READER’S VOICE

DISGRACED & WRONG
Thank you for publishing this article on the Israeli arms industry (“The Spoils of War,” June Indypendent). I spent a decade as an officer in the Marine Corps, from 1998 to 2008, and then spent an additional year working for the Department of Defense on counter-suicide bomber technology.

This past year I was able to participate in a Veterans For Peace delegation to Palestine where we witnessed firsthand the apartheid state that exists. As we observed the Israeli occupation forces and talked to both Israelis and Palestinians — including many former Israeli military members — the use of the Palestinian population as laboratory subjects for Israeli security forces, codified by Israeli law and security policy, was markedly and viciously demonstrated against the Palestinian people. It is disgraceful and wrong for our federal and state governments, universities and police organizations to be so intertwined in such crimes.

— Matthew Hoh

ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS
Israel is on the front line in a new war being fought today (“The Spoils of War,” June Indypendent). If the rest of the world can learn from Israel’s success, who except those who support terror could object?

— ANON

THE SCUM ALSO RISES
Clueless, freeloadi ng scum (“A New Hotbed of The Resistance: Trump Tower’s Fifth Floor,” indypendent.org).

DEMOCRATS AND LIBERAL TRASH.

— JOE OWENS

FULL COURT PROTEST
Thanks for covering (“75 Years for Protesting in Black?” online and on page 12). I was shocked to learn that at a recent court hearing one of these folks only had one person on court support duty! I know getting to D.C. can be tough, but I’d love to work with people from the J20 protest to make sure that doesn’t happen moving forward.

— KIM FRACZEK

FIGHT THE MACHINE
Hi Indy! Kudos from the Sonoran desert!

Hi Indy! Kudos from the Sonoran desert! This fight is about We the People of the Democratic Party versus the party’s freeloadi ng, corporate membership (“Will the Democratic Party Open its Doors to Young and Work- ing People?” indypendent.org). It’s about a movement, us at the street level, fighting against a malevolent machine, a.k.a. the corporation; an alive, loving humanity, of whom we are a part, against a tiny cabal of very mean, cruel individuals using all means necessary to oppress the majority.

— BOB ZAVODA

STOP SLAMMING HILLARY
Steven Wishnia’s review of Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton’s Doomed Campaign, (“How Clintonworld Imploded,” June Indypendent) extends the authors’ thesis that her defeat was ensured by the failure to present a campaign attractive to white working-class voters in larger numbers.

While I agree the Democratic Party can and should forward a platform that will help create decent jobs for working class and middle-class Americans, the causes for Clinton’s defeat were more immediate. These included an electoral system that denied victory to the candidate who garnered nearly three-million more votes than her opponent. Close behind this singular abrogation of the principle of majority rule were systematic legislative and administrative maneuvers to depress the turnout of voters favorable to Clinton.

Most egregious, Clinton was subjected to an unprecedented campaign, abetted by the Russian government, of misinformation, innuendos and outright lies, which was tethered to vast social media networks. Suspicion aroused by this campaign against segments of the voting population moved toward outright belief when, 11 days before the election, FBI Director James Comey announced the opening of an investigation into Clinton’s work-related emails sent through her personal server.

The absence of indignation in Shattered about this extraordinarily undemocratic set of circumstances leading to the defeat of the Democratic Party’s first woman nominee should have been addressed in Wishnia’s review. Instead of slamming Hillary Clinton, the left needs to turn its attention to confronting and beating back a Republican Party that has become captive to extreme forces of reaction.

— GERALD MEYER

YOU COULD DIE WAITING
Medicare for all is an excellent plan but it is too ambitious and there are still a lot of things to consider if they really want to make this work (“The Time has Come for Medicare for All,” June Indypendent). But for now, people will have to be responsible about their healthcare expenses and prepare for it rather than wait for Medicare for all to come to fruition.

— LEANDRO MUeLLER

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THE INDYPENDENT
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JULY/AUGUST

THE JULY 11–SAT AUG 13
4PM • FREE
SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM
The course of true love never does run smooth. Leer deBesonnet, Founder of The Public Theater’s groundbreaking Public Works program, brings her electric theatrical vision to this classic romance about the supernatural nature of love. Visit publictheater.org for ticketing information. Delacorte Theater Central Park

SAT JULY 15
10AM–4PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: CITY OF WATER DAY
Now in its 10th year, this free, family-oriented celebration of the New York-New Jersey waterfront is the region’s biggest harbor festival. Highlights include free boat tours on all kinds of vessels, from tall ships to tugboats. Plus free rowing, kayaking and paddle-boarding. More info at waterfrontalliance.org. Governor’s Island

SUN JULY 16
10AM • $5–$10 sliding scale, +21
PARTY: DANCE, DANCE REVOLUTION; ASSATA TAUGHT ME
Asata Shakur, the Black Panther exiled to Cuba, turns 70 on July 16. Join Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Black Lives Matter NYC and Black Youth Project as they celebrate this freedom fighter and ikew for the revolution. DJ Bembona and A D A I R are spinning! It’s Lit. Proceeds go to Asata Shakur’s family. Starr Bar 214 Starr St.

THE JULY 18
6PM–9PM • FREE
CONCERT: LOWDOWN HUDSON MUSIC FEST, FEATURING COMMON • THE WARRIORS
The Lowdown returns to downtown, bringing lively, world-class musical talent to the Waterfront Plaza at Brookfield Place. This year’s festival will be headlined by Sarah Palin’s favorite rapper, Common. 230 Vesey Street

FRI JULY 21
8PM • $8
CONCERT: DSA BENEFIT
NYC Democratic Socialists of America, Crown Heights Tenant Union and New York Communities for Change are holding a benefit show featuring Emily Reo, Bears, Will Table and Future Punk DJs. The Silent Barn 603 Bushwick Ave

SUN JULY 23
7PM–10PM • FREE
SCREENING: THE BUS RIDERS UNION
Join fellow public transit riders for a screening of this award-winning documentary about how activists built the Bus Riders Union in Los Angeles and won a fare reduction, more buses to decrease overcrowding and better service to working-class neighborhoods. The screening will be followed by a discussion of how we can organize to win a transit system that works for all New Yorkers. Verso Books 20 Jay St., Suite 1010

THE JULY 27
7PM–8:30PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: VANISHING NEW YORK
Come celebrate the publication of Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul. An unflinching chronicle of gentrification in the 21st Century and a love letter to lost New York by Jeremiah Moss, the creator of the popular, incendiary blog Vanishing New York. Admission is on a first come, first serve basis. Housing Works Bookstore Cafe 126 Crosby St.

SAT JULY 29
10AM–4PM • FREE
BOOKFAIR: SMALL PRESS FLEA
This summer market sponsored by the National Book Foundation and hosted by BOMB Magazine showcases independent publishers and small presses. Brooklyn Public Library 10 Grand Army Plz.

SAT JULY 29–SUN JULY 30
11AM–6PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: 7TH ANNUAL NEW YORK CITY POETRY FEST
Workshops, bookstalls and three stages of readings and performances. For more info visit newyorkcitypoetryfestival.com. Governor’s Island

SUN JULY 30
2PM–6PM • $5–$10
MUSIC: BACKYARD HI-FI SESSIONS
Taking inspiration from the yard parties of Kingston, Jamaica and the block party culture of New York City, Backyard Hi-Fi Sessions explore the connections between hip-hop, reggae and contemporary bass music through the lens of Dub-Stuy’s custom-build, 15,000 watt, Jamaican-style sound system. Alongside the music, Backyard Hi-Fi features food, drinks and games spread across both the indoor and outdoor areas of Trans-Pecos. Entry $5 if you RSVP via events@dub-stuy.com in advance. Trans-Pecos 9-15 Wyckoff Ave.

