YOUR DATA IS OUT THERE
FACEBOOK IS USING OUR PERSONAL INFO TO MANIPULATE US. CAN WE STOP IT?
PETER RUGH, P10
THRU JULY 22
WED–SUN, 11AM–6PM • $0–$16
This exhibition explores the groundbreaking contributions to contemporary art by Latin American and Latin women. Featuring 123 artists from 15 countries, the exhibition focuses on the use of the female body for political and social critique and artistic expression.
BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Pkwy, Bklyn

TUE MAY 1
12PM • FREE
RALLY: FIGHT TOGETHER! STRIKE TO WIN!
May Day NYC 2018
On International Workers’ Day, celebrate the collective power of migrants and workers in New York and around the world. Program begins at noon, march at 5 pm.
Union Sq. S., Mnhtn

THU MAY 3
7PM–9PM • FREE
TALK: WE CAN’T EAT AUSTERITY: CRISIS AND RESISTANCE IN PUERTO RICO
It’s been more than six months since Hurricane Maria and although the crisis in Puerto Rico has left the headlines, thousands of people on the island still do not have electricity and life there has changed fundamentally. Giovanni Roberto of the Comedores Sociales de Puerto Rico delivers an eyewitness report.
HUNTER COLLEGE
(HUNTER WEST 507) 695 Park Ave., Mnhtn

SAT MAY 5
8PM–2AM • FREE
PARTY: KARL MARX’S 200TH BIRTHDAY PARTY
Join Sven-Eric Lidman, author of A World to Win: The Life and Works of Karl Marx, and Charlie Post for a conversation on Marx’s life and legacy. Book signing and birthday cake at 9 pm, dancing at 10 pm.
VERSO BOOKS
20 Jay St., Suite 1010, Bklyn

THU MAY 10
6:30PM–8PM • $5–$20
TALK: ISABEL WILKERSON IN CONVERSATION
During the Great Migration, millions of African Americans moved from the rural south to urban centers in the North and West. This conversation, with audience Q&A, will explore how the Great Migration transformed our cities, politics and culture with Isabel Wilkerson, author of The Warmth of Other Suns, an authoritative history of this pivotal moment in American history.
FEDERAL HALL
26 Wall St., Mnhtn

FRI MAY 11
8PM • $25
MUSIC: THE MELOVINS
They inspired Nirvana and took punk to new dimensions. Don’t miss these grunge legends as they take the stage in Williamsburg.
WARSAW CONCERTS
281 Driggs Ave., Bklyn

SAT MAY 12
1PM–6PM • FREE
MARKET: WITCHING

HERBS PLANT MARKET
Come make some plant friends and channel your inner green witch at the occult bookshop and spiritual community space, Catland.
CATLAND BOOKS
987 Flushing Ave., Bklyn

THU MAY 17
THU 7:30PM–9:30PM • FREE
POLITICS: THE DIY PORN REVOLUTION: AN INTIMATE POV ON KINK, SEX WORK AND POLITICS
Feminist porn icon Madsen Young reads from recently published autobiographical works that delve deep into sexual worlds of kink and sex work through a feminist lens.
BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKS
172 Allen St., Mnhtn

FRI MAY 18
6:30PM–9PM • FREE
FESTIVAL: 9TH AVENUE INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL
A celebration of New York’s cultural diversity. Awaken your taste buds as you stroll between 43rd and 57th Streets and taste scrumptious foods from the many vendors along the way.

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AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
47-29 32nd Pl, Queens

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ICE BREAKERS

By Jesse Rubin

The increasing detention of undocumented immigrants across the city is spurred by protests from the public defenders who represent them. Immigrants make up a large percentage of public defender clients and their attorneys say Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is violating their clients’ rights by preventing them from attending court hearings without fear of apprehension.

Undocumented immigrants often arrive to court for low-level offenses, only to find federal agents waiting for them. Alejandra Lopez of the Immigration Defense Project told The Independent that so far this year her organization has documented 41 courthouse arrests statewide, including 31 in the city. “This is a 70 percent increase from the same time period last year,” Lopez said.

During the first year of the Trump administration ICE made 144 courthouse arrests in New York State, 97 of which were in the city’s courthouses. There were just 11 such recorded incidents in 2016.

In response to ICE’s increased presence in the halls of justice, attorneys with the Legal Aid Society have staged a series of walkouts with more planned for the future.

“Public defenders were just tired of having their clients taken away from them and having their due process denied,” said Alexi Shalom, an organizer for the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (ALAA).

Legal Aid Society attorneys, as well as lawyers with Bronx Defenders and Brooklyn Defender Services, have walked out of courthouses six times so far this year.

Critics have denounced the temporary strikes, accusing attorneys of abandoning their clients. “There is no justification for walking out on clients during court hours,” Kim Livingston, a spokesperson for the Queens DA’s office, told The Indy. In April, court administrators took the unusual step of assigning 10 Legal Aid clients in Queens to new attorneys.

“If anything, we are representing our clients through these walkouts,” Sha-Wen argues, adding that none of Legal Aid’s clients are left without representation, since the walkouts have occurred during the lunch hour with supervisors assigned to clients in the meantime.

There are other means of protecting immigrants in the courtroom, but they require cooperation between prosecutors and the presiding judge.

“What we usually do when we know there’s a client that’s going to be arrested by ICE is we try to argue for some type of low-level bail,” says Legal Aid attorney Pauloma Martinez. By remaining in the city’s custody, clients avoid federal arrest. It’s a bizarre situation in which attorneys are forced to stop defending their client’s innocence and instead must advocate for them to go to jail as a means of escaping deportation.

This strategy is not ironclad. When she spotted ICE agents waiting in the wings for two of her clients at the Kew Gardens courthouse Martinez sought bail. However, an assistant DA argued against it in one of the two cases, leading to a client’s apprehension.

“For what reason is an assistant district attorney not arguing for bail?” Martinez asked. In situations that don’t involve ICE, for a low-level legal citizen drug offender for example, “they almost always argue for bail.”

[“We believe there’s only been one occasion where we were asked to set bail, and did not do so because it did not meet the criteria for setting bail, which is to ensure an individual’s return to court,” said Kim Livingston of the Queens DA’s office.

