Mahmoud Kasem, owner of the Al Aqsa Bakery & Restaurant.

INSIDE LITTLE PALESTINE
IT’S THE CLOSEST THING TO THEIR HOMELAND FOR NYC’S PALESTINIAN DIASPORA
BY LARA-NOUR WALTON — P12

SUPPORT THE INDY
WE CAN’T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU
FOR MORE ON OUR ANNUAL WINTER FUND DRIVE, SEE PAGES 2 & 24
The cultural crackdown that began soon after Oct. 7 shows no sign of letting up.

Journalists at major news outlets have been fired, suspended or otherwise sidelined after refusing to abide by the pro-Israel bias across the U.S. news media. In more niche corners of the publishing world, David Velasco, the editor-in-chief of Art Forum, was sacked after publishing an open staff letter that called for a ceasefire and — how crazy is this? — Michael Eisen, the editor-in-chief of a prestigious science journal, was fired after retracting an Onion article.

In Hollywood, actors like Susan Sarandon who speak out against the war risk losing work or being dropped by their talent agencies.

On college campuses, pro-Palestinian student groups are decertified while individual student activists endure doxing and other forms of harassment. Campus teach-ins and movie screenings are “paused” due to “security concerns.” Not that campus bureaucrats will be spared as we saw recently when the presidents of Harvard, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania (all women) were hauled before their congressional inquisitors and made to answer for the tweets of 20-year-old college students.

It’s happened before — during the Red Scare of the McCarthy Era and more recently in the inflamed aftermath of 9/11. Here at The Indy, we won’t be cowed into silence on Palestine-Israel or anything else. Thanks to the support of readers like you, we are free to publish our unique mix of on-the-ground shoe leather reporting, political education and incisive analysis of visionary social movements fighting for a more just and humane world. The only thing that could silence us would be an indifferent response from our readers during our winter fund drive.

In Solidarity,
John Tarleton
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
THE INDYPENDENT
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INDY WINTER FUND DRIVE, P24
We do the work all year. Now is the time we need the support of readers like you.
The mayor is seeking severe across-the-board cuts through this budget modification. Mayor Adams is slashing $1.4 billion from essential and care-based services, which means cutting over 2,000 city jobs. The impacts of these cuts are immediate, and New Yorkers are already feeling their city services shrink. Composting organizations are shuttering their doors, and 120 people with green and clean jobs will be out of work by the new year. Libraries are closing on Sundays. Almost 500 Fire Department jobs will disappear. There will be over $500 million cut from the Department of Education, not including pre-school and 3K cuts.

But the mayor, a retired police captain, did leave two agencies largely unscathed: the NYPD and Department of Corrections (DOC). So, why 15% cuts? There are no projected deficits in the current fiscal year; all of these cuts are to address claims of out-year gaps between revenue and expenses. We are looking at potential 6% gaps for next year, and 8% in 2025 that we would need to fill. But it’s already been proven that it is possible to recover from out-year gaps, as the City did not once, but twice in the 2000s.

Out-year gaps and how we deal with them is normally what we do in the traditional budget process that takes place, instead of pushing cuts through the shorter, less-transparent budget modification process. In January, the mayor normally presents a preliminary budget that the Council debates and researches so that in June we finalize it before the new fiscal year. What is happening now is the Mayor is asking to make big changes without the time, information, insight or transparency of a hearing process or cycle. This is unprecedented.

The sensible thing is for City Council to put Mayor Adams’ budget modification to a vote, and vote it down, unless the Mayor agrees to halt cuts until the regular FY23 budget process begins, or rolls back cuts to composting, libraries, schools, CUNY, childcare, and essential services and finds further savings in the NYPD and DOC's bloated budgets. City Council can also reject budget modifications if they are of a significant size.

This hasn’t happened in a long time — and the Council is not required to vote on a modification; it can pass without action. But if the Council votes down a mod, the mayor can still cut or underspend, like they would in a hiring freeze, but not move money around as easily. This may seem like the Council can’t do much. But it can curtail some of the mayor’s power to push through increased NYPD spending or other mayoral budget priorities without much input from the public or the City Council.

The Independent Budget Office reported that the administration had overstated asylum-seeker costs by up to $1.6 billion dollars, and the Fiscal Policy Institute has stated that the Mayor “significantly overstates the fiscal impact of migrant arrivals,” naming that proposed budget cuts of $10 billion per year are “billions of dollars higher than the increased cost estimates for asylum seekers.”

Yes, the city has gaps in future fiscal years. But there are several contributing factors to the out-year gaps — which the Citizens Budget Commission points out as unified over-time, city lawsuits, and new union contracts — ones that the city can overcome like in years past without drastic budget cuts to essential services.

