THE INDEPENDENT
#242: JANUARY 2019 • INDEPENDENT.ORG

TENANTS UNITE
P4

BRAZIL ON EDGE
P16

2018 BEST ALBUMS
P18

GEAR UP FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL
ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ & THE PLAN TO CHANGE EVERYTHING
BY PETER RUGH, P12

IT’S IN YOUR HANDS.
FOR MORE ON OUR 2019 WINTER FUND DRIVE, SEE PAGES 2, 23 & 24
For journalists, it’s the worst of times. And it’s the best of times.

Journalism as an industry has been in dire straits for years. That’s hardly news. And Donald Trump’s war on the media and the truth is not as novel as it seems. Lyndon Johnson lied us into Vietnam. Richard Nixon placed journalists on his “enemies list.” Ronald Reagan worked diligently to control every image that came out of his Hollywood presidency while George W. Bush proclaimed “Mission Accomplished” from an aircraft carrier just as the U.S. occupation of Iraq began to implode.

Still, we find ourselves in a uniquely toxic moment where not only are journalists and what they do under attack as never before, but so is our society’s collective sense of reality and the idea of solid facts, our building blocks for understanding and interpreting the world and possibly changing it for the better.

It’s also an amazing time to be doing journalism. The stakes have never seemed higher. The issues more urgent. The future direction of the country more up for grabs.

Will we fully embrace being a diverse rainbow nation where everyone’s basic needs are met, including the need to be respected for who you are, where politics no longer cater to the whims of the 1 percent and immense challenges like reversing climate change are fully addressed? Or will a ressentment minority successfully assert their vision of a white nationalist ethno-state with liberty and justice for the few?

More people have taken to the streets to protest in the past two years than at any time in American history, according to social movement historian L.A. Kauffman. Voter turnout in the most recent midterms was the highest in more than half a century.

Here at The Indypendent we’ve risen to the occasion. We’ve been on the frontlines covering the stories that matter the most from the Women’s March and MeToo to the struggle to defend immigrant families and communities to the stunning rise of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whom we featured on our cover this past spring when no other publication in this city even bothered to take note of her insurgent campaign.

Our circulation has tripled to 45,000 in the past two years. You can find our bright red and white outdoor news boxes across the city. It’s 2018 and we also have a snappy new website, are producing podcasts and short videos and now have a weekly Monday evening news show on WBAI-99.5 FM.

We love what we do. For more about our annual winter fund drive, see pages 23-24. With your support we look forward to doing more great work in 2019.

— John Tarleton
DECEMBER/January 2019

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

IN THIS ISSUE

January 2019

The Independent

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JANUARY 10–JANUARY 15

Times vary • $15–$20

FILM: 1ST IRANIAN FILM FESTIVAL NEW YORK

A selection of acclaimed and award-winning films from one of the world’s most vital and distinguished national cinemas. The festival aims to unite two strands of Iranian moviemaking — the classic art-house Iranian cinema beloved by cinephiles around the world, and new cutting-edge works that showcase the adventurousness and daring nature of younger Iranian directors. Visit irfilmfestny.com for a full program.

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., Manhattan

SAT JANUARY 12
1PM–5PM • $15–$50

MUSIC: ROCK N’ ROLL

With the appointment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, Roe v. Wade and access to sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion, are in jeopardy. Join Move Forward Staten Island for a community benefit concert to support both Move Forward Staten Island and Planned Parenthood. Featuring: Wahoo Skiffle Crazies, Hegazy and Dolltits.

THE FLAGSHIP BREWING COMPANY
40 Minthorne St., S.I.

SUN JANUARY 20
10AM–8PM • FREE

CONFERENCE: YIDDISH ANARCHISM: NEW SCHOLARSHIP ON A FORGOTTEN TRADITION

Despite the importance of Yiddish anarchism to the histories of both the U.S. left and the Jewish community, it has been largely forgotten. This conference, the first of its kind, brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars whose multilingual research examines the origin, evolution and contributions of Jewish anarchism in New York City and beyond.

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH
15 W 16th St., Manhattan

JANUARY 25–JANUARY 26
FRIDAY 7PM, SATURDAY 3PM • $22–$40

MUSIC: BLACK FLAGS OVER BROOKLYN

A two-day, anti-fascist extreme metal festival featuring a vendor market with band merch, radical publishers, activist organizations, local artisans and more.

BROOKLYN BAZAAR
150 Greenpoint Ave., Brooklyn

BE BLOWN AWAY: From Miles Davis to Art Blakey, sax-man Gary Bartz has jammed with the best. He’s among the headliners at the Winter Jazz Fest this January.

FEEL THE RHYTHM: Get ON THE FLOOR with the Dance Cartel at Public Arts on Jan. 5.

NOW IS THE TIME, P4

Will the Democratic takeover of the state Senate lead to an overhaul of NY's rent laws in 2019? Or will big money have its way again?

BRIEFING ROOM, P7

Toxins, drones, landlords, killer cops — welcome to the jungle.

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD, P8

The Indy bids adieu to a long-standing Boerum Hill haunt.

WAY OFF TRACK, P10

The 2nd Ave. subway extension isn’t a train line, it’s a money pit.

MAKING AMERICA GREEN AGAIN, P12

Workaday activists are injecting a fresh sense of liberty, equality and fraternity into France.

BRAZIL GOES BERSERK, P16

Meet Trump’s Latin American doppelganger and the resistance challenging his bullets, beef and Bibles agenda.

GLOBAL BRIEFING ROOM, P17

Bombs drop on Yemen, indigenous peoples race to save the Amazon, a voyager breaks through the heliosphere.

A SOUNDTRACK FOR A YEAR OF JOY & STRUGGLE, P18

Offerings from local working-class heroes and global superstars make our list of 2018’s best albums.

A HISTORY OF ENERGY, P20

Can our civilization rapidly transition to a new system of energy? It’s happened before.

INK-SLINGER NOIR, P21

A reporter finds himself chasing a story that could prove fatal in this new novel.

DEGENERATION X, P21

Matthild Bernstein Sycamore delivers a tale of sex, drugs and learning to love yourself.

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P22

Our advice columnist Rev. Billy has a holiday message for you.
2019, YEAR OF THE TENANT?

By Steven Wishnia

The movement to strengthen New York State’s rent controls and tenant protections is going into 2019 with two advantages it didn’t have before: A solid Democratic majority in the state Senate, and growing tenant organizing in several upstate cities.

After six of the eight renegade Democratic senators who’d allied with Republicans to sustain GOP control lost to more leftist primary challengers in 2018, Democrats won a 39-24 majority in the November elections. That gives them clear control of the Senate for the first time since 1966.

That means bills such as repealing the law taking vacant apartments out of rent stabilization if they rent for more than about $2,733 a month, which regularly passed the Assembly over the past several years and never got out of committee in the Senate, now have a strong chance of success.

“We never say Albany can’t screw something up,” says Sen. Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan), who sponsored several of those bills, “but I’m far more optimistic than I’ve been in my adult life.”

“It doesn’t mean this is automatically going to happen,” says Tenants PAC treasurer Michael McKee. “We’re going to have to work to make it happen. But I think we can.”

Meanwhile, housing activists in New York City and its inner suburbs have begun working with tenant groups in upstate cities including Albany, Rochester, Binghamton and Kingston. “In every place in upstate New York, rents are rising faster than incomes,” says Ryan Acuff of the Citywide Tenants Union in Rochester. Tenants there also lack “basic, basic protections,” he adds. It is legal, for example, for a new owner to buy a building in a gentrifying area and give everyone 30 days to get out.

The state’s rent-stabilization laws, which protect about 1 million households in New York City and Westchester, Nassau and Rockland counties, expire in June. Renewing them is a perennial struggle: In 2003, with Republicans holding the governorship and the state Senate, the laws were dramatically weakened. In 2011 and 2015, with center-right Democrat Andrew Cuomo as governor, token improvements were enacted.

“Since 1994, we have lost nearly 300,000 units of affordable, rent-stabilized housing,” says the Upstate Downstate Housing Alliance coalition. “Five million renters in New York State have no protections whatsoever.”

The coalition’s legislative agenda includes long-time tenant demands such as repealing high-rent vacancy decontrol and the 20-percent bonus increase allowed on vacant apartments, ending permanent rent increases for apartment renovations and requiring “preferential rent” discounts to last for the duration of the tenancy, so renters don’t get whacked with massive increases when their leases expire. It also wants to ban rent increases for building-wide major capital improvements, on the grounds that such work is often a necessary part of building maintenance and the costs passed on to tenants are often fraudulently inflated.

