WE WILL BE HEARD

THERE’S A CULTURAL REVOLUTION UNDERWAY THAT BRETT KAVANAUGH’S CONFIRMATION CAN’T STOP.
LINDA MARTÍN ALCOFF, P4
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE INDYPENDENT

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NEW YORK THEATER WORKSHOP
79 E. 4th St., Mhnthn

MON OCT 15
6:30PM–8:30PM • FREE
PANEL: REPORTING ON IMMIGRATION
Journalists and grassroots advocates discuss the impact immigration coverage has had on immigrant communities and explore ways reporters can amplify the stories of immigrants more safely, ethically and effectively. Panel moderated by Garry Pierre-Pierre, founder of the Haitian Times and CUNY’s Center for Community and Ethnic Media.
THE NEW SCHOOL WELCOME CENTER
172 Fifth Ave., Mhnthn

SAT OCT 20–DEC 16
THU–FRI, 3–7PM; SAT–SUN, 1–5PM • FREE
EXHIBITION: WAR AND PEACE IN LIBERIA
Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros’ powerful photographs played an important role in moving the world to action and ending the Second Liberian Civil War (1999–2003). Hondros risked death to send frontline images of women and children being killed by the hundreds from front pages around the world. Hetherington embedded with soldiers fighting dictator Charles Taylor’s forces and provided documentation of the rebels shipping civilians. He was also targeted by Taylor’s assassination squads.
BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
128 Pierrepont St, Bklyn

THU OCT 25
2:20PM–3:45PM • FREE
TALK: OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA: PUERTO RICO’S FUTURE
Puerto Rican independence leader Oscar López Rivera spent 35 years in prison for “seditionist conspiracy” until his sentence was commuted by President Obama in 2017. He discusses the state of the independence movement in the context of the island’s ongoing financial crisis and Hurricane Maria.”
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7PM–12AM • $5–$10
PARTY: REAL MONSTERS!
Freddy Krueger may chase us in our nightmares, but plenty of real monsters — landlords, bosses, wardens and bankers — stalk us during our waking hours. Drink and dance away the horrors of medical debt, college loans and high rents. Proceeds benefit Mayday Space, a multi-story organizing center and social hub in Bushwick. MAYDAY SPACE 176 St Nicholas Ave., Bklyn

SAT OCT 27
11AM–5PM • FREE
SAT ARCHIVES FOR HISTORY: THE WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER 158 Buffalo Ave., Bklyn

SUN OCT 28
8PM–12AM • $15 suggested donation
PARTY: RED SCARE
Dress as your favorite revolutionary or wear something red (and spooky) to this fundraiser for the Democratic Socialists’ Central Brooklyn branch. VERSO BOOKS 20 Jay St., 10th Fl, Bklyn

THU NOV 1
11PM • $20
MUSIC: AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA (ATFA)
Using twin tape decks to unleash rare disco, soul and pop releases from West Africa onto the dance floor, ATFA’s DJ set is unlike any other. Joining ATFA are special guests Dâm-Funk, nicknamed the “ambassador of boogie-funk,” and Miranda Maxwell. ELSEWHERE 599 Johnson Ave., Bklyn

MON NOV 5
6:30PM–8:30PM • FREE
TALK: ANGELA DAVIS
Activist, scholar and writer Angela Davis discusses politics and aesthetics in the era of Trump, #MeToo and the women’s movement. Writer and performer Miranda Davis moderates and brings the case is far from closed. TRUTH & RECONCILIATION, p14

EVENTS

SPOILS OF WAR: July 20, 2003: Joseph Duo, a Liberian militia commander loyal to the government, exults after firing a rocket-propelled grenade at rebel forces at a key strategic bridge in Monrovia. Among the photos on view at the Bronx Documentary Center starting Oct. 20.


COMMING FORWARD, P4
We are living through a cultural revolution in which more and more women refuse to remain silent.

KNEE TO THE GROIN, P5
A woman describes how she survived two attempted rapes.

SAVING NEW YORK, P6
A bill to preserve NYC’s small businesses might finally have its day after 32 years.

BRIEFS, P7
Fossil fuels, corruption and a bit of good news too.

CLEANING UP THE INDUSTRY, P8
Laundry workers are fighting for higher wages and safe working conditions in El Barrio and beyond.

ONE FOR ALL, P9
A new movement breeds solidarity among construction workers.

THE GREAT GREEN HOPE, P10
The Green Party’s House Hawkins is the only progressive left in the governor’s race.

HOW’S IT GOING TO END? P11
Local and state races to watch in the midterm elections on Nov. 6.

THIS IS HOW IT IS DONE, P12
Progressives could learn a few lessons on building power from their GOP nemesis.

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION, P14
After decades, French authorities cop to the torture and execution of a young activist in Algeria. But the case is far from closed.

FRED MCDARRAH’S NEW YORK, P17
When the Village was both the edge and the center of American culture.

KICKING IT, P18
Recent memoirs recount the rise, fall and redemption of two of rock and roll’s great radicals.

OLD SONGS FOR A NEW DESPOT, P19
Guitarist Marc Ribot and friends retell the protest song and take on Trump.

TEMPERATURE RISING, P20
Michael Moore asks what went wrong on Nov. 9, 2016 and what can we do now.

THE GREAT (AND SECRET) AMERICAN BAKING CHAMPION, P21
Valery Lomas won one of the most watched cooking shows on TV. Here’s why you haven’t heard of her.

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P22
Our advice columnist answers readers’ questions on travel, America and ORWGs (old, rich, white guys).
We can’t say we didn’t try. Anti-rape activists all over the country mobilized and marched and called out senators with new forms of heartfelt testimonials combined with direct action in the streets. With Brett Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court nomination now confirmed, we know we lost the battle, but we found some new allies, new insights, and new methods to win the war.

What we witnessed is, in a real sense, the “best case scenario” for accusers of sexual assault. The principal accusation against Kavanaugh, as made by Christine Blasey Ford, was taken seriously. Her charge was investigated by the FBI. She had an excellent team of lawyers. Moreover, across the country, citizens who saw the investigative journalists of their own to follow through on the details of the case, and gave her story serious coverage. Both print and digital media solicited opinion essays by well-known feminist commentators.

And, of course, Blasey Ford is white, middle class, mature in age, the mother in a reassuringly heterosexual family and a professional whose expertise includes memory functions of the brain. She’s even blond.

Furthermore, Blasey Ford’s accusations were supported by other women, women she did not know previously. These women reported eyewitness accounts of similar behavior from Kavanaugh, involving alcohol-fueled sexual misconduct that occurred in close proximity to his male buddies, possibly for their benefit as much as his. Like Blasey Ford, these accusers have all gone on the record in public. Even if their accounts were not followed up by the FBI, they made it into the public airwaves. And, Blasey Ford was willing to subject herself to hours of public testimony in which a traumatic event in her life would be picked apart. She had to face questions from not just a single judge, but to lessen the scope of the retaliate, victim’s ghost their friends, their families, their own public lives. They delete twitter and facebook, leave jobs, and move.

Because of my scholarship in the area of sexual violence, I’ve had many students come to me over the years, looking for support, suggestions, safety. Some had their tires slashed, others had their friends harassed, their doors pounded on at all times of the night, their phones ringing of the hook. One received threatening letters from the perpetrator that he would be back to ‘finish the job.’

Now that there are more highly publicized cases like Ford’s, the retaliation can be spread to an anonymous army, an unseen horde of guerilla-style anti-feminist activists. Their motivation is not based on knowing the accuser or accused personally; rather, they are clear-minded at the growing power that victims—generally women—are gaining in the public sphere. This power was represented by Kavanaugh in his opening statement as a ‘whirlwind,’ a maelstrom of female emotion and confusion that will bring anarchy to our hallowed institutions.

This may seem like more than a bit of hysteria on Kavanaugh’s part, but it is true that this case was indeed at the nodal point of an intense political and cultural war zone, between political parties and political ideologies. At stake is the future of critical social policies that will affect millions of lives. And, because this case was so much in the headlines, it will have an impact on the capacity of victims to make accusations after a long time has passed, on the norms of teenage sexual behavior, and on the ways in which accusations will be heard, judged, and discredited in the future. This is what no doubt terrified the armies of skilled internet trolls who tried to silence Kavanaugh’s accusers.