THE AUG 1
7PM–9:30PM • FREE
BOOK TALK: APPRENTICED TO VENUS
In 1962, 18-year-old Tristine Rainer was sent on an errand to Analis Nin’s West Village apartment. The chance meeting changed the course of her life and began her years as Analis’s apprentice/accomplice. Rainer’s Apprenticed to Venus: My Secret Life with Analis Nin stories her deep friendship with the pivotal historical figure. Bluestockings 172 Allen Street

WED AUG 2
1PM–3PM • FREE
HOME AND GARDEN: RADICAL GARDENING NYC OPEN HOUSES
Visit Radical Gardeners’ seed library at The Base community center. Swap garden stories, plants and materials. Tend to indoor and street gardens over tea and snacks. Radical Gardeners NYC is an anti-capitalist garden network working collectively with existing or new garden spaces. It offers free seeds, soil and building materials. In exchange, a portion of what is grown is harvested for food sharing programs at The Base. The Base 1302 Myrtle Ave.

WED AUG 2
8PM–11PM • FREE
SCREENING: THE WARRIORS
Indulge at Brooklyn Bazaar’s bar and restaurant while you enjoy a “silent” screening of the Coen Brothers’ cult comedy; an absurd tale of mistaken identity, bowling, White Russians, anger management issues, kidnaping, pornography, nihilists and, of course, His Duddeness — all while gathered together under the stars (and the big screen). Damrosch Park 165 W 65th St.

SAT AUG 5
4PM–4AM • Give give what you can
PARTY: BEER, PIZZA, SOLIDARITY
Over 200 people were arrested during anti-capitalist, anti-fascist protests in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 20, Inauguration day (see page 12). Many of those arrested are now facing decades in prison. In order to raise funds for the J20 defendants, the New York City General Defense Committee is hosting a pizza party at Rebecca’s in Bushwick. Come for the solidarity, stay for the drinks, pizza and jamz. There’ll be free pizza from Norbert’s between 4 PM and 5 PM, so show up early! Rebecca’s 610 Bushwick Ave.

SAT AUG 12
2PM–7PM • $25 advanced, $34 day of
EXHIBIT: BASQUIAT & BRUNCH
An exhibition-style brunch, featuring contemporary art lightly inspired by the amazing and infamous, Jean-Michel Basquiat. Delicious cuisine and unlimited mimosas served until 5 PM. 1103 Fulton St.

BLACK PANTER PARTY: Celebrate the birthday of exiled Black Power revolutionary Assata Shakur at Starr Bar on July 16. Proceeds support her family.

COME OUT AND PLAAAAAY: You think your commune is rotten? Try making it back to your home turf with every gang in the city out for you. Catch The Warriors at Brooklyn Bazaar on Aug. 2.
I always thought it would be nerve-gas or a nuclear bomb that brought down the city of New York. But perhaps the worst threat is internal. The thread that holds this city together will simply unravel, rip and give way under the strain of neglect.

There were glaring signs of the coming collapse in June. Reports of passengers jumping out of stranded subway trains and making it to stations on foot. The words “I will survive” scrawled in the fog of human body heat coagulating on the windows of a packed, air-tight, fast-moving L train dead on the tracks. A train smoking off the rails with 800 riders on board.

We hardened New Yorkers can handle swastika-scarving graffiti artists, dastardly hawking live crickets, breaking dancers swinging their sneakers within inches of our skulls, doomsday preachers hollering at the top of their lungs. We can coexist remarkably well with all manner of odorous discharge and vermin that crawl and ooze about our feet under the jaundice-lamps beneath the earth. We’ve learned to bear the cross that is our daily commute with a sigh, to gaze vacantly into infinity until it’s over. Delays, messes, and then — not a problem. But more and more, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is failing to accomplish its basic mission: To take New Yorkers from point A to point B safely and faster than a horse-drawn omnibus.

Why do our commutes suck? Our 113-year-old subway system has been underfunded for decades. It moves 5.6 million passengers per day using technology that dates back to before World War II. Rather than modernizing, the MTA is accumulating debt and spending billions of dollars on superficial alterations, quick fixes and projects that provide photo opportunities for you to partake in. Which would you choose?

In New York, the choice is always the same and the governor and the MTA aren’t the only culprits. The merits of these various mega-projects vary, but some things they have in common is they cost a fortune and almost always come in years late and wildly over budget. Here’s a look at a few of them.

2ND AVENUE SUBWAY

The long-dormant Second Avenue subway project was revived in 2007 and became operational at the beginning of 2017. For $4.45 billion, the Q train was extended by two miles from 63rd to 86th Street and created a windfall for Upper East Side real estate interests. A lack of accountability and long-term planning has plagued the MTA since its founding. This has meant that spending all too often follows the whims of constituencies that have the most clout beyond the ballot — real estate developers, big construction firms, union organizations and the finance companies that underwrite the MTA’s bonds and profit handsomely.

In May, the authority released a six-point plan to improve service. Don’t get your hopes up.

“WHO’S IN CHARGE?”

The plan allocates $20 million on top of the current capital budget for improvements like new subway cars, increased inspections, new track and more construction to treat sick passengers. But signifying its real priorities, the MTA issued $1.6 billion in bonds that same month, adding $5 billion more to its already bloated $38 billion debt load.

Instead of improving service, the money raised will go towards blockbuster expenditures like extending the Second Avenue subway and polishing our transit turf by beautifying stations — all priorities of Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Mayor Bill de Blasio gets a lot of flack from New Yorkers over the subway’s deteriorated state, most riders do not understand that it is actually the governor’s office that has the most sway over the MTA. Their contention is understandable.

“Who’s in charge?” Cuomo asked on June 22.

“Who knows! Maybe the county executive, maybe the president, maybe the governor, maybe the mayor.”

Cuomo was hipping his last-minute proposal to have the state legislature grant him a controlling stake on the MTA’s board. But the governor already appoints six of the board’s 14 members, including its chair. Together with members from the counties surrounding the city — mostly plucked from local chambers of commerce and corporate law firms — Cuomo has a working majority on the authority. He has the strongest grip on the authority’s purse strings as well. It was his brilliant idea to cut $65 million from the MTA’s budget this year, for instance.

The fact that Cuomo didn’t submit the bill to give him control of the MTA until the end of the legislative session indicates that his proposal wasn’t serious. He also called on Mayor de Blasio and the city to match state contributions to the authority.

Currently, the state chips in about $32 billion and the city $8 billion towards the MTA’s five-year capital plan. If he had actually received what he supposedly wished for, that too would have been a win for Cuomo.

Upstate lawmakers are loath to meet the MTA’s budgetary needs. Cuomo’s bill would have promise of a theater district stop was shelved and the extension became a one-station affair, which was finally completed in 2015.

WORLD TRADE CENTER TRANSPORTATION HUB

In the aftermath of 9/11, New York’s leaders wanted the reconstruction of the World Trade Center’s transit hub to become a civic icon. Famous Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava’s exotic design for the station was supposed to embody the wings of a bird taking flight. As the cost of fulfilling this vision spiraled upward, the bird transformed into a white elephant. When the new transit hub was completed in 2016, the final cost was nearly $4 billion, making it the world’s most expensive train station. The site was built and developed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which is jointly controlled by the governors of the two states.

BROOKLYN-QUEENS CONNECTOR (BOX)

Not to be outdone by his rival in Albany, Mayor Bill de Blasio jumped into the mega-project sweepstakes last year with a proposal for a $2.5 billion streetcar line that would travel from Astoria, Queens, to Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Critics have dubbed it the “gentrification express,” whose real purpose is to inflate waterfront real estate values. The project would allegedly pay for itself with a $2.75 fare, but a leaked memo from de Blasio’s BOX advisors suggested the actual price tag could be much higher. And, because of its proximity to the East River, much of the line would be vulnerable to flooding in the event of another storm like Hurricane Sandy.