It’s also demanding statewide tenant protections: removing the geographic restrictions in the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) of 1974, so local governments outside New York City and its inner suburbs could enact rent-regulation laws, and barring evictions without a “good cause” such as not paying rent or creating a nuisance. It also wants to give tenants statewide the right to take their landlords to court to demand repairs or heat and hot water, now largely limited to New York City.

McKee believes Gov. Cuomo is the biggest obstacle to significantly strengthening rent regulations. The governor told the Metropolitan Council on Housing in writing in August that he would “advance a comprehensive plan — eliminating vacancy decontrol, limiting or eliminating vacancy bonuses, combating artificial rent inflation, making preferential rent the rent for the life of the tenancy.” “It would be very hard for the governor not to sign these bills,” Krueger says.

Therefore, McKee suspects, Cuomo will “say all the right things in public,” but will placate his real-estate donors by working behind the scenes to weaken pro-tenant legislation, such as by pushing to raise the threshold for vacancy decontrol instead of repealing it outright — and then claim that as a great improvement, as he did in 2015. That would still leave the system open to fraudulent deregulation, McKee says.

With fraud and vacancy decontrol eroding the number of rent-regulated apartments, McKee says, tenants have to treat strengthening the laws like a political emergency. “If we don’t do this in the next six and a half months, we may never have a shot,” he says. “Tenants have to get involved. They have to get on buses, they have to write letters, they have to visit their legislators and persuade them to make this a priority.”

We want one fair-housing law for the whole state,” says Acuff.

Most residents of upstate cities such as Buffalo and Utica are renters, he says. In Rochester, they suffer from both gentrification and neglect. Some neighborhoods have problems with landlords abandoning or not maintaining their buildings, while others, particularly the downtown area inside the “inner loop” of Interstate 490, are facing rapid rent increases and “buyout-clearout” mass evictions.

One out of every 15 of the city’s renters got evicted last year, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reported last May. In June, a luxury-housing developer ousted 70 people from the single-room-occupancy Cadillac Hotel, including some who had lived there for more than 20 years.

“Moves so quickly. They just start buying up whole neighborhoods,” Acuff says. But residents of a 16-unit building in the gentrifying Meigs-Monroe area, he notes, staved off eviction by forming a tenant union: They won the right to either stay or return after renovations were finished.

State Sen. Neil Breslin (D-Albany) has agreed to sponsor a bill to expand the ETPA, says McKee.

It’s Time: State Senator-elect Julia Salazar (D-North Brooklyn) speaks at a City Hall rally in support of sweeping reforms to NY State’s rent protection laws.
SEE MORE OF MNN THAN EVER BEFORE.

No one tells the story of New York better than New Yorkers, and now the story just got bigger. Presenting MNN’s HD Community Channel: We built this channel specifically for MNN Community Producers to tell their stories. Love stories, documentary stories, action stories, BIG stories. Join us at MNN HD on Time Warner Cable channel 1993 for the biggest New York stories there are - the story of your life.

LOCAL VOICES

TIME WARNER CABLE CHANNEL 1993

MNN HD

STREAMING WORLDWIDE ON MNN.ORG
UNFRIENDLY SKIES

Up to 14 NYPD drones will soon be hovering over the city’s skyline, the police department announced this December. The drones will not be weaponized, according to the NYPD, but instead will perform tasks like finding lost children and monitoring crowds. Nonetheless, the secrecy surrounding the development of the drone program, together with the department’s history of unlawful surveillance directed at activists and communities of color has watchdogs barking. In a statement, the New York Civil Liberties Union warns that the program “opens the door to the [NYPD] building a permanent archive of drone footage of political activity and intimate private behavior visible only from the sky.”

KILLER COP MAY FINALLY LOSE BADGE

The police officer who was captured on video choking Eric Garner to death in 2014 may finally lose his job. For the past four and a half years Daniel Pantaleo has been on paid administrative leave while the NYPD has insisted that it was waiting for the Justice Department to first determine whether to bring federal civil rights charges against him. With none forthcoming and the statute of limitations expiring this summer, the NYPD began preliminary disciplinary proceedings against the white officer in December. His departmental trial is slated for May. Garner, a black father of six, was mistakenly accused of selling loose cigarettes, sparking the fatal confrontation on the streets of Staten Island. “I can’t breathe,” Garner’s last words, echoed on as a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement.

UNFORTUNATE SONS

Life ain’t easy when the president’s son-in-law is your landlord. At least if you live at 118 E. 4th Street in the Village. For years, residents have complained of mounting garbage, a lack of heat and frequent cooking gas outages. Now they have lead construction dust to contend with. Following demolition work conducted by Jared Kushner’s Westminster City Living company, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found lead levels nearly ten times federal Environmental Protection Agency standards in the building. “The halls and everything in my apartment were completely covered in dust,” said David Dupuis, who has lived at 118 E. 4th Street for 35 years. “The burning sensation at the back of my throat lasted for days.” The Lead Dust Free NYC Coalition and elected officials are calling on the city to ramp up enforcement of lead regulations, particularly in older buildings undergoing rent-hiking makeovers.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Workers at Amazon’s Staten Island “fulfillment center” plan to join the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Pointing out that the city and state are offering the company a $3 billion incentive package to locate its corporate headquarters in Queens, they contend Amazon should use some of that money to raise wages and improve working conditions, and that it should collectively bargain with its employees. It is so hot during the 12-hour shifts Rashad Long is forced to work five or six days in a row that he says he sweats through his shirt. “We have asked the company to provide air conditioning,” he said, “but the company told us that the robots inside cannot work in the cold weather.”

The warehouse workers are joining forces with employees at the grocery chain Whole Foods, which Amazon recently acquired. They announced the union drive on the steps of City Hall on Dec. 12, ahead of a City Council meeting where lawmakers lambasted the backroom deal struck between Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Amazon to subsidize the trillion-dollar company’s Long Island City HQ.
By Peter Rugh

Ernest Hemingway wrote of the importance of a “clean, well-lighted place.” I would counter that a dark den of questionable cleanliness is desirable on occasion too, a place to venture away from the glittery trappings of postmodern society and revel in bokeha-glazed gloom with a cold one in hand. The people at Hank’s Saloon pride themselves on running a clean shop, but a barroom doesn’t exist for over a hundred years without collecting a bit of dust in the odd corner. Anyway, you’ll find plenty of darkness in there and while it’s not for everyone, those of us seeking such refuge have for years received it on the corner of Atlantic and Third Avenues in Brooklyn.

On a recent weekday afternoon this included a young bride-to-be who was apprehensive about trying on wedding dresses with her mother later that evening. “I’m more a T-shirt and jeans girl,” she said. “And there’s all that weird underwear that goes along with it.”

From behind a bar that has bore the strain of thousands of leathery elbows and absorbed gallons of spilled beer, Jeannie Talierco filled a tall dram with something cool and potent on the house. She offered her nuptially-nervous-rattled customer mints too so that her mother wouldn’t get on her case for having a nip of the hard stuff. It’s small acts of kindness like this that have earned Jeannie a reputation far and wide. She’s not a heavy drinker herself and never takes a sip while on duty but might put a twenty on the bar for a hard-up regular. She’s been at the grand ol’ dive for around two decades and is its heart and soul. Teachers, playwrights, executives, folk singers, punks, mathematicians, juvenile prison mess hall attendants, Jimmy Kimmel — virtually all manner of society has at one time or another sought Jeannie’s counsel and her generous pour.

But Hank’s Saloon is soon to be no more.

The two-story, railroad-car-shaped building where Hank’s resides on the ground floor (nobody has occupied upstairs for decades) was built in the 1880s by two Irish brothers. It first opened as a bar in 1903 and was popular with Mohawk ironworkers who began settling in Boerum Hill in the 1920s to work on the Empire State building, forming a community known as Little Caughnawaga. The headquarters of Ironworkers Local 361 was just up the block in those days and union decals — together with stick-on company logos — went along with it.