Yet, in the ordinary cases of sexual assault accusations, one may still wonder about why there is such a low incidence of reporting. Why do victims of sexual violence so often remain silent, failing to report even serious crimes to the police?

Conservatives tended to delay that it is an obvious sign of malfeasance, an indication of deceit. Any self-respecting women would defend her honor immediately, they suggested, if she were truly violated. Any innocent accuser would refuse any further contact or communication with the man who assailed her dignity. Any other sort of behavior on her part is a sure sign that the charge is a falsification.

Some liberals contended, on the other hand, that silence is the effect of trauma. The crime itself is what silences victims by producing a heightened emotional state where fear determines all their actions.

Both are wrong. Silence and the decision not to report these very serious assaults is socially orchestrated, man-made. It is the result neither of deceit nor the natural conditions of trauma. Children are happy to talk. Adult women have an innate capacity to speak up for themselves. But this capacity is ambushed by social conventions about speaking about our sexual lives in detail, speaking against those with more social status than we have, speaking about our own, as opposed to others’ oppressions.

What made the Senate Committee confirmation hearings a “circus,” exactly? My suspicion is that many of those who declared this event as a “circus” find any detailed discussions of sexual events distasteful in the public sphere. The topic breaks a taboo on polite speech. The particulars are uncomfortable to hear the first time, much less repeated. The inevitable images that come to mind are repugnant. The calm and rational, civil dispositions that many conservatives imagine to have heretofore ruled the nation’s elite institutions cannot share space with these images of hands passing over bodies, mouths forcibly shut, penises thrust in faces, queues of boys awaiting the chance to engage in serial rapes. There is no way to speak about such events with language that will not be considered a transgression on polite civility.

Maybe it is natural that no one really wants to be forced to hear these descriptions of disturbing events. But some may also feel they are entitled to live in a genteel world where ugly and unpleasant stories can be kept out of the room.

The Democrats say they want VAWA strengthened. A reauthorization bill introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) in July would extend the VAWA as far as six months, allowing time to negotiate changes.

**Violence Against Women Act’s Uncertain Future**

While the Brett Kavanaugh confirmation hearings and the allegations of sexual assault brought against him by Christine Blasey Ford and at least two other women dominated headlines in September, the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was set to expire. As part of a larger short-term spending package that will avoid a government shutdown ahead of the midterm elections, Congress approved a short-term extension to the VAWA on Sept. 28. It ensures funding for programs that empowers victims of sexual assault and domestic violence receive will continue through Dec. 7. The Democrats say they want VAWA strengthened.

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By Linda Martín Alcoff

The Independent online edition, October 30, 2018
HOW I FOUGHT MY RAPISTS & WON

By Carol Lipton

The best way to stop rape in our culture would be for men and boys to stop raping. In the meantime, we women have to be ready to defend ourselves though, depending on circumstances, it’s not always possible.

In my lifetime I have successfully fought back against two armed rapists, one when I was 25, another when I was 48. I don’t ever want to have to do that again.

The first was in Washington, D.C., my last year in law school. I didn’t know him, and he came up upon me in the street brandishing what appeared to be a 6-inch hunting knife. He grabbed me by the right arm, which was his mistake, because I’m left handed. When he told me to “Shut the fuck up, bitch!” after I offered him money, I realized his goal was to rape me and maybe kill me.

I was 5 foot 4 inches and weighed about 120 pounds. In that moment I remembered what I read about martial arts, that you attack your opponent when he is off-center. As we turned to go into the alley, I swung around with my left hand and in midair, grabbed the blade of his knife. I was not cut. I quickly managed to get it pointed it right at his heart, about 1 inch away. Then I had a split second to make a decision — do I toss the knife, or do I stab him in the heart and have his blood gush all over me?

I decided that I would disarm him. I threw the knife away, and started screaming at the top of my lungs. Not a single person on Swann Street NW came out of their houses to help me. He landed a very powerful punch right between the eyes and sent me flying in the air, landing me on the street, badly hurting my back. Since I thought he might have a gun, I immediately began rolling over, as in basic training, until I saw him run away.

At the police lineup two weeks later, I met a pair of women from Antioch Law School who he raped. They were very angry that I didn’t kill him.

The second time was a push-in intruder to my Brooklyn apartment. He held a gun to my right temple for about 13 minutes, during which time he asked for my PIN number, pistol whipped me when I initially made a beeline for the front door, took my wallet and wedding ring. He handcuffed me behind my back, which hurt like hell. I’m a pianist, and my hands are very important to me. I asked myself what Charlie’s Angels would do, and I wriggled out of the handcuffs with my right hand, pretending to still be cuffed behind my back. After he sat me down on the bed in my darkened apartment, I saw my opportunity as he was unwrapping a piece of duct tape to put over my mouth and was not looking at me.

I kneed him in the groin with my left knee, then grabbed the barrel of his gun with my left hand, till I had it pointed down at the floor, all the while screaming loudly enough to wake the dead. He kicked me with a shoe that had cleats on it, and started to run out of my apartment. I chased him to the door and pushed him out, yelling “Get the fuck out of my apartment motherfucker!” and slammed the door on him. This time, the entire building and several neighbors who heard me scream gave chase. But because he had a stocking over his face, I was unable to identify him.

This time, my right ulnar nerve was permanently damaged, so I have tremendous weakness in my right hand and drop things all the time. I didn’t realize until I was in the emergency room how badly he had beaten me. I had no insurance at the time. I waited two years for Crime Victims to give me approval for psychotherapy, but could not afford to lay out the money for therapy and wait months for reimbursement, so I’ve never had treatment.

I’ve never had nightmares, but the way my PTSD manifests is I am extremely aware of anyone in my space, and I don’t want anyone walking behind me. I jump any time a car backfires. And I’m on edge and super alert every time I leave my apartment or go into an elevator.
ick of the chain pharmacies plastering New York’s corners with stock photos of grotesque-ly happy people? The Windex windows, wall-to-wall carpeting and Muzak atmosphere of fecundating bank branches? Tired of peering into the dark, padlocked spaces where your favorite butcher, vinyl purveyor, hairdresser used to greet you and wondering why the place has sat vacant for months? Feeling lost in a city that looks more and more like a suburb of itself day by day?

New York’s small businesses employ more than half of the city’s overall workforce. They often serve as a first rung on the economic ladder for working-class immigrants. And they are part of what makes New York New York.

“These small businesses are run by human beings, with families, with culture, with history in their neighborhoods, connecting to social networks that keep people in their neighborhoods alive,” says Jeremiah Moss, author of Vanishing New York. “In order to have a healthy city you need to have long-lasting stable businesses.”

Marni Halasa, who runs Red Eye Coffee in Chelsea with her husband, says that even though her store is small, it is popular because she and her spouse have created an intimate atmosphere. “People come to see my husband,” she says. “My husband knows when their grandkids are coming to visit them, when their kids are graduating, when they’re going on vacation — it’s what New Yorkers need! You don’t need an impersonal chain store. You need someone who knows your name.”

The lease on the couple’s café expires this year and Halasa says their landlord is hiking their rent well beyond what they can manage: “We feel like we’re in a chokehold. Either we take it or we have to leave. It’s really difficult because most spaces are even more expensive.”

There’s a bill before the City Council that could help Halasa and thousands of small business operators like her but the legislation has atrophied at councilmembers’ fingertips for three decades since it was introduced in 1936, largely thanks to the power of the city’s real estate lobbyists. This October, however, the Small Business Jobs Survival Act (SBJSA) is slated to have another chance at the New York City Council. The bill has come up for a vote before, but it has so far set back in taking a public position on SBJSA.

“The city’s Law Department raised no qualms with SBJSA when the bill was originally introduced. Its alleged illegality only became an issue in 2009 when it looked to pass, but it has since become the most frequent explanation given for not backing the legislation offered by the mayor and councilmembers, who straddle a line between satisfying their constituents and keeping out of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act’s crosshairs.”

“REBNY has been holding this back,” says Kirsten Theodos, cofounder of TakeBackNYC, a coalition of small business owners, residents and advocacy groups who support SBJSAs. “They have an unlimited amount of resources and it’s no secret that in New York City and in Albany they have a strong hold on our elected officials.”

Given REBNY’s reach, she is less optimistic than Moss that the legislation will pass this time around.

Corey Johnson received $63,000 from developers when he last ran for office, part of a $500,000 campaign chest that he shared with other candidates who later helped him secure the speakership in December. Nevertheless, Johnson’s office said the speaker is weighing the bill on its merits, not its legality.