— JOHN TARLETON
meant the city contributing more than twice as much to the MTA as it does now while possessing even less control over it.

It’s anyone’s guess what Cuomo hates more: funding the MTA or taking responsibility for it.

“The MTA is a state-run agency and the ultimate executive of that is Gov. Cuomo,” says Masha Burina of the Riders Alliance, a 1,000-member straphanger advocacy group. “The state has been steadily moving funds from the transit authority. It’s indicative of a reluctance to invest in this public good.”

THE COLLAPSE

A citizen lobbying effort the Riders Alliance initiated was instrumental in halting the governor’s yearly habit of removing funds from the MTA’s operating budget and putting the money towards its general debt-service fund. Cuomo removed $270 million from the MTA’s operating budget in his first term, between the 2011 and 2015 fiscal years. The money went to servicing debt that the MTA was forced to accumulate because of a lack of state funding.

Meanwhile, the MTA has squandered the funds that haven’t been raised, spending lavishly on multimillion-dollar ventures dear to the governor’s heart like the new subway for the Upper East Side, accumulating more debt in the process.

“Real estate is the only reason that the Second Avenue extension was built,” says Tom Angotti, professor emeritus of urban planning at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center. “It was supported by a political base which is largely real-estate interests on the Upper East Side, the most expensive real estate in New York City and perhaps in the world. Adding that stub of a subway line to that huge area would essentially for billionaires and millionaires and very well-paid people.”

Cuomo gets a pass on that boondoggle. It was the brainchild of our billionaire former mayor, Michael Bloomberg. Under his administration, the city’s Economic Development Corporation issued the bonds that paid for the $2.37 billion extension, just one station at 34th Street and 11th Avenue.

“We have taken on projects that have been expensive,” MTA board member James Vitiello lamented at the board’s monthly meeting in June. “I think we’re coming around to seeing we may have done some of that at the expense of day-to-day maintenance. We’re adding new rooms to a house that had a roof falling in and water in the basement.”

Some observers, however, contend there is a false equivalency in this analogy.

“Why should we have to choose between the continued improvement of what we already have and additions to a system that hasn’t seen a lot of additions really since the 1940s?” asks subway historian Clifton Hood, defending the capital expenditures. “I think that’s absolutely false thinking that buys into this ideology that we have to choose one or the other. There’s a lot of waterfront development happening now.” But “waterfront redevelopment” is often code for upscaling undervalued real estate and longtime dock-side residents are fighting plans for luxury high-rises from the Bronx to Sunset Park. Opponents of the recent subway expansions aren’t against extending the system. They just want it to extend to meet real needs.

“We need a bigger vision for how the transportation system is going to be expanded throughout the city, but also expanded in terms of its capacity,” says Masha Burina. “That means buying new train cars, laying down new tracks. We need to actually invest in purchasing these capital goods.”

Luxury City

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TROUBLE ALL THE WAY DOWN THE LINE: Waiting for the 4/5 Train at Union Square. Subway delays have more than doubled over the past half-decade while the price of the ride continues to rise.

IT’S ANYONE’S GUESS WHAT THE GOVERNOR HATES MORE: FUNDING THE MTA OR TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT.

update the signals is on a pace to be completed in 50 years. Only the signals on the L line have been entirely upgraded since it began, and the L will be shutting down between Brooklyn and Manhattan in April 2019 for 15 months of repairs.

“There’s room for us to begin enacting a multitude of solutions to the city’s transit woes,” says Burina. “That would include improving the system as it is so that trains are more reliable, so that the number of delays decreases and crowding on platforms and inside the subway cars is addressed. But, at the same time, we should be thinking about where we are headed as a city when it comes to our growth and development, and really consider what does it mean to have an inclusive transit system that can address [the needs of] and be accessible to New Yorkers everywhere.”

LUXURY CITY

That’s a nice thought, but putting it into reality would first require Cuomo to gird his loins and take responsibility for the MTA. In late June, the governor, who is up for re-election next year, declared a “state of emergency” and directed the authority to draft a plan to

Continued on next page
address the mounting delays within 30 days. (In the spring, he'd offered $1 million in genius grants to anyone who could provide a plausible quick fix.) Joseph Lhota, Cuomo's newly appointed MTA chair, will be the man holding the mop. Lhota won accolades during his previous tenure as chair for steering the authority through Superstorm Sandy, but he left the post after less than a year to run for mayor in 2013 as a Republican.

"Joe Lhota is a respected professional who has valuable experience as MTA chair," Riders Alliance executive director John Raskin said in a statement. "The question remains, what is the governor's plan to fix the subway, and will he give Chairman Lhota the funding he needs to get the job done?"

Lhota will not work full-time as the chair. He wants to keep his day job as an executive at NYU Langone Medical Center, a $1 million-plus per year position.

City officials, particularly Mayor de Blasio, bear some responsibility for the subway clusterfuck too. The city, for instance, could free up more traffic lanes for express buses, which would ease the burden on the subway system. Instead, de Blasio, like Bloomberg, has his eyes on costly waterfront developments. His administration has approved tax breaks exceeding half a billion dollars for high-rise developers surrounding the Hudson Yards site — but the mayor's personal pet transportation project is the BQX, a $2.5 billion trolley system that would run along the waterfront and connect Astoria to Sunset Park. The project would allegedly pay for itself with a $2.75 fare, but a leaked memo from de Blasio's BQX advisors suggested the actual price tag could be much higher. Construction costs alone, the memo projected, will rise by $100 million a year due to inflation.

The trolley won't "serve the transportation needs of the vast majority of people living in Brooklyn and Queens," says Angotti, co-author of *Zoned Out! Race, Displacement and City Planning in New York City.* "Again, it's planning transportation around real-estate speculation."

Angotti also takes issue with the city's habit of allowing luxury high-rises to be built on top of major transit hubs. Nearly one in three of the city's most expensive apartments sit empty for at least 10 months out of the year. Why is the city squandering its housing stock by providing easy public transit access for rich ghosts who prefer to be elsewhere?

"We have to stop believing in the myth that there is this invisible population of people with a lot of money who are coming to New York City and the city is obligated to provide them housing, transportation and services," says Angotti. "That was the Bloomberg Luxury City myth. The biggest vacancy rates in New York City are in luxury housing. They're not being built to meet people's transportation needs. They're being built as vertical safe-deposit boxes."

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**UNDERGROUND HISTORY**

The subway transformed New York City and has become an indispensible part of daily life over the past century. However, for much of that time the public has had little say in how the system is run and on whose behalf.

**1900-1904** Fifty-four mostly immigrant workers are killed during the construction of the city's first underground subway line which runs from City Hall to West 145th Street via Grand Central Station and Times Square.

**OCTOBER 1904** With a trainload of dignitaries on board, NYC Mayor George McClellan drives the subway at top speeds of 40 mph on its maiden voyage from City Hall to W. 145th St. Fast, clean and modern, the new subway is wildly popular with a public accustomed to atten slow and cumber some travel above ground.

The subway is operated by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT), a private and monopolistic entity founded by the financier August Belmont.

**1913** A second massive wave of subway construction is initiated by the city. The IRT will come to operate what are now the 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 trains while another private company, the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation (BMT), will oversee what is today the J-L-M-N-Q-R-W-Z trains.

**1925** With public anger growing at the greed of the IRT and BMT monopolies, construction begins on a third subway system, the city-owned and operated IND, or Independent Subway System, which will become what are today the A-B-C-D-E-F-G trains.