Today Hank’s is surrounded by glass-walled high-rises yet there are few Mohawk ironworkers left. Jeannie has Hank’s flame-emblazoned logo tattooed on her right forearm, but when she first started working at the bar it went by Doray Tavern, after its owners Dottie and Ray — “a sweet old couple” who spoiled her, as Jeannie fondly describes them. The neighborhood was in rough shape in those days and the doors were locked to keep trouble out. But once it was determined you weren’t going to start a fight or hold the joint up you were admitted.

“It was a real nice crowd, real cool,” Jeannie remembers. “A lot of oldtimers. A lot of ironworkers.”

Dottie passed away in her sleep one evening after a night of dancing and Ray took the road for heaven soon after. In 2005, the bar opened in its current incarnation, named for the cowboy crooner of such numbers as “I’ll Never Get Out Of This World Alive.”

Through it all Jeannie has remained at her post. Come January, however, she and her customers will have to make way for a six-story condominium building. There will be some kind of restaurant or cocktail lounge on the ground floor — likely too pricey and well-lit for many of the Hank’s regulars to feel at home in, but you can’t evict a memory and you can’t bulldoze a ghost.

“I always think there’s spook in here,” Jeannie says. The ice machine will rumble, the front door will open seemingly on its own reconnoissance “or something will go a little freaky and everybody will say, ‘That’s Dottie and Ray. May they rest in peace.’”

Boerum Hill’s own Jonathan Lethem has noted the spirits too. He immortalizes the saloon in his short story the “Mad Brooklynette,” writing of it as a “bar like a black hole. Daylight bent and broken at its threshold, full of Mohawk ghosts.”

The ghosts will be absent when Hank’s reopens this February several blocks away near Borough Hall. The new venue will be three or four times larger than it is now, with barbeque on offer from Hill Country Food Park downstairs, and the sound system will be much improved.

“We will not be trying to recreate ‘Hank’s Saloon’ (since that is not possible), but hope to offer the same community and neighborhood atmosphere that we have now,” reads a little slip of paper handed to patrons asking after the dive’s fate.

Rumor has it that the bar’s rowdy Sunday afternoon “Honky-Tonk Brunch” that Jeannie spearheaded will be replaced by some sort of gentle jazz dining experience. And the crowd will be different too, fewer working stiffs and more suit-and-tie types and out-of-towners from nearby office buildings and Marriott hotel. Many of Hank’s bartenders, including Jeannie when I spoke to her, aren’t sure if they’ll be working at the new place either. The month gap between Hank’s closing and reopening is a long time to go between checks.

Either way, those looking to stop by and see Jeannie can always find her at the American Legion at 9th Street and Third Avenue where she’ll be serving up hearty libations and salty philosophy on Friday nights.

“I’ve been very fortunate,” Jeannie reflected. “The people I met here — I met a few assholes but basically everybody helps everybody. It’s a shame they’re going to tear this place down.”

We at The Independent think so too. This was our favorite watering hole after wrapping up a late night meeting or finishing an issue just as the sun licked the sky. The sound of glasses clinking, the ping of Hank’s dice-taped cash register, Jeannie singing along under her breath to a Motown classic on the stereo, her voice like a radio tuned just shy of the station it is looking for but not without a certain sweetness — the din of the dark little den will ring in this reporter’s mind long after it goes down and condos come up.

Over the years, people were married at Hank’s and people were stabbed, but mostly it was just a simple spot where friends met for a good time on a dime. There aren’t enough places like it left in this town. Long live Brooklyn, down with yuppie scum! And remember to tip your bartender.
Breaking bread brings us together. Connecting people creates new possibilities. Working together builds community. We are an accessible educational and cultural space that nurtures the next generation of visionaries and organizers. Our space comprises a co-working area, conference rooms, a theater for film screenings, a media laboratory, a lending library, and our People’s Café.

We create affordable food, using iconic familiar recipes from all over the world, and most importantly...fresh ingredients!

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The Long Honduran Night . . . tells not only the tragic story of another failed state and the forces that continue to work against establishing real democracies in Central America, but also inspires in its stories of everyday people—in Honduras and the United States—who work against difficult odds to create change, often by placing their lives at risk.”

—Maria Martin, independent journalist

This powerful narrative recounts the dramatic years in Honduras following the June 2009 military coup that deposed President Manuel Zelaya, told in part through first-person experiences. Although it is full of terrible things, this is not a horror story: the book directly counters mainstream media coverage that portrays Honduras as a pit of unrelenting awfulness, in which powerless people sob in the face of unexplained violence. Rather, it’s about sobering challenges with roots in political processes, and the inspiring collective strength with which people face them.

The true story of Judyth Vary Baker—teen science super-star recruited by the U.S. Government during the height of the Cold War in 1962 as part of a secret project developing cancerous bio-weapons designed to kill Fidel Castro. She met and fell in love with another Government agent involved in the project. His name: Lee Harvey Oswald. This factually verified love story tells the events that result in the assassination of J.F.K. An All-Star DowntownEast and band sings and acts this incredible true story to life.

(Adapted from “Me and Lee,” by Judyth Vary Baker, Trine Day.)

The MTA has a long-term plan to make life easier for New York City’s beleaguered commuters — at least a few of them. It will cost billions of dollars and won’t be ready for a decade or longer. Is it a new, modernized signal system to replace the antiquated one from the 1930s that keeps trains creeping through dimly lit tunnels like giant metallic caterpillars?

Not so fast.

The MTA is ready to move forward with its plan to extend the Q line by three stations from 96th Street to 125th Street after the Federal Transit Administration green-lighted the project on Nov. 19, making it eligible for as much as $2 billion in federal assistance.

The new stations represent Phase 2 of the Second Avenue subway project. They will be located at 106th and 116th Streets in East Harlem before the train reaches 125th Street and veers over to connect with the 4-5-6 line at 125th and Lexington Avenue, as well as the nearby Metro North station.

Phase 1 extended the Q train by three stations from 63rd to 96th Street at a cost of $4 billion, the most expensive subway dig in human history. Phase 2 is projected to cost upwards of $6 billion with a projected completion date of between 2027 to 2029. The really long-term plan is to extend the subway line all the way down the East Side to the financial district in Lower Manhattan.

“It’s all about real estate,” said Tom Angotti, professor emeritus of urban planning at Hunter College and co-author of Zoned Out! Race, Displacement and City Planning in New York City. “The hottest piece of real estate in Manhattan is the Upper East Side and then going up into East Harlem.”

The Second Avenue subway follows in the pricey footsteps of projects such as the $2.7 billion extension of the 7 train by one station from Times Square to 33rd and 11th Avenue, site of the Hudson Yards luxury real estate development project. Then of course there’s the East Side Access project, which will allow Long Island Rail Road commuters to connect with Grand Central Station and the Upper East Side. That project is years behind schedule and its projected cost has ballooned from $3.5 billion to more than $11 billion.

“The subway system was originally built to move people into Midtown,” Angotti said. “Today the areas that need mass transit the most are outside Manhattan and they need to be connected to each other.”

According to Aaron Gordon, author of the Signal Problems newsletter, a key way to rein in subway construction costs would be to change regulations that require new subway stations to be much larger than is necessary.

“If you just go to a Second Avenue station, you can see how much space there is compared to other subway stations and that really makes things way more expensive than they necessarily have to be,” Gordon told Indy Radio News.

The dream of a Second Avenue subway dates back to the 1920s and was revived in the mid-2000s. Benjamin Kabak, author of the Second Avenue Sagas transit blog, warns that it will take upwards of 20 years to complete all of six new subway stations on this one line. “This is an unsustainable pace for a city trying to keep pace with international peers and in desperate need of massive expansion of its transit network,” he wrote on his blog.

The MTA should stop pouring money into new subway lines, Angotti told The Indy, get most cars off the road and invest instead in less glamorous (and less costly) dedicated bus lanes that deliver riders to existing subway stations. This would bring better transit service to all corners of the city. To accomplish this, he added, will require overcoming the objections of neighborhood car owners who don’t want to lose parking spaces to bus lanes and the NYPD which doesn’t want to be bothered with the mundane task of safeguarding dedicated bus lanes from other users who might clog it up.

“These are political barriers that the elected officials don’t want to confront,” Angotti said.
Since its founding in 1924 the mission of International Publishers has been to serve the progressive community by publishing and distributing books to help understand and change the world. Now, in 2018, International Publishers is providing these books to a new generation of activists, a task of vital importance in this age of Trump.