“What is vitally here is that we discuss policy issues related to the bill,” a spokesperson told The Indy on Johnson’s behalf. “Bills are amended during the process and we are not going to tie ourselves to a legal interpretation.”

TakeBackNYC wants clarity going forward.

“The best thing to do is to get in writing from the speaker’s legal department — is the SBJSA constitution-al or not? Does New York City have the ability to enact this piece of legislation or not?” Theodos said.

The Small Business Congress, which also supports the legislation, is planning to boycott the upcoming hearing. It is convinced that Johnson is not as dedicated to giving the bill a fair airing as he claims and notes that the Small Business Committee chair, Mark Gjonaj opposes the legislation.

Even if SBJSA clears the council, it could hit a dead end when it reaches de Blasio’s desk, should advocates fail to garner a two-thirds majority to override the mayor.

“If the mayor thinks he can veto this bill and there not be a massive blowback to his political career, then he doesn’t understand New York,” Friends of SBJSA member David Eisenbach told The Indy.

De Blasio’s office did not respond to requests for comment.

It withstood numerous attempts to overthrow it in the Court of Appeals until it was eventually al-lowed to expire in 1963. The city’s Law Department raised no qualms with SBJSA when the bill was originally introduced. Its alleged illegality only became an issue in 2009 when it looked to pass, but it has since become the most frequent explanation given for not backing the legislation offered by the mayor and councilmembers, who straddle a line between satisfying their constituents and keeping out of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act’s crosshairs.”

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AMAZON FEELS THE BERN

By The Indypendent Staff

In news surrounding the mega retailer Amazon, New York appears to have been spared the presence of the company’s HQ2. Meanwhile, on Oct. 2, the mega-corporation announced it could spare the change to provide its employes a minimum $15 an hour. “This is what the political revolution is all about,” said Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) who has led a months long campaign calling on Amazon to pay its employees a living wage.

Last year, Amazon stoked fears of gentrification in New York and cities across North America when it announced it was looking for a location to establish a second corporate headquarters on the continent. Now it seems the company is zeroing in on towns in the Washington, D.C. metro area. Amazon’s founder, Jeff Bezos, met with the governors of Virginia and Maryland last month. The company already has a growing presence in New York, however, including a $355,000-square-foot distribution center in Staten Island, opened to be fully operational by Christmas, and has signed a 15-year lease at Brookfield Properties’ 5 Manhattan West in Midtown that will be home to its fashion, advertising and web services divisions. Amazon also owns the Whole Foods grocery chain, which operates 14 outlets in New York.

GREEN ON GREEN

While the state comptroller’s office finds itself ensnared in a scandal surrounding fossil fuel investments, NYC announced plans to put $4 billion from its pension funds toward renewable energy by 2021. The investment, double the city’s previous goal, comes after NYC comptroller Scott Stringer announced NYC would begin withdrawing funds from fossil fuel entities in January.

DIRTY POWER

Environmental groups sent a letter to the NY State Joint Commission on Public Ethics on Sept. 24, calling for an investigation after a report produced for WNYC revealed that the state’s top pension officer took a job with Williams Companies after investing public funds in the natural gas conglomerate. According to the report, Vicki Fuller left her position overseeing the $207 billion state retirement fund this summer and that same week took a seat on Williams’ board. During Fuller’s tenure at the comptroller’s office, the state pension fund invested over a $100 million in Williams bonds — even as the company’s stock value sunk by as much as 20 percent. It also used its position as a major Williams shareholder to back executive payouts totaling $62 million between 2014 and 2016.

THE INVISIBLE WALL

Visa and Green Card applicants will no longer be guaranteed the opportunity to make corrections should the lengthy forms they must submit contain errors or lack information. Immigration advocates describe the policy, which went into effect on Sept. 11, as the latest brick in the “invisible,” bureaucratic wall the Trump administration is erecting while the president calls for one to be built at the border. Also in September, the Trump administration announced plans to render recipients of federal food and housing assistance ineligible for Green Cards.

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RAPE

Linda Martin Alcoff

“Alcoff’s groundbreaking book draws on the author’s decades of experience as a scholar, an activist, and a survivor.”
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“Alcoff’s work is consistently insightful, clearly written, and well argued … The best book I have read in several years.”
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By Alex O'Brien Nicoll

The Independent

LAUNDRY WORKERS FIGHT TO END DIRTY LABOR PRACTICES

RINSE & REPEAT

The crowd gathered in Thomas Jefferson Park in East Harlem on June 28 was drenched but determined. They huddled under umbrellas, jumped over puddles forming at their feet and covered their signs with garbage bags to keep them dry.

Mahoma Lopez Garfias, co-director of the Laundry Workers Center (LWC), brought the crowd together for a rally as the rain stopped.

The protest was a bit of a coming home for the LWC. The group formed in 2011 to organize the laundry industry but the numerous laundromats, each with a limited number of employees proved more challenging than expected, so instead the center began to focus on other low-wage, high-immigrant industries. Most recently, the group led a campaign to unionize B&H Photo’s warehouses. Seven years later, it is back where it originally intended to begin.

“This is a groundbreaking campaign,” the center’s other co-director, Rosanna Rodriguez-Aran, says, “We’re trying to bring changes to the industry. Not just for this group of workers but for everyone.”

Juana (who declined to give her last name because of anti-immigrant sentiment) and Nicolas Benitez, the only two employees of TYS Laundromat in East Harlem, spoke in Spanish through a megaphone. They detailed their grievances: earning less than the minimum wage, receiving no gloves, masks or even toilet paper from their employer, no overtime pay or breaks either. Juana said that she had contracted gastritis while handling soiled laundry.

With the help of the LWC, Juana and Benitez have been meeting with other low-wage workers and labor advocates over the past eight months in the hope of building a coalition to support their efforts to organize not just their shop, but hundreds like it across the city. In the midst of a summer thunderstorm, at least 50 people turned up to support them.

The rally marked the inauguration of the first organized retail laundromat in New York, and potentially in the United States. The employees named their campaign Awakening, as they intend to be an example for laundry workers around the city — and potentially, across the country — to collectively bargain with their employers.

There is virtually no union density in the non-industrial laundry field. The combination of small, diffuse workplaces and a largely immigrant workforce afraid of retaliation, has made the industry very hard to organize. This leaves a large void for the non-traditional and worker-led organizing tactics of the LWC.

The rally followed the release of the center’s “Report on Working Conditions in the Retail Laundromat Industry.” Researchers surveyed 100 laundry employees in New York City, uncovering harsh and illegal working conditions in the retail laundromat workers. The report found, are 99 percent people of color, 86 percent female and 79 percent immigrants. Laundry workers often work alone or with one other employee, and as a result, 54 percent experience some form of harassment, often from customers. A quarter of workers who reported harassment had been called racial slurs at work.

They are often underpaid and overworked. One in five workers were paid less than minimum wage, according to the survey, while 36 percent of workers were underpaid or not paid at all for overtime. Almost a third of workers did not receive any sick days or time off and 15 percent were not provided breaks.

“Virtually all workers, 99 percent, have been exposed to hazardous materials while doing their job. This has led to roughly a quarter developing allergies and a fifth experiencing skin conditions. Often the worst exposure is from soiled clothes that customers bring in. Garfias heard workers complain of laundry bags full of blood, bed bugs and cockroaches. One worker, he said, “found a dead cat in a laundry bag.”

Meanwhile, one in five laundry employees were forced to purchase their own protective gear.

Benitez and Juana raised objections over their working conditions to their employer before connecting with the LWC but these were ignored. Benitez has worked at TYS Laundromat for eight years, after moving to New York from Guerrero, Mexico, Juana has worked there for ten, but neither know their bosses’ real names. Instead, they call their male boss Roco and their female boss Bena.

The pair met Garfias when he came to the laundromat to gather information for the center’s report. Benitez and Juana filled out the survey and said they wanted to learn more. They contacted the center again in October 2017 and their training as activists began.

The LWC encourages workers to be union organizers themselves, instead of clients of a staff of professionals. This point is extremely important for Garfias, who himself came to organizing through a LWC campaign while working at an uptown bakery. While he is now a full-time organizer, he’s found campaigns only work when the workers are in charge.

“We can’t lead the campaign for them,” Garfias said. “They have to be in front. They have to build power in their community. They have to build power in the workplace.”