There are a few other things we can do to fill the gaps without gutting city services. First, we can get people out of temporary shelter and into safe and stable homes. Fixing the city’s shelter system and housing New Yorkers and immigrants more humanely will actually save money in the long run — instead of the mayor’s continued over-reliance on questionable emergency contracts. The mayor has refused to enact the voucher package the City Council passed in July 2023, which would address the bottleneck of moving people out of more costly temporary shelter into cost-effective affordable housing through vouchers. Also, we can undo the hiring freeze at revenue generating agencies, and use some of the city’s $8 billion in reserves. We could also ban broker fees and stop paying charter schools’ rent, along with a host of other ideas from the Independent Budget Office which can help fill this gap.

The mayor is using a manageable budget deficit as a distraction to his many scandals and to carry out an ideological agenda that translates into favors for rich friends and less than scraps for working-class and poor New Yorkers. The New York City Council can stand with New Yorkers and reject this attempt to force these changes through the mods process and stand up for a city whose services are on the ropes. In a city with the most billionaires in the world, there is no reason we cannot afford world-class schools, abundant libraries, fully-funded CUNY and universal childcare. The mods are no time for far-reaching policy in the form of austerity, and the Council needs to vote it down if they don’t get movement on keeping funding for central services that the working class of this city need and rely on.

By Brandon West

New Yorkers are particularly concerned with Eric Adams’ fifth round of cuts, in the form of 5% mid-year budget cuts to agencies, with another 10% cuts to come by April 2024. The Mayor has unilaterally made these unpopular, devastating cuts to libraries, composting, public schools, CUNY programs and a long list of essential services. These cuts are bad for New Yorkers struggling to afford the basics, bad for a functioning city government and bad for local democracy that excludes working-class and poor New Yorkers from decisions that impact them. But thankfully, the Council has a role to play, and the tools to stop the devastation — if only members have the guts to use them against the mayor’s unnecessary and deeply unpopular austerity agenda.

Without getting too far into the weeds, what you need to know is that the fiscal year begins on July 1, and what we are experiencing now are budget modifications or “mods.” This budget approved in June is the “adopted budget,” but that can be altered and be modified on an ongoing basis over the fiscal year as budgetary needs and conditions change. There are quarterly “financial plans,” where many of these mods happen. Changes in revenue projections, agencies needing to move money around or “new needs” popping up can warrant Mods. Modifications require less process and less transparency, so sometimes it’s where the mayor can push through increased NYC spending or other mayoral budget priorities without much input from the public or the City Council.

Brandon West previously worked at the NYC Office of Management and Budget and as a City Council budget analyst. He was an organizer with Occupy City Hall in 2020, ran as a DSA-endorsed City Council candidate in 2021, and currently is on NYC-DSA’s Steering Committee.
LEGISLATORS LAUNCH BILL TO END $321M TAX BREAKS FOR COLUMBIA & NYU
Two state legislators from Queens have proposed a bill to end property-tax exemptions for private universities that had more than $100 million written off in the last fiscal year. State Sen. John Liu and Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani’s measure would use revenue from the cancelled tax breaks to fund the City University of New York. Last year, Columbia University got $179 million and New York University $142 million. “At a time when CUNY faces budget cut after budget cut and is in a constant state of disrepair, Columbia and NYU — two of the largest property holders in New York City — are exempted from paying property taxes,” Mamdani said Dec. 12. The legislation faces a complicated path: The State Legislature would have to amend the state constitution in two consecutive sessions, voters would have to approve that amendment and then the Legislature would have to pass a bill to put it into effect.

STATE COURT ORDERS NEW YORK TO REDRAW HOUSE MAP
New York’s top court on Dec. 12 ordered the state to redraw its congressional map, voiding the court-ordered districts used in 2022. The Court of Appeals’ 4-3 decision held that under the state constitution, districts must be drawn by an independent redistricting commission or the Legislature, and courts can only draw districts for temporary use. In 2022, the court ruled that the 26 districts drawn by the Democratic-controlled Legislature after the redistricting commission deadlocked were unconstitutionally gerrymandered. The map drawn by the upstate judge named as independent special master put several Democratic incumbents, including Manhattan veterans Jerrold Nadler and Carolyn Maloney, into the same districts. That helped Republicans flip four House seats in New York in 2022, crucial to them winning a majority. Republicans say they will likely challenge any 2024 map; it would not take much tinkering to give Democrats an edge in up to six GOP-held districts.