**1932** The first branch of the Eighth Avenue subway opens and is burst of subway construction, the IND continues through the decade. The activity is spurred on by generous federal funding provided through the New Deal.

**1948** The nickel fare — instituted in 1904 — is rescinded and the cost of a subway ride doubles to 10 cents, sparking public outrage.

**1953** With the subways financing faltering as automobile usage increases, the state government places the system under the control of the New York City Transit Authority, which is designed to be immune from public pressure.

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**RECLAIMING OUR SUBWAY**

For a brief period, beginning in 1940, the subways were actually operated by the city.

"I've gone through those records, and you can see City Councilmen got letters from constituents complaining that the buses now stopped every four blocks instead of every two blocks," said Clifton Hood. "That's a legitimate thing to complain about, because if you're 80 years old or if you're a mother with two kids in a stroller, walking four blocks instead of two blocks is a real handicap. Their feet were really put to the fire, and that doesn't exist anymore."

From its earliest inception as the New York City Transit Authority in 1933 — it was put under the MTA umbrella in the 1960s — the authority structure was established "to insulate politicians from accountability for what is an extremely expensive system," says Hood. "What you could say is the problem with the subways in New York City is that they are extremely expensive, there is a lot of public demand for good service and cheap service, and yet there is not the wherewithal to provide the funds from anybody for that service."

Public transit — like health care, public housing, higher education, public broadcasting, and the Post Office — was once thought of as a costly but necessary service for the general good. Now it is looked upon as a burden to taxpayers, expected to be sustainable on its own, though it lacks the capability to do so. Nobody in Washington, Albany or City Hall wants to fund the MTA or be accountable for its mounting shortcomings. In the absence of any significant funding, the city buys out the IRT and BMT monopolies, consolidates and unifies the system. The city buys out the IRT and BMT and unifies the system. The IND continues through the decade. The activity is spurred on by generous federal funding provided through the New Deal.

**1990** IRT control of the MTA is rescinded and the cost of a subway ride doubles to 10 cents, sparking public outrage.

**1993** With the subways financing faltering as automobile usage increases, the state government places the system under the control of the New York City Transit Authority, which is designed to be immune from public pressure.

**1948** The nickel fare — instituted in 1904 — is rescinded and the cost of a subway ride doubles to 10 cents, sparking public outrage.

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**STUFFED** New Yorkers are getting close to each other on their commutes these days. Real close.
voter pressure, our political system operates in default mode, retooling a public benefit to satisfy the whims of a wealthy minority.

Once upon a time, the interests of real-estate tycoons and other corporate elites went nearly hand in hand with those of the workaday straphanger. In order to support New York’s extraordinary commercial growth — fueled in the 19th century by the export of slave-picked cotton and maintained into the 20th Century by a continuous supply of hungry immigrants — the city’s housing stock had to expand. Land speculators were only happy to oblige, and employers needed a way to transport their growing workforce to downtown docks and factories.

“Where are the business foundations and major corporations based in New York City?” asks Hood. “Where are the major New York City corporate-law firms, which, after all, have a lot of money and a lot of clout, with respect to what’s going on with the subway?”

Noisy complaints from business leaders helped rescue the MTA in the 1980s when, as novelist Paul Theroux described it, the subway had “the filthiest trains, the most bizarre graffiti, the noisiest wheels, the craziest passengers, the most macabre crimes,” and, one might add, the least dependable service in its existence. Hood blames Reaganism for the idea.

Continued on next page
that “we should starve the public sector.”

Another lingering question: Where is the Transport Workers Union? Their working conditions are our riding conditions.

In an email to The Independent, TWU Local 100 spokesperson Jim Gannon blamed the subway for being “unfairly” on a “confluence of factors” including the system’s advanced age and the need to conduct repairs overnight and clear out before the morning rush. The “MTA’s capital plan is good and totally necessary, but the result won’t be felt for some years to come,” he wrote. “We’ve been pressing for more money to be sunk into the operating budget which could then be used for maintenance of the current system. There’s no easy answer.”

On June 27, when secured pieces of rail, loosened by tunnel vibrations, fell on tracks and caused the derailment of a packed A train, Local 100 and the supervisors union blamed the MTA — but pointedly, not Gov. Cuomo. While transit workers guided rattled passengers to safety through a smoky dark beneath Harlem, Cuomo was in Albany horse-trading for the new $4 billion Tappan Zee Bridge to be named after his father, Mario. Meanwhile, a proposal by state Senator Michael Gianaris (D-Queens) to tax millionaires to fund the subway was left on the table. The money, to be raised from wealthy residents in the MTA’s service area and by upping the state’s hotel tax by $5, would have been devoted exclusively to the MTA’s maintenance and modernization needs.

Interestingly enough, in an era where Cuomo has fought for capping state workers’ salaries, Local 100 members received pay bumps in 2014 and again two years later. Gannon insists the union “invested a lot of resources into [its] contract campaigns” and credits Local 100’s “strongly united membership standing behind the leadership” for the raises. “Cuomo had nothing to do with the recent contract,” he said. “I’m sure the MTA had to clear the final document through him, but negotiations were strictly between us and the MTA.”

With businesses passing the buck and the transit workers’ union sitting in Cuomo’s lap, it looks as if the task of creating political pressure to address the crisis at the MTA will ultimately fall to the millions of riders suffering on the trains every day.

The way to win “meaningful improvements to the subway is to continue to beat the drum of accountability,” says the Riders Alliance’s Masha Burina. “And again, that means making sure that New Yorkers, every time that they go underground, they know that they are stepping not into just New York City territory, but they are stepping into Gov. Cuomo’s territory. He is the one who is ultimately accountable for fixing the subways. The only way we can win that is if there’s enough pressure on the governor to ensure that he knows that he has to satisfy the growing frustration among the ridership.”

FRUSTRATED BY YOUR COMMUTE? LET GOV. CUOMO KNOW HOW HE'S DOING BY CALLING HIS NEW YORK CITY OFFICE AT (212) 401-4540, OR HIS ALBANY OFFICE AT (518) 474-8390.

Continued from previous page

PITS OF DESPAIR: While many New Yorkers wait for trains that won’t arrive, billions have been spent on a few lavish stations.

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HOW TO GET THE SUBWAYS WE DESERVE

1 TAKING CARE OF THE BASICS
Showboating politicians who come around for splashy photo ops but won’t take responsibility for the basic upkeep of our subways are useless. The system is 113 years old. It needs constant maintenance and repairs. The signal system is antiquated, which is a major factor in train delays. The MTA’s current plan is to modernize all the signals in 50 (1) years. That’s unacceptable.

2 TAX THE RICH!
State Senator Michael Gianaris (D-Queens) has proposed an income tax surcharge on millionaires living within the 12 counties served by the MTA that would raise $2 billion per year. You can fix a lot of signals with that money and give straphangers a break on future fare hikes as well. And it is only fair, given that pricey projects such as the 2nd Avenue subway and the 7 train extension have spurred real estate values in what are already some of the poshest neighborhoods in the city.

3 DEMOCRATIZING THE MTA
Both New York State and City are appointocracies. How much more you will have to pay to live in a rent-stabilized apartment, increases in tuition at CUNY and SUNY colleges and hikes in water rates, to give just a few examples, are determined by unelected, nominally independent boards that are appointed by the governor and/or the mayor. This insulates elected leaders from the blame for unpopular decisions their hand-picked appointees make. The MTA runs on the same principle and the results have not been pretty.

So why not have the MTA Board be directly elected by the people of the New York City area? Surely an elected board would be more responsive to the riding public than the current one. Would an elected board be prone to short-term thinking and an unwillingness to make tough decisions that ensure the long-term health of the system? Maybe. But that’s what we’ve had for decades. Let’s try something different.