As the sun burned away the clouds on June 28, the protesters marched half a mile down 116th Street, the heart of El Barrio, to TYS Laundromat. Rush-hour commuters held their flaps in the air and honked their horns in a show of support. The march entered the laundromat and snaked between the washing machines, startling customers and one of the managers. The demonstrators chanted until it was time for Benitez and Juana to present their demands: minimum wage instead of $8.25 an hour they earn, protective gear and breaks on the job.

Benitez said he felt a combination of fear and nervousness. “But also a lot of power.”

A few days later, he and Juana had their hours cut. The center’s legal counsel told the laundromat owner that it would sue if the retaliation continued. Shortly thereafter, the pair’s hours were restored and their demands were met.

While the campaign was a success in this instance, the center knows the industry is too fractured for it to train leaders at every laundromat in the city — not that that is going to stop the LWC from reaching as many workers as possible.

“Going laundromat by laundromat is going to be labor intensive but someone needs to do something,” said Rodriguez-Aran. “The alternative is no one handling this and that’s why conditions are so bad.”

The center is also preparing legislation for the City Council that will protect laundromat workers from on-the-job hazards. Garfias anticipates it will be ready within two years. LWC organizers have already met with Councilwoman Diana Ayala (D-East Harlem) multiple times. They plan to have laundry workers drive the creation of the legislation.

“They’re the experts,” said Garfias. “They’re the persons who spend half of their lives on the job. They know what they really need.”
A skye lightens on Thursday mornings, construction workers stream down the streets west of Penn Station, men and a few women clad in lime-green and orange T-shirts, blue jeans and work boots, their hands clutching large coffees. Their hard hats are festooned with stickers — including a green rectangle that reads “#CountMeIn.”

#CountMeIn is a campaign and a movement that began last fall, as workers began holding weekly rallies outside Hudson Yards to protest developer Related Companies’ use of nonunion labor on the behemoth West Side project. Related had signed a “project labor agreement” with the New York City Building and Construction Trades Council, the umbrella coalition for the city’s construction unions, to use exclusively union labor on the first phase. But it refused to do that for the second phase, instead hiring contractors using a so-called “open shop” mix of union and nonunion workers.

At 50 Hudson Yards, a 58-story office tower Related says will be the city’s fourth largest when it’s completed in 2022, union officials say it has brought in nonunion laborers, operating engineers and metallic lathers, the workers who build the metal frameworks that reinforce floors and hold walls.

“It’s terrible,” Abraham Hernandez, 66, a 39-year member of Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Ironworkers Local 46, said while doing an informational picket at the site in July. “Carpenters, ironworkers, laborers, concrete. And they’re paid lower money.”

Construction workers “have had enough of corporate greed and are fighting back by demanding middle-class wages, a fair work environment and access to quality jobs,” Building Trades Council President Gary LaBarbera said in a statement to The Independent. Nonunion contractors have been gaining an increasing share of the city’s construction industry for years.

“In the ‘80s, we did everything,” says veteran Laborers organizer Mike Hellstrom, assistant business manager of the four-local Mason Tenders District Council, speaking to this reporter for LaborPost in early September. But now, work on smaller residential buildings is almost entirely nonunion.

Developers like Macklowe Properties, JDS Development Group, and Two Trees have used nonunion labor on high-rise apartment buildings in Manhattan and Brooklyn. At JDS’s 111 West 57th Street, an 82-story tower where apartments start at $18 million, workers were paid as little as $15 an hour and “open shops” were festooned with stickers — including a green rectangle that reads “#CountMeIn.”

Related has signed a “project labor agreement” with the New York City Building and Construction Trades Council, the umbrella group for the city’s construction unions, to use exclusively union labor on the first phase. Related did ally with the tenants movement in protesting Mayor Bill de Blasio’s 2014 affordable-housing program, as his administration refused to use union labor. That alliance has largely faded, although smaller groups of union workers such as Laborers Local 79 continue to protest the plan’s rezoning schemes.

But Related, whose owner, Stephen Ross, is a former chair of REBNY, has attacked the unions both in the courts and in the press. In March, it sued the Building Trades Council and LaBarbera for $75 million, charging that the unions had fraudulently inflated costs at Hudson Yards, such as by having workers being paid $42 an hour delivering coffee and lunch. (Most high-rise construction sites are closed to outsiders, so delivery people can’t get in.)

The legal case parallels a publicity campaign. For the last three years, the Center for Union Facts, an anti-union propaganda outfit run by lobbyist Richard Berman, has been running ads, launching websites and publishing newspaper columns accusing the building-trades unions of racism, with “bosses male, pale and stale” and blaming LaBarbera personally for the subways being screwed up.

The building-trades unions were largely segregated until the late 1960s, but blacks, Latinos and Asians are now a majority of union construction workers in the city and more than 60 percent of apprentices, according to a 2017 report by the Economic Policy Institute. The nonunion sector is more than half black and Latino and predominantly immigrant — many of them undocumented, which makes them much more vulnerable to wage theft.

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Related is now trying to use nonunion labor on large commercial buildings in Manhattan, the industry’s most solidly union sector. “Commercial construction is our bread and butter,” says Hellstrom. Over the last five years, he says, anger among rank-and-file workers has reached “a boiling point.”

A spate of fatal accidents increased that anger. In 2015, 25 construction workers were killed on the job; in 2016, 21. More than 90 percent of them were nonunion workers, according to the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health.

On nonunion jobs, former workers say, they often don’t have basic safety protections such as being “tied off” with a harness to restrain them if they fall. “Open shops” are also dangerous, union officials say, because nonunion workers generally don’t get the safety training union apprentices do.

Large developers have historically been willing to pay extra for union labor because they get the job done faster and better, but the open-shop model revolves around using union workers for more skilled tasks and nonunion to save money on others. Building-trades unions also see it as a divide-and-conquer tactic.

“It’s not about saving nothing. It’s about breaking us,” Mason Tenders District Council business manager Bobby Bonanza told a Times Square rally in April.
Hawkins is running for governor but that’s not why he’s here. That’s what the retired UPS worker in the dark gray suit tells the crowd of about 40 people who assembled to mark the seven year anniversary of Occupy Wall Street on Sept. 17 in the place where it all went down.

“I’m here because I’m a veteran occupier,” says Hawkins, who helped organize a parallel encampment in Washington, D.C., in 2011.

Would the lifelong activist have been on hand at Zuccotti Park if he weren’t running for office? Hard to say. The race is what brought the Syracuse native to New York City to begin with and, as he prepared to zig-zag his way campaigning across the state from Manhattan to Buffalo, it was certainly on his mind. The large stack of green pamphlets he stowed on a nearby marble bench testified as much.

Nevertheless, Hawkins, who dropped out of Dartmouth College just shy of graduation in 1977 because he didn’t want to wind up a paper pusher for a rich, addressed the crowd in language more of protest than politics. “You never know when you start something that it’s going to be the event that changes history,” he said, reflecting on Occupy’s fight of economic equality and comparing it to movements he participated in as a young man — Civil Rights and the anti-Vietnam war effort. “Don’t give up, keep agitating and we will make progress.”

That’s essentially Hawkins’ motto. The 65-year-old retired Teamster is making his 22nd bid for elected office. So far he is zero for 21. But now that the hullabaloo surrounding this year’s Democratic primaries has died down, he is hoping larger swaths of New York beyond the limited group here in Zuccotti will start paying attention.

In a year where Democratic voters have shown a keen interest in ruffling the feathers of the establishment, Hawkins is the only progressive left standing in the New York governor’s race.

He has a message for the half million people who voted for Cynthia Nixon, Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s defeated left-wing challenger in the Sept. 13 Democratic primary: “I’m your Plan B.”

Hawkins has crafted a platform that is in some ways more sophisticated than Nixon’s. For instance, when it comes to rent regulation, Nixon called for universal rent control but said nothing about the Urstadt Law, which grants lawmakers in Albany, many of whom come from Republican districts upstate and receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from downstate developers, a say in New York City’s rent regulations. Hawkins would give the city home rule when it comes to rent law.

His platform also goes a few steps further than Nixon’s or that of any of the other high-profile progressives in New York of late who have identified as socialists and run on the Democratic line.

“They’re not talking about a new economic system. They’re talking about social programs, which socialists support, but the difference between us and the liberals is we really mean it and the system really can’t get it. That’s why our slogan is ‘demand more.’”

