230,000 Filipinos in Mindanao during the 1899-1902 war that made the nation a U.S. colony.

Duterte and Trump are the politicians you get when governments are run by an oligarchic elite and the dissatisfied public seeks a messiah. Prior to Duterte, Philippine national elections were marred by vote-buying and distrust of the traditional political families. Duterte ran as an outsider, a figure unblemished by the “cacique democracy” of Manila and its debilitating corruption. For many, this makes him the best candidate for ushering in real change, even if it means swallowing his death squads and his exaggerating the nation’s drug crisis to justify them. (Filipinos use “shabu,” methamphetamine, at rates similar to Americans, and cocaine and heroin use are negligible.)

While their messianic roles indicate why they enjoy strong and often uncritical support, remaining generally immune from the consequences of their words and actions, Trump and Duterte play different versions of strongman politics. Trump

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BIRTH Pangs OF A NATION

Birth of a Nation
DIRECTED BY NATE PARKER
120 MINUTES, RATED R
THEATERS CITYWIDE

By Mark Read

I was asked about Nate Parker’s new film, Birth of a Nation. The question struck me as ironic. The film’s central themes revolve around the question of redemption. Add to this Parker’s real-life efforts to redeem himself in the public eye after recent revelations of his 1999 arrest for sexual assault and rape (he was acquitted, while his codefendant and co-writer, Jean Celestin, was found guilty but later had the conviction overturned), and the theme of redemption begins to feel omnipresent within and around the world of this film.

Redemption is defined in the dictionary as “the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.” The sin here is chattel slavery in the United States. Salvation from this evil is the central struggle for all the characters in Birth of a Nation, as told through the eyes of its protagonist, Nat Turner, the famed leader of the 1831 slave revolt that was the bloodiest in U.S. history. But the film “explains” Turner’s decision to lead the revolt as a direct response to the rape of his wife. This unmasks the rebellion from its historical reality as an uprising based on moral opposition against the institution of slavery itself. Somehow, that motivation wasn’t deemed sufficiently dramatic, so the rebellion is transformed into a revenge narrative, a vehicle to redeem black masculinity from the humiliations of slavery.

In telling this story, rather than the actually true and more politically powerful story of slaves rising up against slavery as a path towards redeeming black humanity, Parker has diminished the power of this important history. Furthermore, by characterizing the women primarily as victims whose violations serve solely to motivate male action, he has effectively sidelined Black women, silencing the historical echoes of women like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. It is for those reasons that black historian Leslie Alexander can I dismiss it so easily. Despite his power and position, Samuel cannot be truly free, because Nat is not free.

Neither, it seems, can Samuel Turner or his family be redeemed, so long as the institution of slavery persists. The kindness and good intentions of the Turners cannot save them from the violent consequences of a violent system from which they benefit. The Turners and the people that they represent — decent and well-meaning whites — cannot or will not imagine a life for themselves without slavery. For this reason, they cannot be redeemed, and that is a tragedy. This is a powerful lesson for white people today.

We are not free until everyone is free. Looking away from the fundamental and institutional ways that black people are kept down and simply trying to demonstrate good intentions will not redeem us. If we are not fighting for universal emancipation, we are ensuring the continued bondage and oppression of our brothers and sisters.

Despite Birth of a Nation’s significant flaws and problems, the film powerfully communicates these messages. While I can’t strongly recommend it, neither can I dismiss it so easily.

NAT TURNER’S EVOLUTION FROM CONTENTED SLAVE TO REVOLUTIONARY PROPHET PARALLELS HIS ENSLAVE’S DESCENT FROM APPARENT DECENCY INTO ALCOHOLISM AND CRUELTY.

The Turners are shown to be “good masters” throughout most of the film. They are kinder and more generous to their slaves than most, allowing a degree of dignity and autonomy that appears to make life as a slave bearable, at least for Nat. Nat and Samuel are shown playing together as small children. Mrs. Turner is the classic compassionate slave-owning missus, teaching Nat to read, protecting him from the hard labor of the fields, and even allowing him to read the Bible before her all-white congregation. Later, when they’ve grown up, we witness Samuel Turner risk his social position to defend Nat from attack by a white man. These two men are depicted as close companions capable of mutual respect, connected through old bonds of friendship. Parker is setting the audience up to feel some affection for Samuel: He isn’t such a bad guy after all. He didn’t create slavery, and he’s doing his best to be decent within an indecent system upon which his entire way of life relies.