In the meantime, the best vehicle for empowering commuters is the six-year-old Riders Alliance (ridersny.org). It recruits members at subway stations, bus stops and community meetings and turns them into transit activists who work to hold public officials accountable.

4 COMMUNITY AND WORKERS UNITE
Since its founding in the 1920s, Transport Workers Union Local 100 has been one of the city’s most militant, left-leaning unions. In 2011, the 41,000-member local was the first union in New York City to throw its support behind Occupy Wall Street and the movement of the 99 percent. In 2014, Gov. Cuomo helped deliver a favorable contract settlement to TWU at a time when he was forcing other public sector unions to accept years of wage freezes. The union endorsed Cuomo’s re-election bid and has repaid the governor ever since with its fealty. No one can blame TWU’s leaders for seeking to deliver for members whose hard work is essential to the functioning of the city. But the union’s relationship with the governor does come at the cost of lost opportunities for a powerful alliance between transit workers and straphangers. As for Cuomo, he has gone after other public sector workers with a vengeance in the past. If he should throw the transit workers under the bus in the future to shift blame from himself, where will they be?

5 TWO TERMS ENOUGH
While Gov. Cuomo was up for re-election in 2014, he received an unexpectedly spirited challenge in the Democratic primary from progressive law professor Zephyr Teachout. She won half the counties in the state and over a third of the total vote. However, Cuomo swamped her in New York City and the surrounding suburban counties assured his victory. For their loyalty to Cuomo, NYC’ers have been repaid with the back of his hand, if Cuomo gets another strong primary challenger, let’s be the wiser for it. Otherwise, get him to pay attention to the subway system will become even harder in a third term that will unfold in the cornfields of Iowa if Cuomo turns his attention to a much talked about 2020 presidential run.

— JOHN TARLETON

THE INDEPENDENT — July/August 2017
The choice is very clear!

Donald Trump wants to drastically increase already-overstuffed Pentagon war spending by 10%. He claims our military is “depleted.” But, like many of his lies, the real truth is the United States already spends more on war than the military budgets of the next seven countries combined and Pentagon budgets are the highest they’ve ever been!

The U.S. will spend almost $650 billion this year alone on war and preparing for war. Trump’s budget would increase it to nearly $700 billion, getting the money by slashing funds for diplomacy at the State Department, decimating the EPA and education budgets and making drastic cuts to vital public programs, crippling the social safety net.

Trump’s budget is a dire threat to world peace, the environment and our quality of life unlike any we’ve seen!

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Interview by John Tarleton

Donald Trump’s election to the presidency has prompted an outpouring of protest and activism from millions of people, including many who had not been politically engaged before. What will it take for “the revolution” to not only defeat Trump but also turn forward a transformative agenda to address the multiple crises of our time?

In his new book, No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump’s Shock and Miracle Politics and Winning The World We Need, Naomi Klein draws from his rich oeuvre on corporate branding, the politics of climate change and the history of neoliberal globalization to argue that the events that have shaped our time and led to Trump’s election are not necessarily the case.

In The Independent, he recently published an essay titled “The finish line is not in sight. The democrats and why a positive vision of what we’re fighting for is crucial.”

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THE INDYPENDENT
The Independent

July/August 2017

CIVIL LIBERTIES

By Alex Kane

Olivia Alsip found herself trapped. The 24-year-old activist traveled to the nation’s capital from Chicago to express her ire against Donald Trump’s antagonistic rhetoric targeting minorities and queer people on Inauguration Day. By 11 a.m. that morning, though, she found herself caged with hundreds of other protesters with no way to go to the bathroom, eat or drink.

At one point, Alsip told The Independent, Washington, D.C. police indiscriminately pepper-sprayed the crowd, hitting a child and onlookers. Six hours later, Alsip was handcuffed and taken in a police van with other demonstrators to a D.C. jail.

The whole experience “felt like being in a cattle car of some sort and being treated as livestock and bodies, rather than actual people,” said Alsip.

Her troubles did not end when she was released the next evening. Instead, Alsip and over 200 other demonstrators are now facing felony charges that could carry up to 75 years in prison if they are convicted. The United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, which reports to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, is prosecuting the case.

Civil liberties advocates say that the demonstrators are being overcharged in an attempt to intimidate them into accepting plea bargains and in order to silence future dissent. They also say that the police response was brutal — and that the prosecutors’ charges, which seek to tar the demonstrators as criminals regardless of their individual actions, are a worrying sign of how protests are being treated in today’s America.

Jan. 20 was always going to be a confrontational day. Trump was to assume the presidency after a contentious presidential campaign filled with nasty, racist attacks on Muslims and Mexicans. Trump lost the popular vote and activists streaming into Washington that day weren’t about to let him forget that.

What was surprising to many protesters was the dastardly police response. A minority of the thousands of demonstrators on the street set fire to a limousine and smashed storefront windows. Instead of focusing manpower on property destruction, police riot squads cordoned off the protesters and kept them in the street for hours.

Police pepper-sprayed peaceful protesters “without issuing a warning or command” and indiscriminately launched explosive devices called “stingers” at the crowd, according to a report by the D.C. Police Complaints Board, which also noted that officers spilled many people into custody merely because of their proximity to property destruction — not on the basis of probable cause.

Among those arrested were legal observers and reporters, including former Indy contributor Aaron Cantú. Charges were eventually dropped against most of the journalists swept up by police, but Cantú still faces charges of felony rioting.

Once in custody, some detainees were subjected to sexual abuse, a lawsuit filed in June by the American Civil Liberties Union alleges. Two of the four plaintiffs in the case, which accuses the Metropolitan Police of violating protesters’ First Amendment rights, say officers performed invasive anal cavity searches on them while other officers stood by laughing.

The aggressive police response to the demonstrations began even before Jan. 20, when according to court documents, an undercover D.C. cop infiltrated planning meetings for Disrupt J20, the group organizing the inaugural protests. An organizer’s house was later raided in an effort to gather information for the criminal case against the demonstrators.

With the first of the trials for the Disrupt J20 demonstrators set for March 2018, there remains scant evidence to substantiate the severity of the charges against the activists. Only a handful of defendants named in the indictment are accused of committing acts of rioting. The rest of the indictment refers to “members of the conspiracy” to riot. Little evidence is offered other than that the alleged conspirators wore dark clothing, similar to outfits worn by black bloc brigades whose tactics have to do with getting arrested.

The indictment notes that protesters chanted, “Fuck capitalism,” among other slogans.

“This is First Amendment activity that is being criminalized,” said Sam Meneee-Libey, a member of Dead City Legal Posse, a group of activists supporting the arrested protesters. “It’s incredibly disturbing.”

The arrests and subsequent indictments appear to correspond to the Trump-era pattern of a shock-and-awe gambit followed by confusion and disarray. Despite the gravity of the charges, many of the defendants are holding together, instead of informing one another, which they believe the prosecutors want. Over 100 have signed a pledge refusing to cooperate with prosecutors against other defendants.

“Part of the [prosecutors’] tactics have to do with getting people to roll on each other . . . to make false confessions,” said Alexei Wood, a freelance photographer and one of the defendants who signed the “points of unity” statement. “That doesn’t feel like justice to me at all. I want to be out about being in solidarity with everybody.”

Yet, advocates are concerned that President Trump’s “law and order” message, combined with his contempt for dissent, could mean an intensified police and prosecutorial response to future demonstrations.

“We expect the Trump administration to be more harsh for protesters, for people who dissent and for those who defend those who dissent,” Ria Thompson-Washington, Executive Vice-President of the National Lawyers Guild told The Indy. “The J20 charges are an indicator for what will happen when other cases like these arise.”