Despite his 22 losses in a row, Hawkins believes he can win. “The thing Working Families is afraid of most is being accused of splitting the Democratic vote and a Republican getting elected,” Hawkins says. He has fewer qualms about that. Marcus Molinaro, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, “may be marginally worse than Cuomo but he can’t do any really bad things cause he’s got to deal with a Democratic Assembly and probably a Democratic Senate. So relax. Vote for who you want.”

Hawkins and the Greens want as many Democratic voters to come to their side as they can get. He accuses WFP of compromising its values in order to secure influence in the Democratic Party and argues Cuomo is more likely to notice Green Party votes since they count against him: “If you vote for Cuomo, even on the Working Families side, you get lost in the sauce if you’re a progressive. He’ll take it as a mandate for what he’s talking about cause you voted for him.”

This argument helped Hawkins garner nearly 5 percent of the general election vote when he last ran for governor in 2014 following on the heels of Zephyr Teachout’s surprise showing that year when she tapped into anti-Cuomo discontent and won 34 percent of the Democratic primary vote and half the counties in the state.

Hawkins says his 2014 vote total helped subsequently force Cuomo’s hand on imposing a permanent ban on fracking and freezing plans to tie teacher evaluations to student test scores — two issues that riled liberal voters that year. He hopes to catch a similar tailwind this year following Nixon’s spirited primary run.

But to what end?

Before Bernie Sanders’ presidential run, choosing between triangulating centrist Democrats and doomed third-party protest candidates was, with few exceptions, the best the left could hope for from electoral politics. Since
DEMOCRATS NEED TO Gain 23 SEATS IN NOVEMBER TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. IF THEY SUCCEED, THEY CAN LAUNCH MULTIPLE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S MISDEEDS AND MAKE THE NEXT TWO YEARS QUITE MISERABLE FOR THE PRESIDENT. WHETHER THIS HAPPENS COULD TURN ON THE OUTCOMES OF SEVERAL RACES IN NEW YORK STATE WHERE DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGERS ARE LOCKED IN TOUGH BATTLES WITH PRO-TRUMP REPUBLICAN INCUMBENTS.

2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
PETER KING VS. LIUBA GRECHEN SHIRLEY
A pro-Trump immigrant basher and virulent Islamophobe, Peter King has held his congressional seat along Long Island’s South Shore for a quarter century. His district went for Trump by nine points in 2016 after voting Democrat in the five previous presidential elections.

His opponent, Liuba Grechen Shirley, a 37-year-old mother of two, is half King’s age and hopes to ride a blue wave of anti-Trump sentiment to victory over King. Grechen Shirley founded a Long Island chapter of Indivisible, a liberal grassroots group, after Trump’s election. She tried to find a candidate to run against King before having an epiphany: “I was waiting for the right person to run against him,” Grechen Shirley told the New York Times, “and a few months later, I realized I was that person.”

Refusing to take corporate money, Grechen Shirley raked in $700,000 in individual contributions by August, more than the combined total of King’s five previous Democratic opponents. She’s running the same kind of intensive, in-depth political analysis you’ve ever experienced — only fun!

24TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
JOHN FASO VS. ANTONIO DELGADO
The 19th Congressional District, which covers the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains, voted twice for Obama, then went for Trump in 2016. It’s never been represented in Congress by someone who was non-white but that could change this year. Antonio Delgado won a seven-way primary in June and polls show him in a neck-and-neck race with incumbent Republican John Faso. A former Rhodes Scholar and lawyer from a half-Black, half-Hispanic working class family in Schenectady, Delgado has called for a public option for Medicare that would allow anyone who wishes to join the program to do so.

Yet, this race has increasingly become about race. Delgado finds himself under attack from Faso for his past a decade ago as an obscure rapper named AD the Voice whose discography rails against white supremacy, poverty and systemic racism. “[He] denigrated our nation and the free enterprise system,” Faso complained in a New York Times editorial.

Delgado has refused to apologize.
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ooking back at the history of how the Republican Party has gained so much power over the past half century and used it to do a deep reactive agenda, two conclusions leap to mind. The first is that as we drift deep trouble and the end game is coming into view. The ultimate Republican goal is to erase all the progressive gains of the 20th century from civil rights for historically oppressed groups to New Deal economic reforms and make impossible for the role of money and white supremacy to be challenged again in the future.

The second is that the process by which the Republican Party has gained so much power over the past half century has been a long game. The ultimate Republican goal is to erase all the progressive gains of the 20th century from civil rights for historically oppressed groups to New Deal economic reforms and make impossible for the role of money and white supremacy to be challenged again in the future.

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About an hour before midnight on June 11, 1957, Maurice Audin was at home with his wife and three small children when a dozen French paratroopers broke in and carried the young activist and mathematician away.

"Look after the children!" his wife Josette recalls him shouting as he was carried down the couple's stairway. It was the last time she saw her husband alive. His body has never been recovered.

Audin's disappearance was the subject of widespread coverage in the French press at the time and numerous firsthand accounts of both the intellectual's brutal treatment and the widespread use of torture by French authorities during the country's bloody, colonial war in Algeria have since been published. Less than a month after abducting Audin, French authorities claimed that he managed to escape while in transfer to one detention center to another. The French government never acknowledged the full scope of the violence it deployed to suppress the resistance in Algeria, including the systematic use of torture, nor has it come entirely clean about Audin's death, until now.

Accompanied by a number of historians and journalists on a visit to the home of Josette Audin on Sept. 13 in the Paris suburb of Bagnolet, French President Emmanuel Macron confessed to the 87-year-old widow that her husband “was tortured and then executed, or tortured to death, by soldiers who arrested him at his home.”

The admission was the result of decades of advocacy on the part of Josette Audin and her children to uncover the truth about the activist’s final days in the face of denials and deception on the part of French authorities. In 2009, Audin’s daughter Michèle, also a mathematician, even declined the Legion d’Honneur, the nation’s highest emblem of achievement, citing the government’s treatment of her father.

Macron’s acknowledgement of France’s responsibility gives rise to a number of further questions concerning other dissidents who met the same fate as Audin, if not worse.

“This recognition also aims to encourage the historical work on all those who have gone missing during the war of Algeria, whether they were French or Algerian, civilians or soldiers,” said the French president, who also conceded during a visit to Algeria in 2017 that French colonialism was “a crime against humanity.”

“It’s really a big, historical turning point for the history of France,” said Benjamin Stora, an Algerian-born French historian who accompanied the president on his visit to the Audin family. “It’s much bigger than the case of Maurice Audin. Macron spoke of a system that allowed torture, violence, crimes — a direct responsibility of the state.

The case of Audin is emblematic, but this touches the whole history of colonization.

The massacre was widely deployed from the beginning of the colonisation of Algeria in 1830 but was finally “institutionalized” when, in 1956, a guerrilla insurgency began attempting to root the French from Algeria, intensifying the Algerian Liberation War, which ultimately claimed 1.5 million lives in the North African country.

French resident minister and governor-general of Algeria, Robert Lacoste, was granted “special powers” by the National Assembly to suppress the Algerian rebellion. Lacoste assigned Gen. Jacques Massu, commander of the French 10th Parachute Division, to “pacify Algeria.”

Massu entered the city with some 8,000 paratroopers whom he gave carte blanche to “establish order by all means” and proclaimed martial law. The military intervention only inflamed tensions in the city in revolt, haunted by insecurity and suspicion.

At the time, Audin was teaching at the Science University of Algiers while preparing his PhD thesis for the Sorbonne in Paris. Although French, both Audin and his wife were advocates of Algerian liberation and members of the Parti Communiste d’Alger (PCA), a Marxist, pro-independence party. Though he had distributed war circulars and had harbored fugitives, Audin never was directly involved in the fighting.

In The Audin Affair, published a year after the activist’s disappearance, French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet insisted that Audin died due to torture. The book puts forth the witness of Dr. Georges Hadjadj, another PCA member and independence advocate, who was also held on the same day in a covert detention center situated in El-Biar on the heights of the city.

“On the night of June 11 to 12, I was put in the presence of Maurice Audin,” Hadjadj recounts. “It was about one o’clock in the morning. … Audin was in underwear, lying on a board. Pliers connected by electrical wires to a generator were attached to his right ear and his left foot … I was then taken back to the infirmary, and for a long time I heard the shouts of Maurice Audin that seemed to be stifled by a gag.”