Not yet released but in the works, are the autobiography of Hugh Mulzac, the first man of African descent to be licensed as a Sea Captain by the USCG, and Stanley Finkelstein’s classic, “Jazz: A People’s Music” with a new foreword by Geoffrey Jacques.

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SAVING THE PLANET & SO MUCH MORE
HOW THE GREEN NEW DEAL COULD TRANSFORM AMERICA

By Peter Rugh

January 2019— to listen to America’s youth, its scientists, its rebels beyond tomorrow’s Dow Jones index to save the planet

It will require those in power now—who, for all their ing, uranium excavation, deepwater drilling, deforestation, of fracking, tar sands extraction, open-pit coal min-

ing— that they will be cooler in the summer and warmer at atop their buildings and homes, retrofi tting them too,

so that there will be cooler in the summer and warmer at
distant cousins are busy at work, raising solar panels
downing greenhouse gas emissions or global

output of heat-trapping greenhouse gases or global

The exact contours of New Deal 2.0 have yet to be
catalyzing action: a coming together of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and co-

• Expand, through sustainable farming, agricultural land by 75 percent by 2050.

• Eliminate household waste by 2025, including plastic waste by 2020. Nearly 40 percent of the

• Support renewable energy by increasing the share of fossil fuel production by 50 percent by

• Establish a national civilian climate corps to employ 100,000 young people in paid service
to restore our national forests and public lands. The corps would focus on

• Increase public transit by 50 percent by 2030.

• Expand affordable housing stock by 5 million units.

• Increase access to quality child care.

• Expand, through sustainable farming, agricultural and forestry output by 50 percent by

• Eliminate household waste by 2025, including plastic waste by 2020. Nearly 40 percent of the

A call for abandoning climate change as a political issue, and for taking action now to save the planet.

B Y P E T E R R U G H

It will require those in power now—who, for all their ing, uranium excavation, deepwater drilling, deforestation, of fracking, tar sands extraction, open-pit coal min-

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GREEN NEW DEAL
Continued from previous page

Adding extra impetus to the solarization drive is legislation that would double the city’s building emissions reduction goal to 40 percent by 2030 with a long-term goal of 80 percent by 2050. The measure could soon arrive on Bill de Blasio’s desk. City Councilmember Costa Constantinides (D-Astoria), who introduced the bill, and its supporters have described it as “Green New Deal” for New York City and hope it will set a template for other major cities to follow.

A TOUGHER HABIT TO BREAK

Globally, while renewable energy usage is on the rise, so too is natural gas and oil. In recent years, greenhouse outputs have either held steady or increased. According to a report released in December by the Global Carbon Project, 37.1 billion tons of heat-trapping gas will be released into the Earth’s atmosphere in 2018, the highest total ever. In the United States, emissions rose by 2.5 percent. China and India saw their emissions soar by 5 and 6 percent respectively. Essentially, humans are consuming more energy, the bulk of it coming from planet-warming sources with a slim remainder of wind and sun filling in the gaps.

Responding to the climate crisis requires putting fossil fuel companies out of business through taxes and regulations. A carbon tax, would have “to start high and keep getting higher,” says Henwood, though “it’s hard to imagine Congress” as is “passing something like that.” But a Green New Deal could absorb that displaced fossil-fuel workforce. Imagine a United States which, instead of selling weapons to countries like Saudi Arabia, exported wind turbines to the Indian subcontinent, solar panels to China. A nation that, rather than squandering $1.5 trillion on Trump’s tax cuts, $26 billion in yearly fossil fuel subsidies and trillions more on endless wars, invested in tackling a very immediate problem threatening our species and millions of others with extinction — and generated millions of jobs while doing it.

As Christian Parenti, author of Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence, observes, “the ruling class doesn’t come to its senses unless forced to.”

Before the institution of the original New Deal at the height of the Great Depression, the United States was experiencing 25 percent unemployment along with widespread hunger and misery across the land. As American factories and farms lay idle, the Soviet Union was experiencing full employment and expanding its influence on a global front. The prospect of global communism wasn’t just something your crazy Birchite uncle rants about but a concern that kept Congressmen and industrialists awake at night. Roosevelt needed to respond to the crisis or he risked having a revolution on his hands.

The situation is much different today. Wages are stagnant but the unemployment rate is less than 4 percent. And while that figure doesn’t include people who have given up looking for work (the rate of labor force participation is at its lowest in decades), it is a far cry from one in four adults being out a job.

Wind, solar and other companies in the green sector would benefit in a big way from a Green New Deal but most leading Fortune 500 companies have a non-stake in it. They rake in a substantial part of their revenues from their international operations. Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, General Motors, ExxonMobil, Coca-Cola, Starbucks — the United States may be home but it’s just one more square on the economic checkerboard. Their executives’ main concern is low corporate, capital gains and individual tax rates and hence disinvestment in the public sphere. There are also major portions of corporate America simply engaged in straight-up asset stripping — deindustrialization, public sector privatizations, debt portfolios.

Yet, with rising sea levels, extreme storms, droughts and raging fires expected to knock billions out of the U.S. economy in the decades to come, Parenti sees conditions conspiring that could compel the ruling class to act.

As a jumping-off point, “There’s a weird thing about the state and weather, disaster more specifically,” he says. “The U.S. government has since its very beginning intervened and tried to make people whole after natural disasters. As climate change continues to accelerate, the price tag for that continues to soar. The question of who pays and whether we can afford this giant military” could reach a boiling point.

This often-glossed-over history of the state stepping in doesn’t just apply to floods and fires, even in our neoliberal epoch. The government was, after all, forced to rescue the economy during the 2008 financial crash. That bailout might have looked different were it dispensed today. Given the pop- ularity of politicians such as Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and groups like the Democratic Socialists of America, there would be a real opportunity to call for wealth redistribution, Parenti argues.

Regardless, natural disasters have something to teach us.

“Storms are physically damaging and disruptive but they are also ideologically damaging and disruptive,” says Parenti. “The rhetoric of selfishness and market hubris, all that goes out the window. In a moment of crisis, giving people free stuff is laudable. Self-sacrifice is laudable. Solidarity is expected and laudable. If at a moment of crisis those values come to the fore, how long should they come to the fore and why only at a moment of crisis?”

As The Independent was going to press, the Sunrise Movement conducted another sit-in on Capitol Hill on Monday, Dec. 10. This time 143 demonstrators were arrested in a protest that included more than 1,000, mostly-young people calling on Pe- lossi, soon-to-be Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Rep. Jim McGovern to support the Green New Deal committee before Congress breaks for winter.

“I want to make sure that it happens,” McGovern, the incoming Chair of the influential House Rules Committee, told the protesters. “But we have to work out the details. We shouldn’t get hung up on every little detail.”

In a tweet, Hoyer, who has received more than $250,000 from the fossil-fuel industry, said he was “happy to hear” from the Sunrise Movement and that he appreciates their “passion.”

The youth activists don’t want Congressional leaders to recognize their passion, they want them to recognize science. A full blown climate crisis is barreling at us like a wrecking ball off its chain. We can spot it coming from a mile away. But physics and chemistry operate at one pace, politics at another. The question of whether we achieve a Green New Deal, or make any effective effort to dodge global warming’s impact at all, could depend on the size and strength of a latter-day environmental movement rising up from below.

Dean Patterson and John Tarleton contributed to this report.
The neOLibeRAL ORdeR In FRAnCe.

A pOpUList InSURGenCy pReSenTS A SeRious ThReAT TO ROAdBLOCK ReBeLS

By Richard Greeman

The uprising was originally provoked a month ago by Macron’s raising of the sales tax on gas and diesel fuel. Blue- and white-collar workers, farmers and small businesses in small towns who depend on cars to survive were outraged. Macron justified this bitter pill as necessary for reducing France’s carbon emissions. Ironically, France subsidizes the fossil-fuel industry, which enjoys a very low tax rate on its huge profits, to the tune of $7.9 billion a year. Meanwhile, Macron’s government has encouraged car use by cutting public transportation and de-localizing post offices and government service centers.

The “carbon tax” seemed calculated to divide working people worried about the end of the month from environmentalists worried about the end of the world. On Saturday, Dec. 8, however, Yellow Vest demonstrations across the country converged with a long-anticipated “March for the Planet.”

In the city of Uzès, one Yellow Vest woman’s homemade sign said it all: “End of the world/end of the month/same people responsible/same struggle.”