In multiple states, the American Civil Liberties Union and other legal groups are challenging ICE’s court presence, arguing it is a violation of states’ rights and that it impedes access to the courts.

On April 25, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced he would sign an executive order requiring ICE to obtain a court order before making arrests in the state’s courthouses but immigration advocates remain skeptical the order will stem the tide of detentions. ICE shows no signs of turning away from New York’s courthouses. As The Indy was going to press immigration agents made two separate arrests at courtrooms in Staten Island and Manhattan.

OUT OF ORDER: Legal Aid attorneys in Lower Manhattan join a citywide walkout against the presence of immigration agents in New York courthouses, March 15.

THE ABCs OF AUSTERITY

ADULT LITERACY CLASSES FACE BUDGET AXE

By Lydia McMullen-Laird

Julio Forbes sneaks into the intermediate ESL class almost half an hour late, red folder in hand and ready to learn. He joins the class of students from Colombia, Russia and Korea. Forbes is a 35-year-old doctor from the Dominican Republic who’s come to the United States looking for a better life. But he’s unemployed at the moment — and he won’t have much luck in the job market until he improves his English.

Forbes is not alone. He’s one of the 2.2 million people in New York City who lack English proficiency or a high school diploma. The $90 million dollars required to run adult literacy programs, which comes from a combination of city, state and federal funding, serves 61,000 people, a mere 3 percent of those in need.

An additional $12 million dollars was added last year for adult literacy programs, but advocates are worried some of their programs may be in jeopardy after the release of Mayor de Blasio’s preliminary budget for the 2019 fiscal year failed to include the additional funding. The New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy has been organizing rallies to demand the restoration of the funding.

The Coalition is not just advocating for additional 2019 funding, but for multi-year funding that would allow programs to thrive in the long term. According to a statement on the Coalition’s recommendations for the 2019 fiscal year, “One-year funding makes it difficult to operate programs... funding instability means programs cannot hire full-time staff with benefits and lose their best teachers as they search for more stable employment.”

Forbes struggles through the exercises on past participles. “Have you ever eaten frog’s legs?” he asked his classmate Carlos Mendez, a 40-year-old porter who is hoping to improve his English so he can get a promotion at work. “No I haven’t” answers Mendez. Their class meets three times a week in the evenings at the International Center of the Catholic Charities Community Services in downtown Manhattan.

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The cuts follow on the heels of a state budget deal hammered out at the end of March by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and top legislative leaders that forced the city to allocate an additional $418 million toward subway repairs that previously had been New York State’s responsibility. But the $12 million dollars of additional city funding for adult literacy “is a small amount in the overall budget that goes a long way,” says Elaine Roberts, director of programs at the International Center. Some adult literacy programs also receive state and federal funding, but many of the classes at the International Center, including the ESL class Forbes and Mendez are taking, are completely funded by the city, said Roberts.

But if the funding isn’t reinstated, people like Forbes and Mendez could lose access to classes... “That would be painful, that would be horrible for the people who come to this country and they don’t speak English,” said Mendez when asked how he would feel if his class were cut. “It’s going to cut all our opportunities to improve our lives. Taking public transportation, attending parent-teacher conferences — everything is harder if we don’t speak English. It’s something that is going to affect our lives.”

The final city budget won’t be approved until June. In the meantime, advocates say they will keep fighting.
April 1 marked the halfway point in the federal government’s fiscal year and, so far, the United States has only admitted 10,548 refugees, placing it on track to fall far short of its already record-low admission ceiling of 45,000 individuals. Resettlement workers and refugee advocates say that this is further evidence of the Trump administration’s deliberate efforts to sabotage the refugee resettlement system now and for years to come.

“The program is being torn down from the top,” says Dr. Shelly Callahan, executive director of the Mohawk Valley Resource Center in Utica, which works to resettle refugees. Since 1980, the president has set the cap on refugee admissions every fall for the fiscal year running from October to September. President Trump’s 45,000 person ceiling is the lowest ever, down from 110,000 during President Obama’s last year.

Workers for the nonprofits that handle refugee resettlement claim the administration is deliberately slowing down the processing of cases as part of its effort to cause long-term damage to the country’s refugee resettlement infrastructure. In the past year, the administration has introduced time-consuming and unnecessary additional screening procedures. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, an office of the Department of Homeland Security, has also reassigned “about 100” out of 197 Refugee Corps officers to the Asylum Division, according to a spokesperson.

While similar to refugee offices in some ways, asylum officers do not conduct refugee interviews overseas, the first step in the lengthy and complex process by which individuals are approved for resettlement to the United States. With fewer refugee officers screening applicants overseas, the entire pipeline is slowed down, with dramatic effects.

The U.S. government works with nine private nonprofit organizations, known as voluntary agencies, to assign refugees to host communities around the United States. Voluntary agencies receive $2,125 in federal funding for each refugee they resettle and administer networks of local offices that provide services directly to the refugees. All of the approximately 320 local offices provide new arrivals with housing and social services that include language training, job-search assistance, school-enrollment assistance and help integrating into the community during their first months in the United States.

In practice, virtually all resettlement offices also provide a variety of services to other immigrant, minority and vulnerable communities alongside refugees, and assist refugees beyond the first months of resettlement. They rely on private donations for these programs.

In December, the State Department informed the voluntary agencies of its intention to close all local affiliate offices that are not projected to receive at least 100 refugees in fiscal year 2018. According to a plan drawn up by the voluntary agencies and obtained by Reuters, some 74 offices are expected to be closed this year.

“We’re trying to look into what would be the best make up of our network and how do we change what currently exists into something more sustainable that can still meet its moral and legal commitments,” says Erol Kekic, executive director of Church World Service, one of the national voluntary agencies. Church World Service has closed 17 offices this fiscal year, bringing its total to just 19.

In New York State, home to one of the largest immigrant and refugee populations in the country, the closures could hit the resettlement sector hard. The state has 23 resettlement offices, 12 of which Reuters says will be closing this year. No one in the resettlement sector knows which offices will be closing, but several officials interviewed for this article reported layoffs at their organizations.

As of March 31, New York State has only been assigned 652 refugees by the State Department, far from the number needed to maintain the existing network. Despite this low figure, New York remains a major destination for refugees previously resettled in other U.S. states, as well as people applying for asylum on arrival at its busy airports — numbers that do not factor into State Department funding and closure decisions but represent constituencies that need many of the same services that refugees require and that resettlement offices are currently equipped to provide.