Thompson-Washington has noticed an uptick in calls to the National Lawyers Guild to send legal observers to monitor police behavior at protests and marches “that ordinarily wouldn’t have needed that protection because [protest organizers] have to worry about people getting arrested.”

State lawmakers in the Trump era are also taking it upon themselves to squelch dissent. In response to the recent upsurge in activism across the country, Republican

Continued on page 17

THE FUTuRE IS NOT WRITTEN:

More than 200 people who were arrested during Inauguration Day protests against Donald Trump face felony charges that could land them in prison for many decades.

THE J20 VIDEO THE FEDS DON’T WANT YOU TO SEE

Prosecutors are seeking a protective order in the trial of 317 protesters apprehended in mass arrests during Inauguration Day protests in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 20. The order would prohibit the defendants from sharing evidence provided to them by prosecutors with the media.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Kerkhoff filed for the protective order in June after an earlier version of this article, published online, contained previously unpublished police body camera video of Metropolitan Police officers brutalizing demonstrators.

Kerkhoff “expressed anger in court after body camera footage showing police attacking demonstrators appeared in an article by The Indypendent,” the website Unicorn Riot, covering the pretrial discovery hearings, reported. “Kerkhoff introduced a motion to forbid defendants from sharing any discovery video under threat of being held in contempt of court, a measure which could prevent evidence from being gathered for future civil suits.”

The Indypendent did not reveal the source of the video and has no plans to do so. Aside from the defendants and their advocates, members of the Metropolitan Police and prosecuting attorneys also had access to the evidence.

Judge Lynn Leibowitz is expected to rule on the motion this month. The defendants — who are facing up to 75 years in prison on charges of rioting and conspiracy to riot apparently based on evidence as thin as the color of the clothing they wore — are not slated to stand before a jury until March of 2018.

Reached by phone, veteran civil rights attorney Martin Stolar called the motion the “purest intimidation,” noting that if there was no previous gag on evidence as thin as the color of the clothing they wore — are not slated to stand before a jury until March of 2018.

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The fact that Kerkhoff is resorting to such tactics “tells me she’s got no case,” Stolar said. “Since the trial is about a year away, I don’t see how that would be a problem.”

— REACHED BY PHONE

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instincts kicked in. The stoicism of working people was sent packing. Its president. His road to union activism began when he moved to Staten Island 20 years ago for a job at Verizon. He is a shop steward, business agent, organizer, and executive board member of the 412-member local. Now he is serving his first term as its president. His road to union activism began when he saw his co-workers being mistreated and his rebel instincts kicked in. The stoicism of working people who have to cope with abuse every day frustrates and motivates him.

"The real message is — we don’t have to take this," he says. Local 1102, after a seven-year struggle, also represents workers at the E-Z Pass customer-service call center in Staten Island. E-Z Pass workers asked it for help in late 2008, and voted narrowly in 2009 to join Local 1102, but the Xerox subsidiary that had taken over the contract challenged the election results and refused to bargain. It brought in Jackson Lewis, one of the nation’s most notorious union-busting law firms; fired 14 union supporters; and switched the workers’ pay from hourly wages to per-call rates. Xerox eventually recognized the union in 2010 and signed a first contract in 2011, but continued its anti-union campaign. Before it signed a second contract in 2015, it held captive-audience meetings with workers and tried to get Local 1102 decertified.

"It’s a hard fight and we are still up against it," Lawton says. "But this is their first experience of working with union folks and good leadership is now showing up.”

COMMUNITY VOICES

The union realized it needed to connect with people outside its own members on broader issues. "Our educational system doesn’t teach things like redlining of neighborhoods by banks and insurance companies, or about systematic racism and inequality," CWA shop steward Joe Tarulli said at a Sustainable Staten Island public forum on economic inequality on June 22. “The main goal ... is to get people out of their silos and to develop empathy. Sustainable SI helps to open peoples’ eyes to see the issues that need to be addressed and then get to work.”

“I wanted to lift up my brothers,” John McBeth of Occupy the Block said after speaking about growing up in the West Brighton projects and returning to Staten Island after a tour of duty in the Navy. Occupy the Block is a volunteer group whose members come from the North Shore neighborhoods and turn out two nights a week during the summer to provide a calming presence in the streets, offering support and guidance to troubled youth. “The idea behind Occupy the Block, is that you continue working with your organization, but also work with others — with us,” says McBeth, who is also a deacon at local St. Philip’s Baptist Church. “We use our bodies — we do it ourselves. This is our community. Do the work and the resources will come.”

Gonzalo Mercado, executive director of La Colmena, a community organization that works with day laborers and other low-wage workers, described how immigrant workers fleeing economic devastation in their homelands find themselves toiling as many as 80 hours a week, enduring high rates of injury and death on the job while struggling to support themselves. “There are no legal ways for people to come to the United States and employers like it like this, since it makes it easier to exploit these workers,” he told the forum.

Members of Staten Island Peace Action described a flurry of recent actions they had been involved in — an April 29 climate-change march down the boardwalk from South Beach to Midland Beach that drew more than 500 people, handing out fliers at the Staten Island Ferry Terminal about how federal tax dollars are disproportionately used for military expenditures and a rally at the United Nations for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

"It’s tricky to get people involved in these global issues,” said Ashley Santangelo. The group also gives talks at local high schools about alternatives to entering the military.

"It’s important for labor to be involved and to come together with our community partners. In this way, our impact is broader,” Steve Lawton says. “Economic, workplace rights, human rights and environmental rights are all connected. The same principles of liberty and freedom apply and we can’t limit our fight for these rights to the halls of our legislatures.”

Building Resistance on Trump Island

Staten Island Union Local Propels a Growing Labor-Community Alliance

By Jane LaTour

Staten Island, the whitest and most suburban of New York’s five boroughs, has a reputation as the most right-wing part of the city. Its voters provided the margins that put Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg in office as mayor. Last November, Donald Trump won 57 percent of the borough’s vote, while he was getting barely 15 percent in the rest of the city. It was Staten Island cops who killed Eric Garner in 2014, and a Staten Island grand jury that wouldn’t indict the one who choked him, sparking weeks of Black Lives Matter protests across the city.

Since the 45-day Verizon strike in the spring of 2016, however, progressive labor unions and community organizations on the island have united in a coalition called Sustainable Staten Island. The coalition’s participants include Communications Workers of America Local 1102, the New York State Nurses Association, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 726, the Professional Staff Congress, the American Postal Workers Union, and grassroots groups such as Staten Island Peace Action and Move Forward Staten Island.

The strike, in which 40,000 Verizon workers on the East Coast walked out to demand better pay and to stop the company’s plans to outsource work to low-paying overseas contractors, succeeded with a combination of worker solidarity and community support. The office of Local 1102, which represents Verizon technicians on Staten Island, is now one of the hot spots of community organizing in the borough. Its meeting room is covered with hand-drawn signs — one says “We’re not taking this” — and photos of customers who picketed the E-Z Pass call center in Staten Island. E-Z Pass workers asked it for help in late 2008, and voted narrowly in 2009 to join Local 1102, but the Xerox subsidiary that had taken over the contract challenged the election results and refused to bargain. It brought in Jackson Lewis, one of the nation’s most notorious union-busting law firms; fired 14 union supporters; and switched the workers’ pay from hourly wages to per-call rates. Xerox eventually recognized the union in 2010 and signed a first contract in 2011, but continued its anti-union campaign. Before it signed a second contract in 2015, it held captive-audience meetings with workers and tried to get Local 1102 decertified.