In Paris, where thousands of self-organized Yellow Vest protesters attempted to gather to express their grievances on the Champs-Elysées for a fourth successive Saturday, they were systematically filtered by police at Paris railroad stations and vehicular approaches to the capital. Hundreds were arrested for possessing ski goggles, face-masks, helmets and other protections, as well as such “weapons” as a hammer (found in the trunk of a provincial carpenter’s car) and bocci balls.

Those who managed to make it to the site of the demonstration were chased down by federal riot police who attacked them with tear-gas, flash-bombs and water-cannons. By the end of the day, cars were burning near the Arc of Triumph and all of Paris was in chaos.

This militarized state over-reaction to a mass political demonstration breaks with a long tradition of tolerance for muscled rallies held by rowdy farmers and militant labor unions — a tolerance Macron has blamed for the failure of previous governments to pass needed pro-business counter-reforms. Meanwhile, throughout the provinces and in the small cities like Uzès hundreds of thousands of environmentalists and Yellow Vests were out demonstrating or blocking highway entrances, intersections and shopping centers.

WHY FRANCE’S ‘SILENT MAJORITY’ IS MAD AS HELL

Like all the spontaneous mass uprisings that dot French history going back to feudal times, the Yellow Vest revolt was initially provoked by taxes. Spurning all established political parties and unions, the Yellow Vests organized on social media and acted locally. The broadcast media, although highly critical, spread the news nationally. The movement gathered steam across France, blocking intersections, filtering motorists, allowing free passage at highway toll booths and becoming larger and increasingly militant each successive Saturday.

Why Saturdays?

“I can’t go on strike,” explained one Yellow Vest participant. “I’m raising three kids alone. My job, that’s all I have left. Coming on Saturdays is the only way for me to show my anger.”

Women workers — receptionists, hostesses, nurses, aides, teachers — are present in unusually large numbers in the Yellow Vest crowds, and they are angry about a lot more than the tax on diesel. Like Trump, Macron has showered corporations and millionaires with huge tax cuts, creating a hole in the budget that he has compensated for with cuts to public services — hospitals, schools, transit, police — and through tax increases for ordinary people, up to 40 percent of their income. A large portion of the population is struggling to get by and going into debt.

In response to an appeal for calm from Macron, the leaders of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and nearly all other labor federations signed a declaration of solidarity — not with the injured and arrested demonstrators, but with the Macron government as the representative of the “peaceful” republican order. They accepted Macron’s invitation to “resume the social dialogue” — that is, to sit at the table with him and negotiate more “give backs” of workers’ rights.

The next day, contradicting themselves, CGT Secretary General Philippe Martinez and other union leaders called for a national labor demonstration on Friday, Dec. 14. They plan to raise the same basic economic demands as the Yellow Vests but one day before the movement’s next scheduled protest.

Regardless, the stage is set for the next act of the popular uprising in France in the weeks ahead. Stay tuned.

Richard Greeman has been a socialist and international activist in the United States and France since the 1950s. He is best known as the translator (from French to English) of the revolutionary novels of Victor Serge. Elayne Mery contributed to this report.
THE TRUMP OF THE TROPICS
CONCERNS GROW IN BRAZIL FOLLOWING FAR RIGHT ELECTION WIN

By Michael Fox

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil is collectively holding its breath for Jan. 1.

That is the day, far-right president-elect Jair Bolsonaro will take office. He won on Oct. 28 with more than 55 percent of the vote.

Bolsonaro is no ordinary politician. He is a former military captain and three-decade-long congressman who has been fined for sexist, racist and homophobic remarks. He has praised torture, Brazil’s former military dictators, Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and Donald Trump. He has promised violence against his foes, be they criminals, the corrupt, or his political adversaries.

During a campaign rally in the state of Acre, he pretended a tripod was a machine gun and told cheering crowds that they were going to “execute” Workers Party supporters.

“We’re going to run these crooks out of Acre,” he said.

His election threatens to push the country toward authoritarianism not seen since the country’s last military dictatorship ended in 1985.

Bolsonaro has vowed to fight crime with an iron fist and do away with left-wing activism. His future finance minister plans to push privatizations and free market reforms, which has international investors salivating.

Teachers and students are concerned their right to study freely will be curtailed. Bolsonaro has called for the teachings of Paulo Freire — the late Brazilian educator who wrote The Pedagogy of the Oppressed — to be banned. He has backed the controversial “School Without Parties” program that, if approved, would limit debate and opinions in the classroom and prohibit discussion of gender and sexual diversity.

Leftists, social movements, feminists and members of the LGBT community are afraid for their safety and even their lives.

In the month leading up to the October 28 election, four deaths and more than 120 cases of political attacks and threats were reported, mostly perpetrated by Bolsonaro supporters.

How could the fifth most populous country in the world intentionally vote itself back into the dark ages?

The answer is multifaceted.

* * *

Bolsonaro’s radical and violent discourse found widespread support.

“The guy is awesome. Totally awesome. And he says it like it is, He’s not fake at all,” said Lennison Carvalho, an Uber driver in Brazil, in the opening days of the electoral campaign. “This is a lawless country. We need Bolsonaro to come in and put these bums in line that have been stealing from us.”

In the wake of Brazil’s worst economic recession and largest corruption scandal ever, Bolsonaro rode a wave of anti-Workers Party sentiment.

From 2002 through 2016, the Workers Party won four consecutive presidential elections, with a focus on increasing rights for traditionally marginalized communities and tackling Brazil’s massive inequality.

The program was highly successful. Millions were lifted out of poverty with education and social programs. When former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva left office in 2010, he had an approval rating approaching 90 percent.

But in 2014, the price of commodities tanked, sending the Brazilian economy into a tailspin. Revelations broke of a massive corruption scheme involving Brazil’s state oil company Petrobras. The investigations have taken down dozens of top politicians from across the political spectrum. The Workers Party received the brunt of the blame in Brazil’s media, which is dominated by right-wing oligarchs. This in turn was to make the case against all Workers Party policies and any “leftist” ideas.

Bolsonaro claimed to be the antidote and warned that a return of the Workers Party would be a vote for corruption, something he has promised to clean up across the country.

His candidacy resonated with many among the middle class and the elites who never embraced the Workers Party policies of wealth redistribution and always felt resentment that their privileges were being stripped away.

Also at work was a culture war over the very values that should guide the country. It’s been fought in evangelical churches across the country. Evangelicals now make up a quarter of the country. They overwhelmingly backed Bolsonaro, lifting the fight against abortion, feminism and LGBT rights to the fore.

The country was also split along race and geographic lines. The South, with large white populations descended from German and Italian immigrants, voted strongly in favor of Bolsonaro, while the poorer majority-Black Northeast states — which overwhelmingly benefited from the Workers Party poverty alleviation programs — voted for Workers Party candidate Fernando Haddad.

* * *

MANIPULATED AND DISTORTED INFORMATION also played a powerful role.

In a press conference in São Paulo, days before the first-round vote, Haddad denounced an onslaught of misinformation and slanderous attacks against himself and his campaign being pushed on social media and, in particular, over the messaging application WhatsApp — a major means of communication for a majority of Brazilians.

In mid-October, the Folha de São Paulo newspaper revealed that businessmen were paying millions of dollars for pro-Bolsonaro fake news messages to be sent illegally to people across Brazil over WhatsApp. The country’s top electoral court admitted that it was not prepared to regulate information in this new age of social media and distorted news.

If the fake news onslaught sounds familiar, that’s because it is. As in the United States, influential members of Brazil’s far-right have been pushing their world view and opinions over social media, and in particular, YouTube.

Chief among them is journalist turned astrologer turned homegrown far-right philosopher Olavo de Carvalho. Since 2005 he has trained thousands of young Brazilians through his online “philosophy” courses.

His theories are conspiratorial and revisionist. He believes there is a global left-wing plot to take over the world and that Hitler and the Nazis were leftists. Bolsonaro is a major fan. According to news reports, the president-elect even asked Carvalho to head the Ministry of Education, although he declined.

These ideas have created an alternate reality, challenging facts and long-held truth. They also convinced millions of Brazilians that the Workers Party was truly at the root of all of Brazil’s woes.

Bolsonaro’s election did not occur in a vacuum. Brazil’s far-right was inspired by the election of Donald Trump and extremists elsewhere. In August, Bolsonaro’s son, Eduardo — himself a highly popular congressional representative — met with Trump’s former campaign strategist Steve Bannon. Eduardo wrote that Bannon had agreed to offer advice to Bolsonaro’s team.