By throttling the pipeline, the State Department is creating the low numbers that it will then use to close offices in the name of cost-saving efficiency. It is also forcing staffing cuts at the agencies, whose funding depends on refugee arrivals.

LONG-TERM DAMAGE

The layoffs and closures being engineered by the Trump administration will impact the refugee resettlement system for years to come. Highly-skilled and specialized workers leaving the sector today will be hard to replace if and when a new administration restores the government’s commitment to humanitarianism. Educational and cultural programs cannot be revived at the drop of a hat, especially if the backgrounds of the new refugees differ from those of the earlier ones.

Perhaps even more concerning is the loss of the slowly-earned trust that makes agencies more efficient.

“[Resettlement offices] have already built up trust with communities, people know to come to us,” says Jim Morris, vice president of the Catholic Family Center in Rochester, New York. His organization and others like it need to establish relationships with refugee communities and state agencies in order to act as a facilitator between the two and ensure that refugees don’t get lost in bureaucracies they may not yet understand, he says. These relationships allow them to intervene early and prevent the need for more expensive and less successful interventions later on.

A closing office is required to notify its active clients but a larger and less defined network of people count on it being part of the community. “The resettlement agency isn’t just there to serve the client,” says Kelly Agnew-Barajas, director of refugee resettlement at Catholic Charities in Yonkers. “It’s also there to serve as a hub on refugee issues. People in universities, public schools and health care settings regularly come into contact with refugees and call the agency. It’s a community resource that’s especially knowledgeable.”

In response to the Trump administration’s attacks, many Americans have rallied in support of the local resettlement offices in their communities. Shelly Callahan of the Mohawk Valley Resource Center says her organization received the most donations ever last year and there has been a surge in volunteers. But, she says, “The State Department is dismantling the program from the inside out. I can have all of Utica hit the streets in support, but it’s not going to change the fact that overseas processing has come to a halt.”

Still, she says that her agency is standing strong and not going anywhere, no matter what the current administration dictates. “We’re fired up in a way we haven’t been, maybe ever,” she says.
‘I DO NOT HAVE A ROOF OVER MY HEAD’

By Erin Sheridan

On the evening of April 18, the sun is just beginning to set over the Penn South complex in Chelsea as Andrea Tejada, Branda Suarez and Sofia Miranda walk into the colorful 17th floor apartment of Lizette Colón, a counselor and union chapter chair at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. The three women, who have been living without permanent housing since they left Puerto Rico after Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island last September, are preparing to speak outside City Hall the next day. The event was organized to protest the impending eviction of 83 Puerto Rican families on April 20, after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declined to renew housing assistance it distributed through its Temporary Shelter Assistance (TSA) program.

“I do not have a roof over my head. Not even here, not even in Puerto Rico,” Tejada remarks in Spanish. Their mood is brighter than would be expected. Earlier that afternoon, it had been rumored that the city would temporarily foot the bill for housing, preventing families from becoming homeless until the next TSA renewal deadline in May. But the three women and many of the 2,600 Puerto Rican hurricane refugees here still lack permanent housing and adequate help to navigate the welfare system, deal with language barriers and get psychological support.

They call it “the limbo,” says Colón. On April 5, four months after their arrival in the city, Tejada and her four-year-old daughter, Gadieliz, were evicted from their hotel room and placed in the Bronx’s PATH shelter, only to be later removed on the grounds that Tejada had to exhaust support from all other programs before she could enter the city shelter system.

“Already twice they have told me to pack because they would throw me out,” Tejada says, through Ana Lopez, translating for Miranda. “And it is really exhausting.”

“I spoke to someone from legal services that is servicing families in the Bronx,” she adds. “And she said that the hotels get $8,000 a month for housing them. With $8,000 a month, these families can have permanent housing — for less.”

Suarez says she receives $145 every two weeks for herself and her son. Suarez, who left two daughters behind in Puerto Rico in order to seek medical care for her 80-year-old grandmother, who suffers from dementia, says she gets $178 bi-weekly. According to FEMA spokesperson Daniel Llagunes, any rental assistance families may be eligible for through FEMA’s Individual Assistance program is based on a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assessment of market values in Puerto Rico, which likely would not cover the cost of rent in New York City.

The women have struggled to find a way to produce a stable income. Miranda is working as a home attendant, but had to cut her hours “because when she was working extra, she didn’t qualify for the rest of the services,” Colón says, translating what Miranda told her. “It’s a catch-22. If you work, then you don’t have the services. So she has opted out because she has a son in school.”

“And Andrea, she has a daughter,” she adds. “The daughter is in school, and she’s trying to get a job. But then between all the things that you have to do with so many appointments, there’s no way that you can keep a job. She has a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice.”

Living in hotel rooms also causes other problems. “They cannot cook, because they don’t have a kitchen,” Colón says. “So it’s a catch-22, because the money doesn’t last.”

The regularly threatened housing-aid cutoffs hit women and children the hardest and show the government’s disrespect for Puerto Ricans, argues Lopez. “In other states and even in New York, hurricane-disaster evacuees did not have a term limit in housing aid,” she says. “They were put in a hotel until housed in permanent housing. No one was ever kicked out. So it appears Puerto Rico is not treated with same respect and dignity.”

State Senator Gustavo Rivera (D-Bronx) calls FEMA’s decision to end TSA aid “the latest example of their inadequate and unacceptable response to this crisis.”

Tejada struggled to find food in the months following the storm. Her apartment in San Juan was flooded and condemned for being unfit for human habitation, and power outages were frequent. The final straw was when her daughter saw three muggers kill an older man.

“The little one saw it from the balcony,” she says, translated by Lopez. “They were on the balcony getting air, it was dark, and there was no electricity. She actually saw the man get killed in front of her. And she remembers.”

The refugees got a temporary reprieve on April 20, when FEMA, responding to a request from Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Roselló, announced it would extend TSA funding to Puerto Rican families for another month.

PETER GUDAITIS, executive director of New York Interfaith Disaster Services (NYDIS), argues that while it is legally the federal government’s responsibility to assist evacuees, the city’s response has also been inadequate.