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FROM PROTEST TO POWER

Hegemony How-to: A Roadmap for Radicals
By Jonathan Matthew Smucker
AK Press, 2017

Jonathan Matthew Smucker’s Hegemony How-to: A Roadmap for Radicals is part of a rapidly growing body of literature that seeks to harvest concrete organizing lessons from social movements’ recent experiences. Whereas Becky Bond and Zack Exley’s Rules for Radicals does this from the perspective of the Bernie Sanders campaign, and Jane McAlevey’s No Shortcuts culs lessons from labor struggles, Smucker is most deeply influenced by the anti-corporate globalization movement of the early 2000s and Occupy Wall Street.

He draws conclusions quite critical of those movements, to the point that his publisher distances itself a little from the text in the preface. Nevertheless, this is not the familiar story of a repentant radical documenting his journey rightward in public. Instead, Smucker is thinking through the flaws, mistakes, and limitations of the movements he has enthusiastically participated in, trying to come to grips with why they have not changed the world as much as he hoped, and how they might do so in the future.

The central tension he struggles with is that people become radical activists out of a desire to change the world, but often find the subculture of radicalism to be an attractive refuge from the unjust world. This undermines their capacity to connect with people outside their small subculture — but it is only by aligning themselves with substantial portions those people that they can actually hope to change the world. Instead of this work of connection and expansion, activists often focus on winning the approval of their peers; for example, by engaging in “militant” acts of property destruction that clearly demonstrate one’s commitment to the cause, but often alienate much of the public.

Similarly, he delivers a withering critique of the “prefigurative” theories that floated around the Occupy movement — that its central goal was to enact utopian social relations in Zuccotti Park and its other encampments around the world. These theories, he argues, were delusional about both what was happening in the encampments and what was politically possible, and led people away from trying to connect with organizations and constituencies that were receptive to Occupy’s position but had very different structures. Smucker is influenced by theories that the prosperity of the decades after World War II led to an emphasis on psychological fulfillment rather than political struggle in social movements, but then inserts the interesting idea that perhaps this tendency has already peaked due to the deterioration of that prosperity.

MOVING OUT OF THE RADICAL CLUBHOUSE

The slogan “We are the 99%!” indicated a desire to move past the radical-subculture mentality, but Occupy wasn’t quite ready to think out all its implications as events raced forward. Smucker clearly believes that such groups must orient themselves to the wider world and develop alliances and ways of talking to the “unusual suspects” who don’t necessarily show up for radical actions at first — but he also acknowledges the need to build solidarity with groups through language, rituals and the like. This is a different perspective from those armchair Marxists who simply wondered why Occupy didn’t organize the working class, as if conjuring such a force arose from having the proper theory rather than the work involved in producing and maintaining an innovative tactic like the encampments.

Rather, Smucker is arguing that having conjured such a force, Occupy let its belief in prefiguration get in the way of organizing for a broader societal alignment. Much of the book lays out his alternative to prefigurative politics. Rather than speaking truth to power, he argues, social movements must pose power to power. To build that power, he offers a five-category chart — active opposition, passive opposition, neutral, passive support, active support — and suggests that social movements map out where different forces in society sit on that scale and concern themselves with moving those groups one notch closer, for example, turning passive support into active ones.

An important element of this is developing new ways for people to demonstrate support for the movement. He describes the way the interacial Freedom Rides during the 1960s civil-rights movement afforded white activists in the North the opportunity to demonstrate active support by participating or helping out, while pulling many of their peers and family members from the neutral category into passive support.

BEFTER FORMS OF LEADERSHIP

Smucker also argues that leadership is important in order for social movements to act more strategically. Leaders, he says, should work to undermine the elusiveness that develops in movements, enable the inclusion of more marginal members and develop strategies that better connect the movement to other constituencies in the passive or neutral categories. Rather than fostering an anti-leadership mentality, movements should promote themselves as “leaderful,” encouraging all members to develop their capacities to perform these tasks and more.

His advice on how to build wider alliances draws from such unlikely sources as dating and corporate branding. He insists on the need to craft powerful narratives, to create a “we” that can expand to include more and more people against an isolated “them.” But he insists that beyond the symbolic contest over who defines society’s common sense, there is also the institutional contest over who has power and how it is exercised.

Here, however, he is much vaguer. He never really addresses the challenges posed by the electoral system, or the matrix of power progressives would confront were they to win electoral office. He encourages the left to take attaining and exercising power more seriously, citing the Chavista movement in Venezuela. That project now appears to lie in ruins, even as it remains in power. Similarly, Greece’s Syriza coalition, which did everything Smucker calls for and produced a broad enough alignment to win a national election, was unable to release the country from the vise of austerity.

Although I agreed with much of the advice Smucker offers, it is difficult to not wonder whether, in a world of rapid capital flows across borders, a Prime Minister Jeremy Corbyn or a President Bernie Sanders might encounter similar difficulties. Anarchistic emphasis on developing “prefigurative” relations in the here and now developed out of a pessimism about the liberatory potential of attaining state power. The first few years in this period of renewed interest in the state-oriented approach haven’t exactly proven them wrong. The “road map” gets a bit fuzzy depicting the terrain beyond building a coalition large and deep enough to compete for state power.
Hah! Let the dream begin!

that he is President of the United States.

shouting something. Trump remembers

The Secret Serviceman is shaking him,

He cries out like a child or an animal.

wakes up. He needs to Tweet. He needs
dollars coming into your body. Trump

ejaculation. It is the sensation of a billion

positive Tantric sex; an unending, hopeless

with rapture. They are suffering a plea-

the Andes, seeking the lowest possible

borders, flying into Africa, flying across

the fast-as-light money that flies across

alright. The white noise pouring from

the bedroom to check if everything is

A Secret Serviceman cracks the door of

feels good about this. He stirs in his bed.

In his dreams, Trump faces an audi-

uum filled with men in suits. He has

a bulge in his pants. He views a sea of

torium filled with men in suits. He has

Dear Reverend Billy,

What does Trump dream about?

— Roxie from Hoboken

Dear Roxie,

In his dreams, Trump faces an audi-

torium filled with men in suits. He has

a bulge in his pants. He views a sea of

Dear Reverend Billy,

What do you suppose Donald and Me-

ลาก is talking about when they’re all alone?

Thank you so much,

Travis, Manhattan

Dear Travis,

Melania can talk for upwards of two

hours without interruption. Trump peri-

odically alternates his facial pose to indi-
cate he is listening but each expression he

assumes resembles the look of a sensual
dry heave in ultra-slow motion. During

these moments he fantasizes. Right now

he is dreaming of a beauty pageant he

used to run on the steppes of Mother

Russia. One hundred and forty-four con-
testants are high-kicking toward him, a

chorus line advancing like a world war.

Each contestant has a full bladder. Mela-

nia shakes him awake with a look on her

face like she was there too. “I was not hu-
miliated by receiving Michelle’s speech!”
she says. “I’m glad Steve Bannon thought

it was a classic dis and hilarious. I can

make a fool of myself in front of millions.

It feels just like my private life!”

Dear Reverend Billy,

Here’s a question: What is Trump’s fa-
favorite Care Bear?

— Sarah in Morningside Heights

Dear Sarah,

Animated bears are not white males.

Trump hits the remote. He has a suspi-
cious feeling about Funshine Bear. He

sees cartoon characters the way the art-
ist Andres Serrano saw Jesus Christ:

Drowning in the urination of God.

Trump fires off tweets like Funshine’s

belly shoots light. The tweets go mon-

strously viral. Trump’s supporters — a

living, farting trash-mass — seek out and

struggles.

relevance to contemporary social

activism and contemplating Marcuse’s

chronicling Marcuse’s anti-capitalist

Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Revolution,

talk about when they’re all alone?