Crisis in Brazil’s political system also paved the road for Bolsonaro.

In 2016, Brazil’s Congress, which itself was swimming in
In his book, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, historian Robert O. Paxton describes the elements often present with the rise of a fascist movement: political crisis or corruption scandals; blame of the rise of a fascist movement; political scribes the elements often present with the crisis or corruption scandals; blame of the rise of a fascist movement: political

2018 with an approval rating around 4 percent, after he and top cabinet members were embroiled in numerous corruption scandals.

In the months leading to the election, former president Lula was seen as the way out. He led all of the polls despite a controversial corruption conviction that sent him to jail in April to serve a 12-year prison sentence.

There is not enough room here to describe the details: the political bias by the prosecutor-judge overseeing Lula’s case, Sergio Moro; the lack of any concrete evidence in his written decision to convict Lula, and the media circus that spun an image of the former president as the kingpin of corruption in Brazil. But Lula remains in jail — considered by many to be one of the world’s top political prisoners — while Moro has accepted a post as the Minister of Justice in Bolsonaro’s incoming government.

Lula supporters and some international analysts called his conviction the second phase of the 2016 coup, and a tool to block Lula and the Workers Party from returning to power.

This, it did, on August 31, when Brazil’s Supreme Electoral Court ruled that Lula would be barred from running in 2018. The Minister of Justice in Bolsonaro’s administration, the Bolsonaro regime will have a green light to take action in the form of tacit support from the United States.

Exactly one month after Bolsonaro’s victory, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton visited the president-elect at his home in Rio de Janeiro, where they discussed diplomatic sanctions against Venezuela and Cuba and moving the Brazilian embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. He invited Bolsonaro to meet Trump.

“Let’s look forward to a dynamic partnership w/ Brazil,” Bolton tweeted.

There is no doubt that this is what they will have.

There will be resistance. In the lead up to the vote millions of women rallied under the hashtag #EleNão (NotHim). Social movements marched. Students protested. They have promised to be in the streets. But there are just certain questions about how the government will respond. The ghosts of the past have yet to be reckoned with. The future is unknown.

Michael Fox is a Brazil-based freelance multimedia journalist. He is the former Editor of the NACLA Report on the Americas. He tweets at @mfox_us.

**PROTECTING THE PLANET’S LUNGS**

An alliance of Latin American indigenous groups wants to create a cross-border “Sacred Corridor of Life” in the Amazon rainforest that would mitigate climate change by protecting trees that absorb carbon. The area the size of Mexico would also preserve the habitat of more than half of the world’s plant and animal species. This comes as Amazon deforestation has reached its highest level in a decade, and far-right Brazilian president-elect Jair Bolsonaro has vowed to ease fines on agribusiness and mining companies that damage the forest.

About a million indigenous people live in the Amazon rainforest. This space is the world’s last great sanctuary for biodiversity,” said Ti-ntiak Katan, vice president of the alliance. “It is there because we are there. Other places have been destroyed.”

**SCIENTISTS:**

**GLOBAL WARMING CAUSED EARTH’S LARGEST EXTINCTION**

A new study published in the journal Science suggests rapid global warming that may parallel climate change today is what caused the earth’s largest extinction some 252 million years ago. The period known as the “Great Dying” coincided with a massive volcanic eruption in modern-day Siberia that belched carbon dioxide and caused global temperatures to rise by more than 18°F. As the ocean warmed, models show it retained less oxygen and more than 95 percent of marine life suffocated to death. Just 30 percent of species on land survived.

**HUMANITARIAN CRISIS DEEPENS IN YEMEN AMID PEACE TALKS**

The U.S. Senate voted Dec. 13 to end U.S. military assistance for Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen. The vote set the stage for both house of Congress to end American participation in the war when they reconvene in January. November was the deadliest month in two years in Yemen, with nearly 3,000 people dead. Fighting escalated even as peace talks underway in Sweden mark the first time rebel Houthis and the Saudi-backed government have held direct negoti-
ations. The conflict began in 2015 and has led to the world’s largest humanitarian cri-

**MEXICO’S NEW PREZ OFF AND RUNNING**

Mexico’s new president Andrés Manuel López Obrador campaigned as a champion of the downtrodden and moved quickly after his Dec. 1 inaugura-
tion to begin enacting his promises. López Obrador put his predecessor’s $218 million luxury jet up for sale and now flies coach on commercial airlines. He also refused to move into the pal-

at the complex into a public museum. On a more substantive note, he also announced that he intended to reverse neoliberal education reforms opposed by teachers unions and to cre-
ate a “truth commission” to investigate the 2014 disappearance of 43 leftist college students in Ayotzinapa, Mexi-

**JOURNEY TO THE STARS**

And finally in galactic news, the Voyager 2 spacecraft has become the second human-made machine to cross into interstellar space. Launched by NASA in 1977 to study the solar system’s giant outer planets, the plutonium-powered spacecraft broke through the heliosphere that extends 11 billion miles from the sun on November 5. Voyager 2 will journey through the cosmos for-

terrestrial space. Launched by NASA in 1977 to study the solar system’s giant outer planets, the plutonium-powered spacecraft broke through the heliosphere that extends 11 billion miles from the sun on November 5. Voyager 2 will journey through the cosmos for-ever. It continues sending scientific data back to Earth, though all of its instru-
ments will eventually shut down. Its twin Voyager 1 exited the heliosphere in 2012.
**BEST ALBUMS OF 2018**

**By Charina Nadura, Brady O’Callahan, Michael Cobb & Independent Staff**

**NONAME // Room 25**
Noname followed up on the promise of her breakthrough mixtape *Telefone* with a release that solidifies her place as one of the most promising rappers on the scene. Noname’s style feels intimate, as if it all of *Room 25* plays out with just you, her, and her handfull of collaborators in close proximity. Ff I tell you, it’s tough to listen to the streets of New York, just because you’re afraid you’ll miss something. It’s best to just sit down with it and give it your full attention. Noname feels like Chance the Rapper’s most sincere moments played out in perpetuity over jazzy breakdowns and soulful choruses. “Montego Bae” is modern day bossa nova, as if Kendrick Lamar and Astrud Gilberto birthed a sound. *Room 25* is different from every-thing else out there, and so is Noname. Both are worth your undivided attention.

**M.A.K.U. SOUDNSYSTEM // 5 Fuegos**
This band takes its name from the Makú, an indigenous people from Colombia. The word translates to “low caste” but their mixture of traditional Colombian music, cumbia, reggae and Afrobeat will get you up out of your seat and grooving like no other record this year.

**ASHLEY MCBRYDE // Girl Going Nowhere**
Everyone loves a story about a small town talent getting a big break, and that’s just the narrative Ashley McBryde’s impressive debut *LP Girl Going Nowhere* presents. The album kicks off with the titular track in which McBryde recounts the naysayers: “You’re not the first, you won’t be the last. And you can tell us all about it when you come crawling back.” She always felt strongly enough about it to keep pursuing music, though, and thank goodness, McBryde hails from Arkansas and has a talent for smalltown storytelling, whether it be scandalous love affairs, drinking away life’s troubles or keeping a piece of family history with you. The standout track “Livin’ Next to Leroy” tells of a neighbor and friend’s overdose, an all too relatable story in working-class communities these days. All this is wrapped up in rollicking rock and country sounds. *Girl Going Nowhere* presents everything that the best narrative music can offer. “Not bad for a girl going nowhere.”

**FATOUMATA DIAWARA // Fenfo (Something to Say)**
Fatoumata Diawara’s deep, raspy voice is ever so soothing here on her second studio album, her first since 2011. Sung in her mother tongue of Bambara, this record is a journey to Fatoumata’s native Mali and into her richly textured innerworld. She takes listeners to beautiful landscapes laced with pain and despair.

**TELEMAN // Family of Aliens**
For those seeking a radical paradigm shift, Teleman’s Family of Aliens is a reminder that we live in the 21st century, where algorithms often make fateful decisions and we may not be alone in the universe. While clearly taking cues from electronic pioneers Kraftwerk, Teleman’s tune “Subma- rine Life” maintains an organic quality through the use of digital and analog instruments. Vocoder-laced lyrics rest upon real bass, drums, synthesizer and acoustic guitar. The composition dissolves into moments of angular madness landing back on solid beats. With *Family of Aliens* we don’t always have to fear the future. Sometimes sentient beings wield synthesizers and guitars instead of rays guns.