In February, it quietly closed the emergency service center at the Julia De Burgos Performance and Arts Center in East Harlem, which had been set up to help evacuees from Puerto Rico and other hurricane-devastated areas last September.

“People that chose to come to New York and are here in New York are New York City’s problem, whether they get federal funding or not,” Gudaitis says. “Because the alternative is just that they end up on the street or in the shelter system, or they have mentally ill children, or they’re getting dumped on hospitals if they have medical problems and they can’t pay their bills.”

While organizations like NYDIS can help families move into apartments with rental deposits, furniture and transportation, applicants have to prove that they can afford to pay the rent before they can access those services, Gudaitis notes. And Puerto Rico has yet to be rebuilt, with another storm sea-

son coming in a few months.

“The governor of Puerto Rico says they want people to return to the island. Return to what exactly? A damaged home with no power, no access to water? A hospital that’s two or three hours away that’s barely functioning on generators still?” he says. “It’s like sending people back to a war zone.”

Miranda says she’s not going back. “She said that in two months she was able to complete a home attendant course, she got certified and it is with a lot of pleasure that she will be taking care of the elderly,” Lopez translates. “Here she says there is an assurance of electricity, water. She’s going to continue to study. And her son is going to school and that’s a sure thing — in Puerto Rico the schools are closed. She feels she can reach certain goals here.”
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SEEING GREEN
DEVELOPER ENVISIONS 30-STORY TOWERS BY BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN. NEIGHBORS SAY, NO WAY.

By Rico Cleffi

egapower, shady developers, community resistance — it’s a story so commonplace these days it is almost a bad joke. But this time the developers might be aiming a bit too high, pushing the community a little too far.

Bruce Eichner of Continuum Company, LLC wants to build a series of towers at the million-square-foot site of a former Timeshare industry giant, Morris J. Golombuck Inc at the southernmost section of Franklin Avenue in Brooklyn. The development — up to six buildings, with at least two in the 30-story range — could block out the sun that shines on the prized foliage growing a block away at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. So far, the Botanic Garden has been silent about this project and did not return requests for comment.

Beyond the garden’s walls, Eichner’s plans have stoked fears of more gentrification and displacement in Crown Heights and nearby Flatbush.

The developer claims half the planned apartments would be below market rate, though it remains unclear what percent of the development would actually be affordable for neighborhood residents. Market-rate metrics include New York City’s wealthier outlying enclaves, tilting the scales toward higher incomes. Eichner also appears to be attempting to head off community opposition by securing construction financing from the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, in exchange for a commitment to use union construction labor.

Continuum Company referred The Indypendent’s inquiries to Lupe Boyd, a public-relations operative with a history of working with politicians of color. The move signals that Eichner is looking to pursue a strategy similar to that taken by the backers of the Bedford Union Armory project, green-lit by the City Council last year. BFC Partners presented the Armory development as beneficial to the surrounding Caribbean neighborhood and pledged to include a recreation center, space for local nonprofits and “affordable housing,” in addition to luxury condos. Todd-Medina insisted to The Indy that “there’s nothing to report” about the spice factory development. The project is “fluid,” she said.

Still, community members have no shortage of concerns about Eichner, who has made headlines in recent weeks for suing his partners over the funding of a condo tower in the Flatiron District. Eichner has the Trumpian distinction of having failed in the casino business and of being forced to settle for fraud with New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. He paid out $7.5 million in 2014 and was barred from the timeshare industry as part of the deal with Schneiderman, who accused him of deceptive advertising.

Beyond the garden’s walls, Eichner’s plans have stoked fears of more gentrification and displacement in Crown Heights and nearby Flatbush.

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Continuum Company referred The Indypendent’s inquiries to Lupe Boyd, a public-relations operative with a history of working with politicians of color. The move signals that Eichner is looking to pursue a strategy similar to that taken by the backers of the Bedford Union Armory project, green-lit by the City Council last year. BFC Partners presented the Armory development as beneficial to the surrounding Caribbean neighborhood and pledged to include a recreation center, space for local nonprofits and “affordable housing,” in addition to luxury condos. Todd-Medina insisted to The Indy that “there’s nothing to report” about the spice factory development. The project is “fluid,” she said.

Still, community members have no shortage of concerns about Eichner, who has made headlines in recent weeks for suing his partners over the funding of a condo tower in the Flatiron District. Eichner has the Trumpian distinction of having failed in the casino business and of being forced to settle for fraud with New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. He paid out $7.5 million in 2014 and was barred from the timeshare industry as part of the deal with Schneiderman, who accused him of deceptive advertising.

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Vox Pop

How Can We Make the Police Less Deadly?

Interviews by Apoorva Tadepelli
Photos by Elia Gran

More than 390 people have been killed nationwide by police in the first four months of this year according to killedbypolice.net. Among the victims is Saheed Vassell, 34, who was gunned down in the streets of Crown Heights, Brooklyn on April 4 when police opened fire within seconds of encountering him wielding a metal pipe. The incident was the latest in a long line of NYPD shootings and ignited protests that drew hundreds of people. We asked a cross-section of New Yorkers passing through Union Square how the problem of police shootings should be addressed. We heard a wide range of responses.

Roy
Williamsburg
Officers should be taught practical self defense — to use their hands, or a police baton — so they can neutralize or take down someone. Even if you shoot you don’t have to kill. They always claim that they didn’t know what their victim was holding was not a gun — there’s no such thing. They know what a gun looks like. There definitely should be less guns. It’s possible to have a police force without guns. They can have tasers.

Fadwa
Midtown West
I’m originally from France, and there even though there is a lot of police violence, fatalities are avoided. Fatalities happen because people react immediately. But proximity to the community gives knowledge of the area, which makes their reactions more sensitive.

Haroon Chaudery
East Village
I work in artificial intelligence. It’s possible to have technology to help police officers make decisions in escalated moments. Maybe down the road, someone could develop a pair of glasses that could alert the officer when the probability of a suspect holding a gun is high. Of course, this solution would probably bring along a host of new issues, including privacy concerns if the technology was also used for things like person identification using face detection algorithms.