Nat’s evolution from contented slave to revolutionary prophet parallels Samuel’s descent from apparent decency into alcoholism and cruelty. These evolutions transpire during a tour of slave plantations, after Samuel agrees to rent out Nat’s gifts as an itinerant preacher. They travel from one horror show to another, witnessing increasingly brutal and terrifying conditions. This tour feels reminiscent of Quentin Tarantino’s film Django Unchained, but instead of the gleeful satisfaction of seeing a former slave punish evil slave owners with the aid of his white ally, we witness a slave forced to mollify and pacify other slaves through sermons that encourage loyalty and deference to authority.

As the fundamental and irredeemable brutality of slavery is laid bare, these two men inexorably grow estranged. We see slavery driving one towards madness and the other towards destruction. Samuel is constantly drunk, growing ever more callous and cruel, enabling rape and demanding torture. Nat grows more fierce and prophetic, enlisting followers and demanding bloodshed in return. Their fates are inseparable.

REDEEMING QUALITIES

The film is not entirely without redeeming qualities, however. The depiction of the relationship between Nat Turner and his owners, the Turner family, particularly the relationship between Nat and their son Samuel, functions as a powerful metaphor through which Parker addresses a modern audience about the conditions that allow white supremacy to continue.
In White Trash, Nancy Isenberg paints a picture of poor whites that I found surprisingly sympathetic, ranging from the Jamestown colony to TV depictions of poor whites. In her telling, a strata of despised poor whites has existed in this country from the very earliest European settlements. In fact, that was one of the function of the colonies: to absorb the so-called scum of England. Isenberg compellingly argues that this permanent underclass of poor whites shows the hollowness of the American mantra of meritocracy and the lie of the American claim to being a classless society.

However, I couldn’t help feeling that there is a hole in the center of this book: isenberg is immensely attuned to how poor whites have in-teracted with non-whites. But while other white people may mock them or repress them, the identity of poor whites is built around being white, not black.

Nonetheless, White Trash is an important contribution to understanding how class works in the United States—and the rot at the heart of our polity. And it is also a good read. Despite displaying the chops of an academic historian, Isenberg is an engaging writer. Hand-in-hand with society’s trash-ing of poor whites is the demonization of blacks—a topic heavily discussed in Carol Anderson’s White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide. Black men, in the American collective unconscious, are deeply intertwined with violence and criminality. We saw this when Dylann Roof told the parishioners at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina, before opening fire: “you rape our women and are killing our coun-try.” When Jesse Jackson expressed his fear of black men walking behind him late at night. And every time Donald Trump lays out a vision of black communities as battlegrounds that seems drawn from repeated viewings of New Jack City rather than trips uptown.

This racialized presumption of violence and inherent danger is so strong, it is dif-ficult for many to see the countless black men killed by police officers as victims. Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Alton Ster-ling and so on: With each death, there was a rush to paint the fallen as thugs, or to suggest the deceased had just committed a crime or to claim he was resisting. For one reason or another, they always had it coming.

When people react to these tragedies with igno-dignation or protest, others take it as a symptom of irrational black rage. But, as Anderson, a pro-fessor at Emory Univer-sity, argued in a Washing-ton Post op-ed that was the precursor to this cur-rent book, media cover-age focused of black rage in the wake of Ferguson ignored the far more potent white rage that shapes where we live, where we go to school, and where we work.

It was white rage that ended Recon-struction and enforced racial domina-tion under Jim Crow. It was white rage that kept African-Americans from reap- ing the full benefits of the New Deal and limited them to a few red-lined neigh-borhoods. And it was white backlash against the civil rights movement that led to the on-the-ground nullification of court-ordered school desegregation — in the South and the North — as well as the rise of mass incarceration.

White rage — or opposition to black advancement — is not limited to spectac-ular acts like lynchings, of course. In An-derson’s words, “White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucra-cies.” This enforcement of racial hierar-chies works under cover of law: it mani-fests itself in underfunded urban schools, criminal courtrooms full of black men in shackles, and citizens not allowed to vote.