**DELVON LAMARR ORGAN TRIO // Close But No Cigar**
The Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio brings the funk the way Booker T. Jones might have had Jimi Hendrix been sitting in. In fact, guitarist Jimmy James takes his stage name from Seattle’s other psychedelic sonic. Jim James divesbombs, trills and wails with luscious licks that would’ve made Hendrix proud. All this action happens over soulful Hammond or- gan grooves and a solid R&B backbeat. Close But No Cigar is at once classic and contemporary. It features 10 tracks of instrumental covers and originals. Though they wear their influences on their sleeves, the Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio is happening today and on tour worldwide.

**J.D. WILKES // Fire Dream**
J.D. Wilkes is known as the wild frontman for the Legend- ary Shack Shakers. His slightly more subdued solo release *Fire Dream* draws from Appalachian springs and gypsy wells. Here Wilkes mashes roots to conjure sonic magic. “There’s bluegrass, jazz, old-time fiddle, jug band music and even swamp rock,” says Wilkes. *Fire Dream* has a live, raw vibe. Coming through a com- pressed ribbon mic, Wilkes’ overdubbed vocals give the sensa- tion of being right in the room with an insane Klezmer orchestra led by Tom Waits’ hillbilly stepchild. Wilkes is also a layman scholar of southern lore, an author and an illustrator. His deep knowledge of Americana and world music permutes this release, *Fire Dream’s* eclecticism de- liveres easy description and keeps the listener guessing.

**ARTURO O’FARRILL & THE AFRO-LATIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA // Fandango at the Wall: A Soundtrack for Mexico, the United States and Beyond**
There has been some amazing music over the years on the theme of immigration, but this album ranks among the best in its own right, the *Celeste soundtrack is some of the most gripping, beautiful and evocative electronic mu- sic to be released in the past few years. In the context of the game, it is apparent just how remarkable and de- liberate the music truly is. By employing delicate piano, pulsing synths and sweeping drones, Lena Raine creates soundscapes that run from triumphant to mourning. Every single composition is majestic and each sets the stage so well for the game’s emotional storyline that you barely need the game to follow. Lena Raine has created something truly sensational.

**JOAN BAEZ // Whistle Down the Wind**
Joan Baez made a triumph (and perhaps final) return to the public eye with this album, adding to her long list of po- litically charged yet subtle music. Baez does not hold back; no names need to be mentioned but if you have been paying attention you will know what she is talking about. This is a great album for everyday for inspiration. It’s tough out there, but Baez reminds us that we are not alone in our anger and our hope for a better future.

**MARY-ELAINE JENKINS // Hold Still**
Brooklyn based singer-songwriter Mary-Elaine Jenkins originally hails from South Carolina. Her smoky southern drawl belys her youth. Timeless tales of love and passion make up her great first release *Hold Still*. Backed by some of Brooklyn’s best musicians, Jenkins is an accomplished country-blues picker. With tasteful guitar, deep upright bass and soaring harmonics, “The Americans” is an in- fectious gospel number that downshifts tempo halfway through. It’s easy to imagine as part of the soundtrack to a southern gothic series like HBO’s *True Blood*.

**LENA RAINE // Celeste (Original Soundtrack)**
Music has been pivotal to the success and artistry of video games since the beginning. It’s a wonder that the music is so rarely critically considered, let Lena Raine change that. In its own right, the *Celeste soundtrack is some of the most gripping, beautiful and evocative electronic mu- sic to be released in the past few years. In the context of the game, it is apparent just how remarkable and de- liberate the music truly is. By employing delicate piano, pulsing synths and sweeping drones, Lena Raine creates soundscapes that run from triumphant to mourning. Every single composition is majestic and each sets the stage so well for the game’s emotional storyline that you barely need the game to follow. Lena Raine has created something truly sensational.

**KACEY MUSGRAVES // Golden Hour**
Kacey Musgraves was already a star in the country world, but she broke through to the rest of the world with *Golden Hour*. Her career thus far has been playfully backs to the country music system, and *Golden Hour* pushes boldly farther than she’s ever gone. It’s a genre blending/bending pop wonder. Musgraves is a master of writing sugary sweet songs that are just a little sad, and there’s a fair share here where she’s whole in her element. “Space Cowboy” is the best song in her impressive catalogue, turning a clever turn of phrase into a heartbreaking piece of poetic genius. “Velvet Elvis” is cheeky, fun stomper, “High Horse” is disco renaissance at its best. Anyone who turns their nose at the
first sight of the words "country music" would have a hard time resisting. *Golden Hour* is Kacey Musgraves’ introduction to the enormous audience she’s deserved for years.

**MAC MILLER // Swimming**

Mac Miller has sort of become a paragon for personal growth, which makes his untimely passing all the more tragic. Critically panned in his early days, Mac took most of negativity and turned it into drive. He quietly became one of the sharpest and most respected hip-hop producers and rappers among his peers, especially in the community he helped foster out of his home studio in Los Angeles. *Swimming* shows just how much Mac matured in the past decade. He tackles mental health, heartbreak and, most importantly, a strong desire to be better. *Swimming* showcases an artist better than he’s ever been, with promise to only get better. We won’t have the chance to find out what might have come next, but this album has already cemented his legacy.

**WEYBOURNE CHESTER BINGLEY // Keeps Streets Live**

*Keeps Streets Live* is a compilation featuring some of Britain’s best bussers produced by prodigious corner troubadour Weybourne Chester Bingley. The top track is undoubtedly “Millionaires” by anarcho-tolk-punks Phat Bollard whose raucous skiffle sound lambastes the hypocrisy of current consumer culture. The rest of the record lifts spirits through a variety of styles from jangly pop to peppy scat to country rock. *Keeps Streets Live* gives the word from the street and reminds the listener that while we’re all involved in the global struggle for equity, we can still make merry music.

**MARC RIBOT // Songs of Resistance, 1942 to 2018**

Ribot has lent his mastery at the strings 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.

Perhaps the most poignant moment on the album is "Scjivas," 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” guest contributor 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.
In the late 19th century, horses hauled wood culled from North America’s great forests in order to heat and power cities. Over 100,000 work horses brimmed New York City’s streets with millions of pounds of manure and 100,000 gallons of urine each day. By 1900, the country largely moved off wood to heat homes and horses began to diminish, but a new menace of black smoke appeared.

For backers of a Green New Deal, Richard Rhodes’ new book on the history of energy reminds us that dramatic changes in how our civilization produces and consumes energy have occurred before and can happen again. Rhodes, who is best known for his Pulitzer Prize winning The Making Of The Atomic Bomb (1986), tells a story of one form of energy supplanting another — a slow decarbonization spanning industrial development. In 1870, burning wood accounted for 70 percent of total energy needs but by 1900 coal became king. Growing reliance on coal for industrial production and also domestic usage befouled the world’s air.

Pittsburgh features prominently in Rhodes’ book. My father-in-law, born in the city during the middle of the previous century, recently recounted that his father’s department store recommended employees bring an extra shirt to change into at work because the very air soiled their white button downs during their commutes.

The struggle over the future of energy can seem esoteric, but by turning to the past Rhodes is able to enliven the subject with people, events, times and places that keep you turning the page. Many industrialists populate Energy, like inventor and early General Motors executive Charles Kettering. In 1911 Kettering created the electric car ignition that allowed many women who had difficulty using hand cranks to drive cars. He also helped eliminate “engine knock” (high pitched rattling) by raising the octane level in gas. There are also more familiar characters, like United Mine Workers President John Lewis who presided over a growing Cold War nuclear arsenal. Under the banner of “Atoms for Peace” while also presiding over a growing Cold War nuclear arsenal.

The strikes, Energy states, were partly waged over the conversion of Texas-based oil pipelines to natural gas. The pipelines extended into the Northeast, where most cities produced a coal-derived fuel called “town gas” for local consumption. Natural gas would compete against town gas. The United Mine Workers of America won economic gains from the strikes but the pipelines switched to natural gas following year.

Natural gas burns cleaner than coal. However, fracking, the drilling process commonly used to access natural gas reserves buried deep in the earth, yields high levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and poisons the air and water of adjacent communities. Meanwhile, King Coal is by no means obsolete. At current domestic demand the federal government estimates U.S. recoverable coal reserves will last another 325 years. Keeping it in the ground is essential to check global warming.