Albor Ruiz
Woodside
Police don’t respect citizens. They’re holding a cell phone, or a wallet, and the police just react. The police have become more of a military force than a community force. They need more training. The police used to do community service. The way they dress is not appropriate for a city. It’s more appropriate for a war.

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This Year the Lifetime Career Achievement Award Will Be Given to Herb Boyd

The author of 23 books, HERB BOYD is widely respected journalist, historian, writer and activist. His latest book is Black Detroit: A People’s History of Self Determination. garnered rave reviews from major media outlets, including the New York Times and the Washington Post. Boyd shares his reflections on this major American city detailing the significant contributions of African Americans to Detroit and Detroit to the nation.

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Y es, we are in an adversarial relationship. It sets up your ego versus theirs. It sets up your wealth versus others. It puts up a wall of energy, which you separate from meaningful interactions with friends and family. People feel more isolated from the experience of knowing things that you don't. So, you're not alone, but it's a false isolation when you're reaching out to others, who you now see as your tormentors.

But the most important thing you need to remember is that you are not alone. You need to find other people, who are not just like you, but who are more like you. That's why you need to find people who you can connect with, who understand what you're going through, and who can help you.

I have been a successful programmer for over 20 years, and I have seen the evolution of Facebook. It started as a simple platform for people to connect with each other, and it has grown into a complex network of data and algorithms that control our lives. This is not a coincidence. It is a strategy. Because if you want to understand how Facebook works, you need to understand how it makes money.

Facebook makes money by selling your data. They sell it to advertisers, who use it to target you with ads. They also sell it to third-party companies that use it to create new products and services. And they sell it to other governments, who use it to create policies and regulations.

But the problem is that this system is not sustainable. It is not fair. It is not just. It is not ethical. And it is not legal. So, we need to fight back. We need to fight against Facebook's monopoly and its control over information.

The Indy's website. Think of all the natural incentives Facebook has to change its behavior. They could use the money they make from selling your data to build a new, better, more transparent system. They could use it to make Facebook a place where people can connect and learn from each other, without fear of being watched or controlled.

But Facebook is not doing that. They are not using the money they make to improve the platform. They are not using it to fight against corporate power. They are not using it to fight against the surveillance state.

So, what can we do? We need to come together and demand change. We need to demand that Facebook stop selling our data and start making its platform open and transparent. We need to demand that Facebook stop controlling our information and start letting us control it.

We need to demand that Facebook stop being a tool for the surveillance state and start being a tool for the people. We need to demand that Facebook stop being a tool for the wealthy and powerful and start being a tool for everyone.

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PEOPLE BEFORE PIPELINES

1,500 environmentalists rallied in Albany, April 23, demanding Gov. Andrew Cuomo put a halt to pipelines and related infrastructure pumping fracked gas into New York. The activists, 55 of whom were arrested during a sit-in outside the governor’s office, want Cuomo to move rapidly toward implementing an energy system based solely on renewable sources. Among those taking part in the protest were two candidates seeking Cuomo’s job, Democrat Cynthia Nixon and the Green Party’s Howie Hawkins.

NOT SO FAST

While environmentalists rallied in Albany, Texas-based Transco was planning to refile a permit application with the NY Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for its Williams pipeline. On April 20, the agency denied a key water permit to the project, which would carry gas from Pennsylvania through New Jersey and beneath New York Harbor. DEC’s announcement happened to come during a press conference held by Cynthia Nixon in Rockaway, Queens, to support a bill that would set New York on course for 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.

WHEN THE TEST GETS IT WRONG

Imagine you are in grade school, taking a test that could determine whether your teacher keeps her job, the amount of funding your school receives or even if it will remain open. There’s a multiple choice question on the screen in front of you, but every option — A, B, C — reads “system error.” The software glitch, which occurred on April 18 while students in 263 New York school districts were taking a digitized version of the state English exam, was ultimately ironed out. But the fiasco is indicative of a wider problem: the state’s over reliance on standardized testing. In the past two school years, approximately 20 percent of New York parents have refused to force their children to take the state’s standardized tests. They say the tests are developmentally inappro-
On April 14 the New York Working Families Party cast caution to the wind and voted to endorse Cynthia Nixon over incumbent Gov. Andrew Cuomo. While Nixon received strong backing from frontline community groups such as Make the Road Action, Citizen Action and NY Communities for Change, several of the WFP’s largest remaining union affiliates — SEIU 32 BJ, CWA Local 1 and the United Federation of Teachers — reaffirmed their support for Cuomo and exited the party, taking their checkbooks with them.

With the Working Families Party facing an uncertain future, Michael Kinnucan of the Democratic Socialists of America reflects on why the DSA and other left-wing groups have much to learn from WFP’s experience even as they forge their own path forward.

By Michael Kinnucan

In 1998, when George Pataki was governor, Rudy Giuliani was mayor and the New York minimum wage was $4.25 an hour, some people with politics not far from the Democratic Socialists of America had an idea that was way smarter than anything we have come up with so far. They figured that if you could combine grassroots energy with labor-movement money and personnel, and exploit the fact that New York election law lets third parties endorse other parties’ candidates, you could build a permanent, self-sustaining progressive electoral operation that could coordinate a independent labor movement’s political strategy, institutionalize skills and experience, build political careers from the ground up, and win dramatic reforms.

This strategy paid off massively. The Working Families Party is by far the most successful thing the left has done in New York in my lifetime, because it won things like substantial wage increases, free child care and guaranteed parental leave for working-class New Yorkers. Very few left projects in the United States since 1970 can point to accomplishments like that.

The contradiction inherent in that strategy had to do with the politics of the labor movement. You absolutely couldn’t do it without the unions, because organized labor is the essential working-class institution, and the only possible source of funding on the scale and stability required to build this sort of thing. But doing this with the labor movement posed its own risks. For structural reasons, most unions are always going to be enormously vulnerable to pressure from politicians. Depending on union money and holding a labor coalition together always risked the party’s political independence. But you can’t run this kind of thing out of your basement — not sustainably, not for the long haul. Without union funding, there was no way at all.

Ironically, as the power and confidence of the Working Families Party increased, so did the problem. The stronger the party and the progressive left it represented became, the greater the incentive for powerful Democrats to take it down. The fix was probably already in when Bill de Blasio, the WFP’s preferred candidate, was elected New York City mayor in 2013. When the party’s grass roots tried to avoid endorsing Gov. Andrew Cuomo for re-election in 2014, powerful Democrats — Cuomo above all — began to move in for the kill.