In 2012, French journalist Nathalie Funès uncovered a document handwritten by Colonel Yves Godard, a former commander in Algiers during the war. The colonel writes that Audin was confused with another detainee whose killing had been ordered and that Audin was stabbed to death by a non-commissioned officer. Godard also notes in the record that Audin was buried in a pit about 12 miles from the city. Complicating the plot but not its basic conclusion, the French general Paul Aussaresses later admitted to ordering Audin’s death.

Audin’s arrest, torture and killing is just one instance among many during this sanguinary era of French-Algerian relations. During the Algerian war, two million Algerians by some estimates were interned without trial, detained and deported to “villages de regroupement” and to concentration camps built by the French army in desolate rural areas. Many were beaten into confessing to crimes they did not commit.

Vidal-Naquet, considered the leading historian of the war, notes that the practice of torture affected an uncountable number of people, some “hundreds of thousands,” the majority of whom were civilians.

In one instance, Larbi Ben M’Hidi, one of the six founders of Algeria’s National Liberation Front (FLN) was captured by paratroopers in February 1957, tortured and executed while in detention. That same month, Ali Boumedjel, a lawyer and activist, was thrown from the sixth floor of an interrogation building. Boumedjel’s death was later passed off as a suicide. Gen. Aussaresses admitted ordering these killings as well.

In his book The Real Battle of Algiers, published in 1972, Gen. Massu, by then retired, evoked the practice of torture in Algeria and particularly in Algiers. Speaking with the French newspaper Le Monde in 2000, he said that widespread use of torture, while “certainly reprehensible, was covered, and even ordered, by [French] civil authorities, who were perfectly aware of it.”

France’s political leaders have been more reluctant to discuss their country’s brutality in Algeria. It was only in 1998 that the French Embassy in Algiers apologized for the 1945 Sétif and Guelma massacre, in which French police and colonial settlers killed thousands of civilians in central Algeria. In 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy declined to even respond to a letter from Josette Audin herself.

The evasion held up until June 2014, when Macron’s predecessor, François Hollande, made it clear that Audin had never escaped but died while in detention. On a presidential visit to Algeria in 2012, Hollande recognized, in vague terms, “the violence of colonization” but failed to make any further statements regarding when or how Audin died.

While meeting with Audin’s widow, President Macron announced that he would be opening up French intelligence archives to historians and to the families of those whose bodies were never found.

Audin’s son Pierre, who was just one month old at the time of his father’s extra-legal kidnapping, told French radio: “From now on, it is necessary to tell the truth and to transmit the documents which will make it possible to know, for my father and for thousands of others, what happened precisely.”

For Maurice Audin’s widow, Josette, many questions remain and her fight is far from over. “How was Maurice killed? What are the names of his torturers? What has been done to his body?” she wondered aloud during Macron’s visit.

Not everyone in France was in favor of Macron’s declaration. “Maurice Audin helped hiding FLN terrorists who committed attacks,” Marine Le Pen, who heads the National Rally party, formerly known as the National Front, tweeted shortly after Macron’s visit with Audin’s widow. “Macron commits an act of division while thinking to flatter the communists.”

Le Pen’s father, Jean-Marie, who also led the National Front, fought in a paratrooper regiment between 1956 and 1957.
On the occasion of Bea Lumpkin’s 100th birthday

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2016, a constellation of groups both new and old — Our Revolution, Justice Democrats, WFP, MoveOn, Democracy for America, among others — has taken shape, backing a strong, diverse field of left-leaning candidates in Democratic primaries. A significant number are winning city council, state legislative and congressional seats, though victory at a statewide level has so far proven to be elusive.

The leftmost of these groups, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), shares an anti-capitalist ideology with the Greens but has adopted a different electoral strategy. Pursuing what might be described as an “outside-inside-outside” strategy, the group participates in grassroots activism outside of the electoral arena, fields candidates when members decide that they align with their socialist principles and then runs door-to-door canvassing operations in support of those candidates that are independent of the politicians themselves. Here in New York, DSA played a key role in this summer’s primary victories of future congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and of Julia Salazar, who won a hotly contested North Brooklyn state Senate primaire just four days prior to Hawkins’ Occupy anniversary appearance.

Hawkins poo-poos the idea that the left can dance with the Democrats for long without compromising its integrity. He views DSA and the candidates they’ve helped elect as proponents of a weaker brand of socialism — if socialism at all. Nonetheless he says he is glad Ocasio-Cortez beat Queens Democratic Party boss Joe Crowley and concedes that Sanders and other socialists who have run as Democrats in his wake have made it safe to use the ‘S’ word without sending voters running for the hills — a development that led to the Green Party declaring itself an outright anti-capitalist party for the first time in 2016. “Sanders really turned the tide on that,” says Hawkins, noting in the past he had campaigned with “socialist content but without the word.”

Interestingly, Hawkins’ political career is not dissimilar from the senator’s early days in Vermont. Sanders’ ran on the Liberty Union third-party ballot line for governor in 1972 and 1976 and the U.S. Senate in 1972 and 1974. He never won more than 6 percent of the vote before gaining a political foothold as Mayor of Burlington in 1981 after running as an independent. Hawkins is still looking for his log up. He won’t win on Nov. 6 but his ideas might, should voters decide to keep troubling the status quo.
McDarrah's camera served as a type of truth serum that could reveal a person's heart.
R
dedical politics, drugs and rock 'n' roll — and winding up in prison — are the common threads between the memoirs Double Life in Double Time, by MDC drummer Al Schvitz, and The Hard Stuff, by MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer.

Their bands were arguably the two American rock bands most explicitly associated with radical politics. The MC5 were the only band to play the prominent at the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968, while MDC played the “Rock Against Reagan” protests at the Republicans' 1984 convention in Dallas.

Both memoirs share the same trajectory: rock 'n' roll meets radicalism, drugs and incarceration, followed by partial resurrection. There’s only six years difference in their ages, but a vast gulf between the eras they played in, between the infinite-possibilities-meet-nasty-backlash days of the late '60s and the cold, constricted age of Reagan.

Kramer, who grew up in a working-class family in and around Detroit, came up in the Motor City's rich mid-'60s garage-band scene; an early version of the MC5 opened for British Invasion stars the Dave Clark Five when he was 17. The MC5 soon blew up their Chuck Berry/James Brown roots with an infusion of LSD, free-jazz chaos, and radical politics — the latter catalyzed by the free outdoor show they did on Kramer's 19th birthday in the spring of 1967, when mounted police he describes as “over-joyed” and “sadistic” assaulted “a bunch of regular folks, stoned-out weirdos and Budweiser-buzzed factory rats.”

Trying to navigate being both radicals and rock 'n' rollers, the MC5 crashed into both music-biz expectations and ultra-left dogma. Their first album, Kick Out the Jams, cut live at two late-'68 shows, is among the most explosive pieces of rock 'n' roll ever recorded and briefly reached the Top 30, but got slagged for being sloppy; Kramer says he was appalled because his guitar went out of tune on the first song. They overcompensated on their cleaner-sounding second album, after mentor/manager John Sinclair was sentenced to nine years in prison for pot. They got it right on their third, High Time, with a funkier sound that wouldn't have embarrassed itself next to Jimi Hendrix or Miles Davis, but it sank without a trace, and the band was crumbling into heroin and alcoholism.

Kramer then descended into Detroit's underworld of burglars and dopefinks, trying to support a heroin habit and a new band, and got four years in prison for selling cocaine. (That descent echoes the city's, which after the 1967 rebellion, he says, went from “a working-class boomtown of union jobs and solid brick houses” to “an empty shell ... ruled by crime and despair.”)

Schvitz, born Alan Schultz, grew up in an affluent suburb on Long Island, and didn't start playing professionally until his mid-twenties. MDC — originally an acronym for Millions of Dead Cops — played what would be dubbed “hardcore” punk, a relentless, high-speed blast of rage, the drums hammering like a carpenter on methamphetamine. (Kramer's more music-theory take on '90s punk was fast tempos with “an almost 12-tone avoidance of anything conventionally melodic.”) MDC’s version was about 90 percent hardline politics and 10 percent gender-bending, interspersing a chant of “dead cops!” with “why is America so straight and me so bent!”