Much of Anderson’s survey of how white rage has shaped the United States since the Civil War will likely be already familiar to readers of The Indipendent. If you know of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ work on racist housing policy, Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative’s efforts to commemorate the victims of lynchings or Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow, you’ll recognize many of the sign-posts on the road Anderson travels. What is most novel here is her claim that white rage is not just a leitmotif of American history since the Civil War, but a central explanatory variable. She links disparate moments and issues to demonstrate how white rage has shaped — and continues to shape — every facet of our lives.

It we believe that black lives should matter, understanding the ways they cur-tently do not seem like an essential first step. Anderson’s compact book serves this purpose well. But her target audience is unclear to me. Those who agree with her central thesis may find that she offers little new; those who do not know this history may be put off her polemic tone.

What I most missed in Anderson’s ac-count was some explanation for the force and tenacity of white rage. Is it simply a matter of racial animus and prejudice? Of trying to hold on to the unearned privileges and prequisites of white skin? Something else entirely? If we are to dis-mantle racial hierarchy, we need a theory of the material and psychic benefits it provides to the white masses, including those poor whites chronicled by isenberg — and, thus, how they can be won to true racial equality.
I feel anxiety from the election. I'm having trouble sleeping. I find my focus is shot. I hate to admit that the election matters this much, but it's getting under my skin.

— Daryl, Ditmas Park

Dear Presidentially Anxious in Brooklyn,

Anxiety is the landscape of the Land of the Free. Our society is based on hand-wringing, gnashing of teeth. Multinational corporations, the military, sports, porn, Hollywood — all the big institutions of American life have discovered fear makes money. They've known that since the invention of advertising. Trump is showing the big boys they can be much more brazen about it.

Let's arrange the candidates in order of ascending murderousness. The 3rd party candidates taunt us. They are the human candidates we could have had. Clinton smiles in our face like the Wal-Mart logo, where she was on the board destroying communities and hiding an empire of sweatshops. Trump is a blathering psychopath who would shoot refugees on the beach. (Testify, Miss Universe!)

There is a reason the Saturday Night Live caricatures of the candidates are so lame. They will never catch up the weirdness of the actual candidates. But if we think that the E=MC^2 of everything is these would-be presidents, then we're sucked farther into their bizarre fear-generating world.

Clinton and Trump are essentially New Yorkers. So, let's change this town.

Go Local. There is nothing as radical as a healthy neighborhood. If a landlord slaps an eviction notice on your neighbor's door, treat that as more important than a Putin flyby in the Crimea. That landlord is your Putin. Better yet, break into buildings that are empty for investment purposes — break in and give New Yorkers homes.

If they are spraying herbicides in your neighborhood park, go warn your neighbors.

A Local Power Movement starts from your insides out, the opposite of the outside-in hypnosis of iPhones, televisions and this election. It calls for embarrassment, long hours, chutzpah, and sometimes jail.

Anxiety is cured by activism.

— Angela Y. Davis, author of Abolition Democracy and Freedom is a Constant Struggle

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ASK REVEREND BILLY

Dear Pastor Bill,

I was an activist like you for many years but I’ve gotten very involved in supporting my family and building a home for us since I reached my 50’s. I spend time on pipes and roof leaks, I have a long-term mortgage, etc. Recently, a homeless shelter moved onto my quiet street. I hear a lot of shouting and music from them. There are cigarette butts everywhere now. My old days of activism seem a long way away. I don’t seem to have patience with these people. I feel invaded. I can’t move. I’m stuck here.

— Frank in the Bronx

Dear Frank,

You can use the activism of your youth to good effect. Activism is going out into public space, into the public mind, and introducing new ideas there. See if you can muster that old moxie from your activist days. Go have a smoke with the shelter folks. Go into this surprise subculture that showed up on your street and get to know some of the people by their first name. Think of it as fixing the pipes beyond the property line.

I’m not a Christian, but I like the golden rule, “Do unto your neighbors as you would have them do unto you.” Imagine you are a homeless person, have been for years, and you finally find a shelter on a safe street. It isn’t a warehouse or an armory. It’s human-size, family-size. You move in there and you feel happy and secure. You can just be yourself, have a smoke outside and laugh, because some of your housemates are good people. And you remember, there’s this other guy who joins you sometimes. He lives a couple doors down, working stiff with kids. He hangs out, too. Nice guy, Name is Frank. You say to your buddy, “We gotta be careful not to be too loud, cause it keeps Frank’s fam awake and his kids gotta go to school in the morning.”