I suspect that the people running WFP saw the threat very clearly. Hence the decision to take the model national, to expand as quickly as possible and avoid being vulnerable to the politics of New York.

By 2018, the dilemma was obvious in New York. Endorse Cuomo and discredit the project, or refuse and lose the unions. Break right or break left. The party broke left, and now we’re in a new era, navigating new terrain. Perhaps the national expansion will save the party, or perhaps the newly confident and aggressive grass roots will be enough to sustain it.

Maybe, maybe not. In any case, it’s a new strategy now. And it’s a scary moment for everyone fighting for the working class in New York.

Ever since I started engaging in

Continued on page 16
The Indypendent
May 2018

No more than 200 years old. Before geographical things
where else. Especially in America, being a place full of
bring forward the conversation of the fact that people
your passport from. So this whole imaginary border cri-
citizens, but the first question I still get asked is where’s
I am an immigrant, a self-identified one for life, but I’ve
How did that experience shape your worldview?

When I first heard Alsaarah’s voice on
NPR’s “Tiny Desk Concert” pro-
gram, I was sold. Her soft but proud
voice serenaded me in Arabic and I
couldn’t care less that I didn’t un-
derstand the lyrics. Accompanied by a blend of electric
and traditional African instruments like the oud and the
goblet drum, Alsaarah, also known as Sarah Mohamed
Abunama-Elgadi, describes her sound as East-African
retro pop.

A lot of when immigrants are being vilified and
scapegoated in Washington, the Sudanese-born Brook-
lynite proudly declares, “I am an immigrant, a self-iden-
tified one for life.” Her voice is all the more poignant
in the turbulent times and, as I learned when we spoke
this April, the turbulent past, it arises from.

CHARINA NADURA: Alsaarah, tell us about yourself.

You’re from Yemen, but you were born in Sudan.

ALSAarah: I was born in Khartoum. My parents were
both grassroots activists. They did a lot of human rights
and environmental rights work. They loved art and mu-
sic. I grew up in a really educated and leftist household.
There was curfews and on Thursday nights we would
have these gatherings in the house with a lot of creative
people. Then in 1989 the coup happened. And things
got really tense for everybody in Khartoum, especially
for people that were already politically active. My dad’s
friends started to get arrested. So my mom got really
concerned about our safety. She decided to move us to
Yemen, which was wise because my dad was arrested
shortly after that. He ended up sneaking out of Sudan
about two years later to join us in Yemen.

And then there was a war in Yemen in 1994. They
deployed any foreign people working for foreign com-
panies and NGOs like my mom. We ended up having to
figure out where to go. We couldn’t go back to Sudan yet
because things were still really crazy and that’s how we
ended up in the United States.

How did that experience shape your worldview?

I am an immigrant, a self-identified one for life, but I’ve
had my U.S. passport for many years now. I am a U.S.
citizen, but the first question I still get asked is where’s
your passport from. So this whole imaginary border cri-
sis, I feel like it’s really important to talk to people, to
bring forward the conversation of the fact that people
move. It’s normal. It’s been happening forever. In fact,
it is humanity’s first anti-poverty plan. You move some-
where else. Especially in America, being a place full of
immigrants. To me, if you are not a person of the First
Nations, you are a fucking immigrant.

The way we deal with borders now is really new, its
no more than 200 years old. Before geographical things
like a river was the end of your empire. A mountain was
the natural border. And even then you crossed them as
you pleased.

Borders are racist. Borders are a new form of
colonization.

How did you feel when you learned Sudan was on
Trump’s travel ban list last year?

The ban made me realize how important it was to do a
lot of outreach work in the States and to start talk-
ing about being an immigrant really openly. There’s so
many of us having these kinds of conversations. And it’s
very healthy. You know, they always say, “Wherever
there is poison, the medicine is right next to it.” I feel
like that’s really what’s happening. There is a poison and
not too far is the medicine.

Where does your interest in music stem from?

When I was a kid, my dad had this cassette tape that was
made and recorded by this collective of writers, poets,
and musicians, and it was performed by a choir made
up of singers from the Conservatoire of Music and the
University of Khartoum. It was all anti-imperialist songs
and know-your-rights songs. The tape wasn’t allowed to
be in existence, so people were passing it around and I
memorized that tape forward and backward.

How has your life experience of moving from Sudan
to Yemen to the United States and settling in Brooklyn
shaped your music?

It made me conscious of the fact that different peoples
different music very early on, because I was literally
moving from place to place to listen to different music.
And it made me think about certain questions. People
would be like, “Who are you? Where are you from?”
Normally a young child would not have to think,
“Where am I from?”

Yemeni people wanted to know who I was. And
moving to Yemen, it also made me realize immediately
that I wasn’t an Arab because they did not consider me
an Arab. It immediately made me the consciousness of
the differences between Sudanese and Arabs — even
though we speak the same language. I was confused
because in Sudan I was Arab. Then, when I left Sudan,
I wasn’t an Arab. “So what am I?” I wondered. The
question started way early for me. I started listening to
music looking for clues.

Tell me about your last album Manara.

Manara, which literally translates to “lighthouse” is
about migration, movement and borders. Also my per-
sonal story is part of it. Manara is a personal reflec-
tion about what does it mean to have a home, what is
a home? Water is also a theme in the album, because to
me water is the oldest highway, it’s the oldest road and
it’s still where a lot of us come for peace with ourselves.

You describe your music as East African retro pop.
What does that mean?

I hate the term world music. I hate everything about it.
So I refuse to have my music called just that. And when
I was younger, I remember I used to read a lot of Audre
Lorde’s work. She’s an amazing poet, philosopher and
thinker — just a powerhouse overall. She had written
something really interesting about the importance of
self-defining and self-labeling. For her the idea is, “If
I don’t correctly label myself, I’m leaving myself at the
mercy of somebody else to label me for me.”