Thus, one is led to ask: “Can you

contemplate Marcuse’s anti-capitalist

interconnectedness.

interconnected stories about dysphoric

The Face of Our Town, a collection of

READING: Elizeya Quate’s reads from

AUG 14 • 7–9:30PM

TALK: Javier Sethness Castro presents

his updated biography of critical theorist

Herbert Marcuse. Eros and Revolution,

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Dear Reverend Billy,

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Is she there too. “I was not hu-
miliated by receiving Michelle’s speech!”

In his dreams, Trump faces an audi-

torium filled with men in suits. He has

breathe his phallus emerges, a cigar-shaped promontory of

the purest gleaming gold. It casts a long


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“You shall possess the origin of all poems ... you shall no longer take things at second or third hand.” Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass is rain-bent, dog-eared and spread like a dirty scroll in my hands. I read the Ur-poem of American Democracy loudly and walk through the city.

Nearly two centuries separate us, but reading Whitman — wow — I can feel his chest shake with wonder at the faces in front of him. I can feel his hands tingle as the city spread like a dirty scroll in my hands. I read the Ur-poem.

one corner you’ll find a virtual Strand in the city. Who knew there is a Strand? A Strand of bookstores, a new neighborhood. The Big Reuse in Gowanus is a city unto itself, a sprawl of clocks, vintage doors and barnwood. In piles of old-timey chachkies, grandfather clocks, vintage doors and barnwood. In piles of old-timey chachkies, grandfather clocks, vintage doors and barnwood. You might find a virtual Strand in Gowanus.

In the Ur-poem, Whitman talks about Agee with keen attention to detail. That is the attention to detail that I admire about Agee. He was in drunken-love with all of life. Reading him is like getting hammered with a friend. He casts his words into a world embrace. “All the men are also my brothers,” he writes, “and the women my sisters.”

The Jane Jacobs versus Robert Moses story has been rehashed before, but if you want a brisk read with a beautiful and informative design and images packed into a perfect package, Affordable Housing in New York: A History of Race and Class in American Urban Development (1962), Bronx’s Coop City (1968) and Brooklyn’s Starrett City (currently marketed as Spring Creek Towers). Kazan’s critics derided his buildings as exclusively Jewish (union members were by and large his target market) but today most are racially integrated and vibrant residences. There are few books, let alone one this visually stimulating, that treat social housing in such a deliberate and thought provoking manner.

Big Solutions for Intractable Problems

Utilitarian block towers in the style of Le Corbusier fell out of fashion after Jane Jacobs wrote her seminal book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Jacob’s quaint mid-century Greenwich Village, a low-rise neighborhood with vibrant sidewalk life and elder, architecturally similar buildings forming a cohesiveness of place was the ideal. Greenwich Village’s townhouses nowadays are some of the priciest real estate in the city but those towers still deliver affordable housing to hundreds of thousands of people.

For my favorite summer books, I picked something old, something new and something borrowed. All contain narratives of Black lives. It has been 41 years since poet Ntozake Shange’s for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf made its Broadway premiere at the Booth Theatre in New York, but this choreopoem, a series of poetic monologues accompanied by dance movements and music, still speaks to the tribulations of contemporary Black women. Shange creates seven characters, each represented by a color. Their dialogues and poetic monologues tackle subjects like rape, abortion, domestic violence, coming of age, sensuality, poverty, oppression, isolation and self-realization. This work is a critical expression of Black feminist struggles and honors the lived experiences of Black women in the United States.

Nearly two centuries later, I look up from the book and see the endless river of people flowing over the sidewalks. Dammed at red lights. Gushing at green. New York City’s interlocking streets, squeezing and releasing 8 million souls though a pulsing concrete maze. Here is a slightly thugs’d out broth, singing gustily a Spice Girl-song. Here’s an old woman, wearing a football helmet as she carefully traces her steps. Here are tourists, unfolding a map and gawking at tall buildings.

Here we combine our singular lives into the life of the city, many cities into the nation, many nations into a civilization.

Yesterday, I saw a horse break free from its carriage.
It galloped crazy fast between cars. We cheered its escape while a fat coachman chased after it. Sometimes a metaphor just happens like that. Sometimes you have to laugh at man chasing after nature. Everyone was happy. “These are the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,” Whitman wrote, but I feel like he’s speaking to my ear, I want to ask him how can we love the stupid greed that drives the systems that destroy so many. I want to ask him if embracing everything and everyone leaves one floating in a limbo with no moral compass. “In all people I see myself,” he answers, “And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.”

Too much. Too much. I fold the book and feel like an open mirror. Here reading is communion with spirits. Together we walk the streets. Whitman tells me that I and everyone else know more about ourselves and each other than we are willing to say — much less act upon.

Read this, he says. Read the sublime and subliminal. Read the body as a book and the book as a body, Touch. Draw from the deepest place the mysterious key. Unlock the silences between us and them. And do what Whitman?

I look at New York in all its dirty, shitty, loud craziness. And he says, very simply, join them!

— NICHOLAS POWERS

was yearning to experience with this author.

My poet friend Adriana Green hipped me to the Black girl magic coming from the desk of Brooklyn resident and Hugo Award winner N. K. Jemisin. Jemisin created The Broken Earth Trilogy — Black speculative fiction and fantasy at its best. The trilogy is made up of The Fifth Season (August 2015), The Obelisk Gate (August 2016) and The Stone Sky (coming in August). The series brings readers into a world called “The Stillness”; a land long familiar with catastrophe, where the power of the earth is wielded as a weapon and where there is no mercy. Jemisin creates diverse complex characters who will stretch your imagination and challenge your worldviews. She uses beautiful prose to build worlds that challenge ideas of racism, sexism, patriarchy and other systemic power structures. This is the sci-fi that will help you understand and escape the crazy world we are living in.

— AMARA WAKEFIELD

gues for socially inclusive housing connected to community needs and assets.

One clear and increasingly present danger to our architecture, socially engaged or not, is global climate change, which portends rising sea levels, more intense hurricanes and storms and an increase in extremely hot days. It is such an immense problem that it is tempting to throw your hands up and say we are all doomed. Take heart, Brecher explores various pathways to challenge big fossil fuels’ grip on politics and the economy. In the wake of President Trump’s intent to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accords, it is incumbent on cities and states to enact their own plans. The key is building public pressure to enforce those plans in order to meet targeted emissions reductions.

There is hope and action everywhere. The valiant Keystone XL and Dakota pipeline resistance showed the emergence of diverse coalitions ready to take militant action to prevent deepening fossil fuel reliance. We are racing against the clock, so read Against Doom and take action now.

— BENNET BAUMER

ems are communions with nature; the blue that rumbles under the sun bounding the pearl that we walk on,” as he puts it in his poem “Ecology.”

Whereas Agee uses the word to describe the world, Jack plays in the world through the word. It all comes together vividly just the same.

For a city poet, check out Robert Fullerton. He’s not in print to my knowledge but a new short film, Ming for Poems and Odes, features him reciting his work and describing life on the Glasgow docks where he worked as a young man in the 70s. Das Capital and The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropist were required reading.

I’d never heard of the latter but again the gods of chance that govern used bookstores worked in my favor and guided me to it on a recent visit to Myopic Books in Chicago. It’s plain to see why those hardboiled dock-workers shoved the book in young Fullerton’s hands. The novel pairs servile members of the working class just as much as their greedy exploiters.

There you have it, some pages to turn whether you’re at the beach or waiting for the A train to Far Rockaway to arrive. In case you’re wondering why it hasn’t showed up, Clifton Hood’s 722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York provides colorful background on the origins of our dysfunctional subway system (See page 4).

— PETER RUGH
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