See what I’m sayin’?

— Reverend Billy Talen

Reverend Billy is an activist and political boomer, a post-religious preacher of the streets and bank lobbies. He’s been in New York forever with the activist performance group the Church of Stop Shopping. Got a question for Reverend Billy? Just email RevBilly@Indypendent.org and unburden your soul.
HALLOWEEN TALES YOUR MAMA NEVER TOLD YOU

By Indypendent Staff

Mythic Origins
Like the night itself, the origins of Halloween are shrouded in mystery. Many folklorists, however, trace its roots to the Celtic festival Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest season. Samhain was a time when the veil between this world and the otherworld was lifted. The souls of the dead could arise from beyond the grave. To ward off misfortune, the Gaels would set a place at their tables for spirits to come and have a bit to eat and drink. They lit bonfires and carved sinister faces into turnips — precursors to modern-day jack-o-lanterns — to ward off evil spirits.

Evil Manners
With the spread of Christianity, Samhain was folded into the Catholic tradition of Allhallows. Nov. 2 became All Souls Day; Nov. 1, All Hallows Day or All Saints Day; and Oct. 31, All Hallows Eve. The Celtic tribes of Ireland were some of the last pagan holdouts. In 1154, Pope Adrian IV ordered fellow Englishman King Henry II to “check the torrent of wickedness” and reform “evil manners” on the isle.

Cross-Dressing
On Samhain, the Celts wore white and shrouded their faces in an effort to blend in with the spirits roving the earth. Their descendants continued to play dress-up. “There is a long tradition of costuming of sorts that goes back to Hallow Mass when people prayed for the dead,” according to historian Nicholas Rogers of York University. “But they also prayed for fertile marriages, and the boy choristers in the churches dressed up as virgins. So there was a certain degree of cross dressing — and the idea of candy as tribute. Trick-or-treat became what we know of it today, instead of a social power inversion ritual.”

Down in the Cellar
The medieval practice of mumming or guising, when the poor, often children, dressed-up in straw-woven costumes and went door-to-door performing songs and skits in exchange for food, is also thought to be related to Samhain. During Allhallowtide the poor knocked on doors dressed as demons, saints and angels and offered prayers to the dead in exchange for soul cakes, sweet pastries topped with a cross. Beer and apples were also acceptable forms of alms, as one old English folksong has it:

**Down into the cellar, And see what you can find, If the barrels are not empty, We hope you will prove kind. We hope you will prove kind, With your apples and strong beer, And we'll come no more a-souling Till this time next year.**

Early Irish immigrants are thought to have brought guising to North America, customs that eventually morphed into trick-or-treating as we know it today.

**Fork up the Candy, or Else...**

Trick-or-treat was no empty threat in the early 20th Century. Many an outhouse was overturned, a cow tipped and a mansion egged. Drawing on the work of British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, the novelist and prankmaster Chuck Palahniuk has described Halloween as a “cultural inversion liminal event”:

(D)ispossessed people, people with no power — usually children, but not always — would go door-to-door and demand tribute. If you didn’t pay them tribute, your property would be destroyed. . . There was a big movement in the 1920s. So much damage was being done at Halloween that candy manufacturers got together with newspapers and they started to promote the idea of candy as tribute. Trick-or-treat became what we know of it today, instead of a social power inversion ritual.

FATHER FIGURE

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projects the image of the brash, shining American capitalist, his supporters aspiring to be as rich and powerful as him.

It is more fitting to think of Duterte as the ominous father of the Filipino people, a savior of the region of Northern Ilocos (Apo is a title of respect used to address a superior or an elder, or God). Ex-President Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino III is often evaluated in terms of how much he stands up to the legacy of his father, Benigno “Nino” Aquino Jr., a national hero who was imprisoned and exiled by Marcos and assassinated upon his return in 1983.

It’s election time, and the American people still have the chance to “fire” Trump. If the Filipinos want to get rid of Rodrigo Duterte, it won’t be easy to disown their imagined kin.

Tracy Llanera is a Filipino academic based in Sydney. She teaches philosophy at Macquarie University and for Open Universities Australia.
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