That really struck me. If I deny myself the three-di-
ensional frame that I want, I am just going to end up
being flattened out and pressed into something that I am
not. I draw from a lot of East African sounds for inspi-
ration. I’m a huge fan of Taarab sounds from Zanzibar
and from Kenya. I’m a fan of Ethiopian traditional mu-
sic, of Sudanese music, of Somali music. The way I re-
fect Sudanese and Nubian music is through a Pan-East
African lens. That’s why I picked up that label. And my
music is retro pop. It’s not traditional.

Your songs are all in Arabic. Do you feel it is the im-
portant to sing in your native language?

Language is personality, it reflects certain traits in peo-
ples. It shapes the way we sing even. I like it that my music
is in Arabic because then I can send it to my aunts in
Sudan and Saudi Arabia.

What role do you see music playing in shaping our
society today?

It’s important for all of us to weave our story into the
larger network. In a very honest way. And when you do
that you give people the space to learn from your story
so maybe they don’t have to go through the same thing
or if they’re going through the same thing it helps them
through it. But more than anything it’s a way to make
sure that you feel remembered. It’s like as soon as you
feel you’re remembered and you’re present and you are
here, it immediately makes you feel like a part of some-
thing bigger and it makes you want to give back because
you feel a collective responsibility.

This interview has been lightly edited for concision
and clarity.
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THE INDYPENDENT

MAY 2018

15
The Independent
May 2018

WFP isn't that we're so brilliant we see that it would be nice that ridiculous. Democrats, they endorsed Cuomo, the fools! I always found would sneer at it. Not a real party, barely independent of the WORKING FAMILIES PARTY
Continued from page 13

New York politics, whenever WFP came up, some leftist would sneer at it. Not a real party, barely independent of the Democrats, they endorsed Cuomo, the fools! I always found that ridiculous.

The difference between us and the people who founded WFP isn't that we're so brilliant we see that it would be nice to have an independent third party and they don't, or that we're so savvy we saw that Cuomo was a bad man in 2014. It doesn't take a genius to see that. The difference between us and them is that they found an organizing model that worked and changed the world, and we haven't yet. Having good positions is easy. Getting power so they matter is hard.

What worked in 1998 won't work now, because the world has changed. The WFP is moving on to a new thing, and so is DSA. But for those of us on the left who want to have the power to win fights, write laws and change the world, the WFP's pre-2018 strategy, contradictions and all, is a model we have a lot to learn from. The lives of working-class New Yorkers are better because they figured out a way to build sustainable power and win.

Michael Kinnucan is a writer and activist in Brooklyn. He is on the organizing committee of DSA’s Brooklyn Electoral Working Group.

BOOKS

SEENING GREEN
Continued from page 8

site-specific upzonings anywhere a developer agrees to build a certain amount of “affordable” housing within luxury developments. Since Eichner’s complex would ostensibly meet "able" housing within luxury developments. Continued from page 8

By Christopher Stewart

When you are gay and in the closet, damage is different. Pain doesn’t destroy you all at once. It leaks out like an oil spill. The cleanup can take a long time, the wreckage can be everlasting. Help can sometimes make matters worse. For Niru, the primary narrator of Uzodimma Iweala’s new novel See No Evil, his coming out is a gay-teen nightmare. Plenty of books have been written about teens coming out, but few to my knowledge deal with a protagonist who is both black and gay. Niru is not only a pioneer of the emerging black-LGBTQ-teen genre, but a martyr to the cause.

Yet when we first meet Niru we learn he is from a relatively affluent family living in the suburbs of Washington D.C., goes to a private school and is Harvard-bound. Iweala, whose Beasts of No Nation followed child soldiers in West Africa, operates best within the tumultuous battleground of adolescence and his prose takes Niru’s developing psyche to new depths, turning the doopy cement of Niru’s high school counterparts — "Drink, drink, drink" — into traumatic reminders for his central character.

“There are kids smoking weed in the basement of someone’s parents’ house and there are kids fucking in the bathroom... And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an in the bathroom…” And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an in the bathroom…” And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an in the bathroom…” And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an in the bathroom…” And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an in the bathroom…” And then there is me, black, sober and scared to death by locker room banter from an

By Michael Kinnucan

Michael Kinnucan is a writer and activist in Brooklyn. He is on the organizing committee of DSA’s Brooklyn Electoral Working Group.

WORKING FAMILIES PARTY
Continued from page 13

The difference between us and the people who founded WFP isn’t that we’re so brilliant we see that it would be nice to have an independent third party and they don’t, or that...
I
A History More Beautiful and Terrible: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History
By Jeanne Theoharis
Beacon Press, 2018

In a history more beautiful and terrible: the uses and misuses of civil rights history

Jeanne Theoharis takes aim at what she calls the civil rights “fable.” This fable states that “Rosa Parks sat down, Dr. King delivered his inspirational speech and American democracy righted itself of its major flaw, racial discrimination.” Theoharis highlights the misuse of this fable by those who wish to declare that the work of the civil rights movement is finished and denigrate contemporary black lives matter activists.

For example, from being saints who seem to float outside history, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King are here portrayed as two tough-minded, often frustrated activists struggling in a wider movement that faced serious opposition from most white people, the federal government, and the national media, notwithstanding the self-congratulations all have enveloped themselves in decades after the fact.

Theoharis devotes considerable space to repudiating the idea that the civil rights movement before 1965 was almost exclusively focused on the South. Instead, she highlights struggles in New York City, Detroit and Los Angeles before the riots of 1964–68 made the issue of racism in the North a national concern. Far from being most white people, the federal government and the national media, notwithstanding the self-congratulations all have enveloped themselves in decades after the fact.

Young people played a significant role in the movement, courageously challenging power and demanding that elders overcome their caution. Women leaders abounded and often bristled at efforts to minimize their achievements or keep them out of the spotlight. These tensions were already palpable by the 1963 March on Washington. Theoharis highlights Coretta Scott King, who in some respects was more politically left than her husband. The movement was disliked, spied on and vilified by a wide swath of government institutions and white people.

In the strongest chapter, Theoharis describes the 1955–56 Montgomery bus boycott. Rosa Parks and organizer E.D. Nixon are recast as longtime activists, struggling in an environment where the prospects of mass struggle were bleak. Although teenager Claudette Colvin’s earlier refusal to give up her seat on the bus is often portrayed as a struggle that didn’t qualify as “respectable,” here it is shown as partially effective, as it highlighted the restlessness of young people and spurred Parks to commit civil disobedience and trigger the citywide bus boycott. The boycott, an impressive feat of collective action, worked because it was disruptive, although this produced not only opposition from the white community but also tensions with the national NAACP.