They inhabited a much narrower subculture, with minimal hope for or desire to reach the mainstream. MDC’s biggest audiences came on the European squat circuit, and in 1984 they put out a compilation called P.E.A.C.E., featuring 55 bands from a dozen countries, including the Dead Kennedys and British anarchists Crass. Schultz’s taste for meth grew into professional dealing, and he wound up in prison for it in 1995.

Both books are written in an unassuming first-person style. Schultz’s is the more immediate, as he wrote most of it in San Quentin, repeatedly admitting he’s a neophyte author. The autobiographical bits and tour stories bounce around semi-chronologically, in between descriptions of prison life — the string-and-hook system used to trade books between cells, ramen-based potluck meals, and keeping enough respectful distance to avoid setting off the landmines of racial tension. One of its funniest bits is his resolving the stereotypical situation of dropping the soap in the shower: After the “rough, nasty state soap,” he didn't want to abandon his brand-new bar of Irish Spring — so he picked it up with a macho growl, much to the other prisoners’ amusement. (He then confesses losing his anal virginity to a tube of Icelandic father or his racist, abusive stepfather. Like most people locked up in the war on drugs, he concludes, “I didn’t need prison; I needed help.”)

Both are still playing. Schultz is touring with lead singer Dave D'Vorot in a revived MDC. “The current government has given us renewed energy for being the angry young men we were; we are just not young any more,” he writes in the book’s epilogue. Kramer revived his career in the ‘90s, making several albums of rock 'n' roll for adults. He later toured with revues doing MC5 songs, and in 2014, cut a jazz album called Lexington. He and his wife also founded the U.S. incarnation of Jail Guitar Doors, a music-class program for prisoners.

I don't know how much these books will mean to people who, unlike me, don’t have a wall of CDs and vinyl with the MC5 and MDC next to each other. But if you want to read about musicians wrestling with their personal demons while eternally chasing the inspirations of high-energy music and fracturing injustice, both Double Life in Double Time and The Hard Stuff are well worth checking out.

By Steven Wishnia
Music

New & Vintage ‘Songs of Resistance’

By Brady O’Callahan

The labor movement had "Solidarity Forever." Civil Rights had "Mississippi Goddam," "Strange Fruit" and the spirituals activists sang with linked arms in the streets.

Black Lives Matter adopted Kendrick Lamar’s "Alright."

"Every movement which has ever won anything has had bad songs," says Marc Ribot in promotional materials introducing his new record, Songs of Resistance 1942-2018. Of course, Music helps movements instill resolve in their base and renders messages memorable and digestible as they spread to a wider audience.

The guitarist knows well the horrors of authoritarianism. His grandparents lost siblings in the Holocaust and over his career he has toured in places like Turkey and Russia. He recognizes President Trump, he says, "and it’s no mystery where we will wind up if we don’t push back."

Ribot has lent his mastery at the piano to everyone from Ikue Mori to Elton John, Allen Toussaint to Allen Ginsberg. With Songs of Resistance, he gathers an impressive group of friends and collaborators to present a captivating collection of original and traditional protest songs that showcase the longevity of message and, conversely, the seemingly glacial nature of progress.

"John Brown," an original song written by Ribot, recounts the story and spirit of the abolitionist. It’s an interesting and effective blend of tradition and modernity. The century-and-a-half-old tale of revolt is recontextualized by Ribot’s funk freak-out arrangement and Fay Victor’s soulful vocals.

"Fischia Il Vento," a 1943 Italian anti-fascist anthem, is updated to rail against climate change and the forces that perpetuate it in “The Militant Ecol ogist.” The substitution of the enemy in the song could risk feeling a bit paint-by-numbers, as if songs of protest could be written using mad-lib formulas, if not for the fact that climate change denial actually seems to be one more facet of the authoritarian regimes we know today. This adaptation re-frames the original’s scope, envisioning a future where “the earth’s green flag is flying.”

Tom Waits, a long-time collaborator of Ribot’s, joins him on “Bella Ciao,” yet another 1940s Italian anti-fascist song. Waits, per usual, sounds weathered but resolute, a natural fit. "One fine morning, woke up early to find a fascist at my door," Waits sings.

In the accompanying music video, seemingly calm American streets are shown with increasing police and military presence. People gather to protest the Trump administration, police brutality and other modern-day horrors plaguing the country. The character in the song, too, resolves to fight the evil on his doorstep. Placed in our modern context, the song shines a light on the damming reality that despotism has gained a foothold here in America.

This sad state of affairs manifests itself powerfully on the standout track “Rata de dos Patas,” an anti-misogynist ballad sung originally by Mexican artist Paquita la del Barrio. This updated version of the song powerfully pairs a woman singing in Spanish of taking down Trump — comparing him to rats, snakes, cockroaches — with Trump’s infamous slurs against Mexicans. The singer was tragically unable to be credited on the song for fear of repercussion due to her undocumented status in America.

Songs of Resistance is certainly never subtle or terribly nuanced, but it seems fairly disingenuous to begrudge it that. If you’re looking for precedent shattering songwriting, you’d best look elsewhere. Simplicity and spreadability (even in bits and pieces) of political and social messaging may be more valuable here.

“I have a lot of friends who think that any kind of politics isn’t cool,” Ribot says. “I appreciate the sentiment but we need to get over it, roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty if we’re going to survive this thing.”

I tend to agree, and Songs of Resistance succeeds in raising a number of banners you can grab and run with.

Perhaps the most poignant moment on the album is “Srinivas,” a lyrical document of Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a Sikh immigrant murdered in February 2017 by a racist who mistook him for a Muslim. It’s a horrifying story that sadly illustrates the reality of many Americans’ lives, the environment we have fostered for centuries and that has been stoked by the current administration.

“My country, ‘tis of thee” Steve Earle sings repeatedly, though he never reaches, as if unable to, the commonly known following line. He sings of a nation in turbulence, one with unfulfilled potential, one where only certain populations are free to live without worry. Hopefully, one day soon, we’ll be able to rightfully call it sweet land of liberty.
“How the fuck did this happen?”

Michael Moore lobes the question at us as he concludes the prelude of his new film, Fahrenheit 11/9 and it looms over the rest of the film, haunting Moore’s steps as he tries to make sense of a world gone mad.

Moore takes us on a meandering but ultimately entertaining journey through his experience of the United States since the election of Donald Trump. While the film is almost maddeningly structureless, Moore is such a familiar and successful filmmaker that at this point it seems as though he can break or rewrite just about any rule of filmmaking and get away with it.

It’s a latitude that he has sometimes abused by allowing his oversized persona to overwhelm the story, but here Moore relies far less on his usual schtick. While he certainly indulges in pranksterism and confrontation, he makes a point of sharing the spotlight with the other characters. Without Moore as the dominating protagonist, the film does feel a bit rudderless, but he remains a compelling storyteller and dominating protagonist, the film still packs a wallop. Moore makes a persuasive case that we are teetering on the verge of fascism. The assault on democratic institutions — the courts, the press, the political class as a whole — when combined with racial scapegoating and attendant appeals to tribalism comprise a methodology that is eerily similar to how the Nazi party built and kept its base of support. The Weimar Republic, after all, was a flourishing democracy, with a robust free press and highly literate and engaged citizens. Hitler was elected.

Crucially, both the Trump gang and the Nazis accurately assessed the two factions that need to be appeased in order to take and hold power. Trump satisfies his electoral base with a few bombastic tweets every couple of days, creating counterfactuals while letting surrogates make occasional excuses for his “lack of polish.” His other audience is the ruling class, elite interests that have no interest in actual populism and might actually be turned off by his divisiveness. Tax cuts and deregulation that send corporate profits soaring appease them. Turns out that the Nazis passed similarly elite-friendly policies while they consolidated power.

The Nazis understood the nature of power. So does the Trump gang. This is not to say that Trump is a genius, but he does intuitively understand the mob, while the past and present cast around him — Jared Kushner, Stephen Miller, Steve Bannon, Paul Ryan, Mitch McConnell — understand the importance of keeping the ruling class happy.

So, what do we do? Moore calls for a dual strategy: an electoral insurgency from the populist left led by figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and, simultaneously, unremitting street activism to keep pressure and heat on those currently in office. Moore has made similar calls to action before. But the stakes now feel bigger, starker and more frightening. The coming midterm elections will determine a great deal in regards to keeping Trump in check. I, for one, immediately took out my checkbook when I got home and gave to a few political groups that share the analysis articulated by this film. I will also do some phone banking and I will re-dedicate myself to showing up in the street. I hope you do the same. If the house is on fire, it’s going to take a bucket brigade of everyday citizens to put it out.