Is nuclear power a part of the solution? Rhodes is a longtime proponent of it and answers in the affirmative. For environmental activists who thought they killed off the nuclear power industry and its lethal hazards 40 years ago, reviving it as a green, eco-friendly alternative to climate apocalypse is practically no choice at all.

Reactors deliver tremendous energy capacity and allow for greater urban and industrial development but can be cost prohibitive. The Nuclear Energy Agency estimates that a new one gigawatt nuclear power plant that can power 750,000 homes costs around $4 billion to construct. That is a lot of wind turbines, geothermal systems and solar panels that could be built instead.

Rhodes references the 1967 Sierra Club commissioned book The Population Bomb to link what he sees as environmentalism’s anti-human “neo-Malthusian” fear of overpopulation and resource consumption to nuclear power opposition. Reticence to nuclear energy production has been intimately tied to the atom bomb’s awesomely destructive power and reactor meltdowns and waste. Starting in the Eisenhower years, the federal government promoted the growth of the domestic nuclear power industry under the banner of “Atoms for Peace” while also preserving over a growing Cold War nuclear arsenal.

“Fear of radiation and misunderstanding of its effects were powerful drivers of antinuclear sentiment,” Rhodes writes. “Activists encouraged this response over the years with claims that a meltdown would destroy an area ‘the size of Pennsylvania’ (Ralph Nader) or that ‘nearly a million’ had died from Chernobyl fallout (Helen Caldicott, the Australian physician).” Just 31 people died from acute radiation exposure in Chernobyl and lower levels of radiation are difficult to directly link to mortality but the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates another 4,000 died due to lower radiation levels from the 1986 meltdown. By contrast the WHO estimates ambient air pollution caused 4.2 million deaths worldwide in 2016. Rhodes will garner more sup-

Lastly, Rhodes argues nuclear waste disposal is a political but not intractable technical problem and that a 1,300-foot-deep cavern in Carlsbad, N.M. could “easily accommodate the entire world’s nuclear waste for the next thousand years.” Like solar panels, nuclear power plants only release greenhouse gases during construction and decommissioning but produce zero emissions once constructed. Unlike solar, nuclear power plants get their energy source from open-pit uranium mining, a carbon intensive, water-consuming, poisonous process.

Amid growing concerns about climate doom, Energy ends optimistically by arguing that the United States could decarbonize its economy if it chose to do so. In other words, the technology, money and engineering exist to radically decarbonize. The only thing missing is political will.
RACE & A SMALL TOWN MURDER MYSTERY

The Man Who Fell From The Sky
By Bill Fletcher
Hard Ball Press, 2018

By Michael Hirsh

“R ace” as a biological category differentiating humans has been a spurious and discredited marker for more than a century. Yet even those who know that it is rubbish and militate against it are stuck with it.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a respected labor and social justice activist, currently field services director for the American Federation of Government Employees and author of the must-read They’re Bankrupting Us: And 20 Other Myths About Unions. The black activist, scholar and journalist is well placed to write meaningfully on where class and the color line meet. He does so again in his newest book, a highly readable and well-told crime novel.

The Man Who Fell From The Sky, his first effort as a novelist, does not disappoint. It shows him to be not just a sage storyteller but no less than a prized canary, warning of dangers past and present.

The 1970-based plot is visited to the reader guessing. The top draw mystery involves the ferreting out of a murderer whose identity is suspiciously masked as either a maniac or an avenging angel in exterminating a clutch of ex-U.S. World War II army airmen. The central figure investigating the deaths is David Gomes, a journalist of Cape Verdean extraction and the Americanized child of immigrants of mixed African and Portuguese heritage, typical of the islands’ diaspora who came to inhabit much of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island coastlines.

That mixed heritage alone makes the story a cultural inquiry in itself, with many Cape Verdians ranging from white to dark skins even within the same family, making identity in a racist society especially complex.

What makes the story work so well is not only its plot line but its capture of time and place. There is the bright and helpful bank teller who in any nonsexist society would be the bank manager. There are the bumbling FBI agents, insisting that the murders are linked — and on the basis of no information — to the Black Panther Party and efforts to aid draft resisters fleeing to Canada. There’s the evocation of Cape Cod as not only idyllic physically but a locus for excellent, inexpensive cuisine. The final plot unraveling is worth the reader’s wait. Enjoy this well-crafted, political and engaging thriller.

COMING OF AGE AMID AIDS

Sketchtasy
By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore
Arsenal Pulp Press

By Eleanor Bader

Sketchtasy captures moments like this with rare precision and even if you, as a reader, have never intersected with anything approximating Alexa’s world, Sycamore’s prose will make you feel the immediacy of the era for this particular tribe of young adults.

As should be clear by now, Sketchtasy is not a typical coming-of-age tale. And, while the narrative can be criticized for being shorter on plot than it is on character and description, it is also a sharply observed showcase for the ways people support each other, alienate each other, and simply mark time with each other.

As readers witness Alexa’s struggle to love herself, Sycamore suggests that it is possible to surmount abuse, neglect, and negative experiences. “We’re brought up to hate ourselves, and we can go beyond that,” Alexa says early in the novel. Indeed, as #metoo has affirmed, it’s essential that we do so.

deed, it comes as a shock when one of their pals announces that his t-cell count has plummeted to five, prompting him to move back to his parents Brandywine, Delaware home for his final weeks. Alexa is jolted by this, of course, and for a time stops drinking and drugging, but this proves to be a short-lived experiment in sobriety. Nonetheless, the scenario is evocative and moving.

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As readers witness Alexa’s struggle to love herself, Sycamore suggests that it is possible to surmount abuse, neglect, and negative experiences. “We’re brought up to hate ourselves, and we can go beyond that,” Alexa says early in the novel. Indeed, as #metoo has affirmed, it’s essential that we do so.
Become a member of Brooklyn For Peace in 2019 and join us in building the peace movement.

**BROOKLYN FOR PEACE**
718-624-5921 | bfp@brooklynpeace.org
brooklynpeace.org

**REVEREND BILLY’S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

Christmas! Resistance is futile. The holiday shopping season remains the flagship ritual of consumerism, the cultural enforcement of capitalism. But then again, the 1 percent has never seen anything like the Extinction Rebellion protests that have recently caught fire.

Finally, we are alarmed and we are panicked and we’re speaking up. Mass extinction? Oh, I get it, extinction. This is about DEATH. Like, you mean, MY death and my kids’ death, my cat and dogs’ death… and the neighbors’...

Well, we could sense this, over the past years. We knew the scientists were right. We’ve been walking around a bit haunted, feeling a strange vertigo… And then, at some point, the radical decline in life forms became directly emotional for us humans. Something about the Irma-Maria-Florence-Michael-Paradise decline in life forms became directly emotional for us humans. It has been snowball-positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks. It has been snowball-positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks. It has been snowball-positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks. It has been snowball-positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks.

The Extinction Rebellion is breaking through to us from the positive side. This new movement says that we can save our lives if we act together and take the risks. It has been snowballing in the United Kingdom since the summer and revealed itself on Nov. 17, as 6,000 people took over the five London bridges and ground the city to a standstill. Within weeks, Extinction Rebellion activists created holiday disruptions in 35 countries. Here in New York, meetings and actions are a’brewing.

In the end (of the world), there is one issue and that is Life. Each of us has our work and our issue. We are hard at work against racism and sexism and climate change, capitalism and industrial agriculture and guns and war. Point is, we need to be alive for our life work. One job we all have is to survive and save others.

We are made of the Earth. The soil and water and sky is in our blood. Our eyes carry the perspectives of ecosystems, of the forests and wetlands and fields. That’s why we still have a conscience for the Earth. We won’t stop loving the Earth. We can listen to evolution. We can hear the instruction to radically change.

Corporate Christmas is the rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born. But what if that beast is stopped on the highway by a million humans who want to survive? The beast will be stopped by you and I, a superstorm of people. A perfect gift.

— Reverend Billy

REVEREND BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A POST-BELEDIGED PREACHER OF THE STREETS AND BANK LOBBIES. GOT A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY? JUST EMAIL REVBILLY@INDYPENDENT.ORG AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.
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THESE ARE DANGEROUS YET PROMISING TIMES

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