White people used many tactics to oppose it, from violence to claims that it was just a question of a “few bad apples” among the drivers—what should sound familiar to those following the news these days. Theoharis’ account is revelatory and global justice, clarifying continuities and present-day struggles and ways in which the civil rights agenda was not fully achieved.

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Theoharis’ account is revelatory and disturbing. For example, she argues that claims today that schools have “re-segregated” in the last couple of decades are misleading because in some places, including New York City, genuine desegregation never happened. The fable—the worshiping of Dr. King and Parks as saints detached from their historical and political context—emerges as an obstacle to clearly understanding the past and present. Recovering the challenges and contradictions of the real history is indispensable to grounding today’s struggles.

I do have one reservation about this book. It emphasizes the constraints of the civil rights movement so much that it obscures its achievements. A clear-eyed assessment of those achievements, neither vacuously celebrating the United States as a self-correcting democracy nor pessimistically seeing the reassertion of white supremacy as inevitable, would have strengthened it. Similarly, it doesn’t illuminate the political context that made possible Dr. King’s visits to the White House to meet with three presidents. By 1948, an alliance of labor unions, Northern African Americans and white liberals was powerful enough to force the inclusion of civil rights in the Democratic Party platform. That alliance was able to isolate the formally segregated South, even as it had a less clear commitment to the more complex task of transforming the North.

But there are only so many things one book can do, and as a guide to the beautiful, terrible history of determined, angry movement activists and the sometimes fierce, sometimes polite resistance they faced, this one is invaluable.
Hey Billy, is it time to praise Starbucks, not damn them? I mean that incident in Philly where they called the police on a couple of black guys for sitting down was pretty disgusting. But maybe it was a much-needed wake-up call. They’re closing all their stores after all for an anti-racial bias training.

— MARNIE, Jackson Heights

WHAT? Howard Schultz is a model West Coast right-wing manufacturer of zombie-inducing, fake, neo-European monoculture and a white supremacist of long standing. For years, the Starbucks CEO screwed Elijian farmers out of fair prices for Sidamo, Yirgacheffe and Harar coffees by corrupting international certification officials. Whether it’s the Guatemalan children laboring in coffee groves, inner-city African Americans facing eviction for the occupation of Palestine — pick your race. The Mermaid-worth no-nipples likes the whites. To bring it back to your race. The Mermaid-with-no-nipples because Starbucks outposts genocide and the occupation of Palestine — pick your race.

Dear Charlene,

I don’t question David Buckel’s decision to die. What goes on in a soul? I do know he took responsibility for all of us, and for that we should be grateful.

His suicide begs the question, “Why is our response to Earth’s crisis so muted, so ho-hum?” Climate change seems like the stuff of a blockbuster film, but is a serious subject that is threatening all life. It’s severity is not really getting through to us. In Hollywood, mass death comes with all those special effects, but the real apocalyptic can’t be monetized.

With his ultimate sacrifice, David has alerted us to something that we have forgotten. Every social movement has alerted us to something that we have forgotten. Every social movement has alerted us to something that we have forgotten. Every social movement has alerted us to something that we have forgotten. Every social movement has alerted us to something that we have forgotten.

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— CHARLENE, Jamaica Plains

Dear Reverend,

I got the news about David Buckel. He took his life by fire in Prospect Park early on a weekend morning to protest climate change. I felt that end was not needed, but there must be another way to express it.

— BILLY

FROM KONY2012 TO MUSEVENI2018
JOIN US ON WED MAY 16 7PM
SCREENING OF
ABRILLIANT GENOCIDE
DIRECTED BY EBDONY BUTLER
This award-winning documentary tells the part of the Ugandan tragedy selectively left out of the KONY2012 propaganda video.
Q&A FOLLOWING THE SCREENING WITH:
MILTON ALLIMADI
Ugandan-born, publisher of the Black Star News, Professor of African History at John Jay College
HELEN EPSTEIN
Author of “Another Fine Mess: America, Uganda, and the War on Terror”, Professor of Human Rights and Global Public Health, Bard College
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TOWARDS A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE LEFT

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FRIDAY, MAY 4
OPENING NIGHT
SALUTE - NYLHA
The Iron Triangle - Stop Gentrification in NYC!
Bowery Tenants Fight Back

#COUNTMEIN
The Cost Of Construction
Stop Deadly Non-Union Construction Work!

SATURDAY, MAY 5
AUSTERITY SUCKS
SINK (U.K.), STIRIAIVIS - A Living Graphic Novel
Freelance Nation - (Uber Story) & Gig Economy Lie
American Courtesans - Sex Workers Are Workers Too

SUNDAY, MAY 6
WOMEN ORGANIZE THE WORLD!
Adios Amor: The Search for Maria Moreno - Trailblazer!
DOLORES - Huerta, A Rebel, Activist, Feminist, Mother
Berta Didn’t Die, She Multiplied - Land Defender in Honduras
Gabby Antonio Smashes the Imperialist, White Supremacist, Capitalist Patriarchy!

THURSDAY, MAY 10
POISONED AT WORK
Dirty Laundry - The Mesothelioma Movie
The 39th - Outsider Runs for Election
Amidst Corporate Bribery, Corruption
Howard Zinn: A People’s History Of The U.S.
- A Voice for the Voiceless, 1929 to 2009

MONDAY, MAY 7
NY STATE NURSES/SHORTS
Healthcare Workers On the Line
PLUS! Our Dysfunctional Political System
We Have Our Ways, The 39th, Picket Line,
A Strike And An Uprising - Black Women
Rise Up In Texas. Beloved CEO Replaced
In Unique Scenes From A Protest

TUESDAY, MAY 8
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ROCK!
Teacher Of the Year - Personal & Political
Charlie vs Goliath - Money Out Of Politics!
Underdog Candidate Runs for Senate

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9
OVERLOOKED & OVERDUE!
The Sea Is My Brother - WWII Marine Vets
Bottom Dollars - Minimum Wage Loophole
for Disabled. COMPLICIT (China) - Sick
& standing up to global electronics industry!

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