**By Mark Read**

**A FILM FOR A COUNTRY ON FIRE**

Fahrenheit 11/9
Directed by Michael Moore
Briarcliff Entertainment, 2018

...
The American Baking Show (2017– )

Vallery Lomas is a lawyer-turned-baker who you would’ve known as the latest winner of The Great American Baking Show had a twist of fate not awaited her. ABC pulled the show when multiple former employees accused judge Johnny Iuzzini of sexual harassment, leaving fans of the show with nothing to hold on to except dreams of Vallery’s orange chocolate donuts.

Born and raised in Louisiana, Valley grew up in a family of bakers, surrounded by her grandma’s fruit trees and fresh preserves. She baked through law school and now you’ll find her blogging full time from her home in Harlem or eating her way through all the crêpe spots in the city.

We spoke to Valley about the show, it’s sudden cancellation and life after.

THE INDYPENDENT: When did you find out the show wouldn’t air?

VALLY LOMAS: The night before the third episode was going to air, I received a phone call. They said, “Hey, there were some allegations against Johnny Iuzzini and the network had to pull the show.” Within minutes of receiving the call, it was announced nationally.

It’s crazy because it felt like I broke through that glass ceiling before and now I’m back under it and keep hitting my head. But I’m happy too because I’m passionate about baking.

How did you end up on the show?

The casting director discovered my Instagram account and they sent me an email asking if I was interested in applying. I knew it would take a lot since I was working as a lawyer but I was already blogging, so I owed myself a chance to take it to another level.

As an African-American woman, what was your experience on the show like?

I knew someone of African-American descent had never won the show. The Great British Baking Show, which the show was based on, had people of color win but never anyone of African-descent. When I won I knew it mattered. Growing up, it was always exciting to have someone to look for, someone who looked like you on TV. You don’t always see people who look like you represented in media so I knew that it was something really special.

Of course, I never got to see the fruition of that. But the night that it did air (as a 90 second clip on the program’s Facebook Page), I had so many people reach out of me, saying, “I have a little girl and she has natural hair like you, she loves your spirit, she loves seeing someone who looks like her.” That really meant a lot, that it wasn’t really about me, it was about this next generation of people who have the privilege of seeing someone who looks like them. To me that was the roughest part of the show being pulled, I knew that it meant something, that it mattered. It’s crazy that Iuzzini’s actions created a ripple effect for so many people.

Do you think women of color are being recognized in the food industry?

I definitely think some women are getting recognition they deserve but at the same time I think there’s a lot of rounding up. It’ll take time to tell.

What is your first food memory?

My grandmother lived in Prairieville, Louisiana, this little town right next to Baton Rouge where I grew up. She would give me figs straight off her trees and at 5, it was the best thing I’d ever tasted. Or I’d go strawberry picking with my dad and make preserves. Growing up in South Louisiana and enjoying the bounty of fresh fruit was incredible.

During the holidays my mother always had this tradition where we would bake family heirloom recipes. I grew up with my sisters and everyone had their own thing to bake. I always enjoyed it but I didn’t tap into it until the third year of law school when the recession was happening and I needed a creative outlet. I started blogging about baking and that encouraged me to bake everyday.

What are you working on now that we can look forward to?

I’m working on a cookbook and blogging full time.

Do you have advice for women of color who are trying to make it as chefs?

I would say just stay true to who you are and remember why you’re here to begin with because you have this passion that you want to share with the world. That’s what I tell myself on bad days.

——

VALLERY’S PUMPKIN CHOCOLATE SWIRL BREAD

Serves 8
Prep time: 30 minutes, Cook time: 60 minutes

INGREDIENTS

Butter, for coating the pan
3 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 large egg
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon pumpkin puree
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup milk
1/4 cup milk

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Coat a 9” x 5” loaf pan with butter and set aside.

2. Melt the chocolate by microwaving it at 10-second intervals, stirring until it’s melted.

3. Whisk together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl.

4. Combine the sugar and oil in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment and beat on medium-high speed until combined, about one minute.

5. Reduce the speed to medium and add the eggs one at a time, beating for about 30 seconds after each addition. Reduce the speed to low. Add the pumpkin and vanilla and mix until just combined, about 30 seconds. Stop the mixer and scrape down the sides of the bowl and the paddle.

6. With the mixer running on low, slowly pour in the reserved flour mixture, mix until just combined.

7. Remove the bowl from the mixer and drizzle all of the melted chocolate evenly over the batter, reserving about one tablespoon. Using a rubber spatula, fold the chocolate into the batter until it’s just swirled in, making sure to scrape the bottom of the bowl with each stroke, about 5 strokes total.

8. Carefully pour the batter into the prepared pan. Dollop the one tablespoon of reserved chocolate on top, and use a toothpick to create a swirl design.

9. Bake at 350°F until the bread is browned on top and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 60-70 minutes.

10. Remove the loaf from the oven and let it cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove the loaf from the pan and allow it to cool completely on a wire rack. Slice and savour the autumnal spices and brisk weather!

For more recipes from Vallery visit FoodieInNewYork.com.
Hi Billy, watching the Kavanaugh hearings and all those Republicans defend him, I found myself wondering why old, rich, white guys are so pathologically f’ed up? Maybe they’re just born that way. Any insights?

— KRISTAL, Harlem

Let’s not blame all of society’s ills on the old rich white guys. It does seem reasonable, though, to strip them of their $3,000 suits, their senate seats, their guns and their pornography. Let’s not stereotype these poor souls, but they really should scream in the agony of humiliation as they kneel for hours before gigantic statues of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford in the center of Times Square. And there is a basic common decency in the idea that, as their bank accounts are emptied, that we should begin to laugh at them, the laughter building until it rings up the avenues and down the streets. A laughing city! Free of Chuck Grassley and Lindsay Graham and Mike Crapo.

Then again, am I guilty of self-loathing? I’ve managed to not be rich but the white part and the guy part do persist. The old part I’ve put off till next Tuesday. All I know is that right now, Krystal, we’re in some deep shit. We have to save each other no matter who we are.

— BRIAN, Crown Heights

America is not the old white guys who pay the media to portray them as leaders of their “great nation.” America is two continents of love, work and hope. It’s a vast place that reaches around the planet and has received the faith of so many. Don’t give America to those who betrayed that amazing name, which translates universally into the destination of dreams. There are millions of people wandering today, dreaming of a home across a militarized border. May they all reach their America, wherever it may be.

— REVRENDER BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A POST-RELIGIOUS PREACHER OF THE STREETS AND BANK LOBBIES. GOT A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY? JUST EMAIL: REVBILLY@INDYPENDENT.ORG AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.
What happens a long time ago is insignificant. Happens to young girls is insignificant. It is, has been deemed insignificant. What that what white teenage boys do, whatever it is, has been deemed insignificant. What happens to young girls is insignificant. What happens a long time ago is insignificant. Most importantly, whatever crimes have been perpetrated by fine upstanding Yale graduates with resumes fit for the Supreme Court is insignificant.

Yet there is cause for hope. The intensity of the backlash is a sign that we are living through a cultural revolution. Though the current government is headed by a perp-in-chief, even the institutions of the state are riven from within between partisans from both sides. Victims are not backing down. Even after seeing what has happened in the best case scenario of Blasey Ford’s accusation, they are accosting senators in elevators, marching in the street, telling their stories from the bullhorn of social media. We have threatened some of the central frameworks that feed the epidemic, which is why we must be silenced.

Revolutions are messy affairs. Nuance is lost, decisions have to be made quickly, and there are always undeserved casualties. But what we are fighting for goes way beyond any individual case, or individual career. This is a revolution over who can speak, who can be accused, and who will bear the brunt of the costs. The key is to keep the fight focused on reducing sexual violence in all its forms, individual and institutional. To not let it get hitched to the wagon of one political party, or diverted to beef up the carceral state, or interpreted through heteropatriarchal frames that cast male protection as the very humanity of the people who built it.”

EVE EWING, author of Electric Arches

“Citizen Illegal is right on time, bringing both empathy and searing critique to the fore as a nation debates the very humanity of the people who built it.”

JOSE OLIVAREZ

“Citizen Illegal is a poetic assault on the state and cultural processes that continue to stamp out empathy and humanity within the rise of today’s migratory drift and its management by the state.”

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