SOCIALISTS LOOKS TO EXPAND ALBANY BLOC FROM 8 TO 11
On Dec. 7, The New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) rounded out its slate of challengers to three incumbent state legislators in June’s Democratic primaries. The socialist organization currently controls three State Senate seats and five more in the Assembly.

In Assembly District 36 in Central Brooklyn, DSA endorsed Eon Tyrell Huntley, a retail service worker, tenant and PTA president. He will challenge two-term incumbent Stefani Zinerman.

In Assembly District 82 in the Northeast Bronx, DSA-backed education activist and former Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez staffer Jonathan Soto will mount a second challenge to 10-term incumbent Michael Benedetto, who represents what is now a majority-minority district.

In a third race in Assembly District 37 in Western Queens, the DSA had previously endorsed union organizer Claire Valdez. Her opponent, Juan Ardilla, was elected in 2022 with the support of many progressive groups only to have his support crater when two women came forward to allege he had sexually assaulted them. Both Huntley and Valdez are running in areas where other DSA candidates have won. In 2022, Soto garnered 36% of the vote in his district when he ran without a DSA endorsement. Unlike most organizations that make political endorsements, DSA endorses only a handful of candidates per cycle and focuses all of its resources on those races, including the ability to deploy hundreds of volunteer canvassers in a district.
COMING FULL CIRCLE

RETIRED LABOR ORGANIZERS ADVISE A NEW GENERATION OF UNIONIZING WORKERS

BY KEATING ZELENKE

Debra Bergen remembers the exact date when she first learned about the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee: “November the ninth, 2022.”

EWOC was launched in 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as a joint project of the Democratic Socialists of America and the UE, a union that dates back to the 1930s. It quickly became a nationwide network of organizers with labor-movement experience who advise and support non-unionized essential workers seeking to take collective action to improve their pay and working conditions.

Two years later, as Bergen was scrolling through Facebook, a video of Amazon Labor Union President Chris Smalls flashed across her screen. Bergen had been involved in the labor movement since she graduated from SUNY New Paltz in 1978. However, after nearly 30 years with the Professional Staff Congress — the union that represents around 30,000 CUNY employees — she retired in 2018. Bergen had spent the years since then pursuing other personal projects, relatively detached from the movement in which she had found purpose for decades.

“All the organizing that was going on all over the city with Starbucks and Amazon, I was really getting a little antsy,” Bergen said of that post-retirement hiatus from labor organizing. “I wanted to get involved.” She filled out the volunteer form on EWOC’s website and was answering phone calls from workers in no time. Soon she became a support organizer — a veteran labor organizer who oversees other volunteers’ campaigns.

Shortly after joining EWOC, Bergen was assigned to support Hex & Company workers, who were fighting to unionize the board-game café’s Union Square location. Employees were underpaid and overworked, some making only $12.50 an hour, crawling their way up to minimum wage through meager tips. Despite this, co-owners Greg May and Jon Freeman refused to voluntarily recognize a union request.

Bergen worked on the Hex & Company union effort for just about a year, and in November of this year, the employees at the café won their union vote by a decisive 50-16 majority.

Since 2015, the popularity of labor unions has skyrocketed, particularly among young employees in the private sector who are increasingly desperate for better conditions and wages. After the initial excitement among young activists begins to settle, uncertainty about what to do tends to set in — that’s where seasoned organizers like Bergen come in. Despite the decades that separate her and the young people who are reinvigorating the labor movement, Bergen and other organizers like her are finding a way to bridge the gap through open-minded conversation.

“People are afraid of getting fired for anything. Asking questions, [coming] into work one minute late — everything,” Ellen David Friedman said of the current climate in many workplaces. Friedman has been organizing since high school, when an older friend brought her to a United Farm Workers meeting; labor leader Dolores Huerta had come to Friedman’s native Long Island to teach activists there about a nationwide boycott of California grapes.

That was in the late 1960s. Officially enamored with anti-capitalism and “the feeling of instrumentality” that organizing gave her, she spent the next few years tracking down her own mentors — former members of the Communist Party who she hoped could teach her about unionizing from an anti-capitalist perspective. During this time, she met with “the founding generation” of labor agitators, like journalist Jane Slaughter and Teamster organizer Ken Paff.

“I would drive into the hills of rural Vermont and just drink coffee and talk with them for hours,” Friedman said. Today, these conversations serve as the foundation for her own mentorship as a prominent labor organizer herself. She worked for 20 years at the Vermont chapter of the National Education Association. And for 10 more years, Friedman and her husband split their time between Guangzhou and Vermont, teaching Chinese workers why they should organize and how they should do it. In 2015, she was expelled from the country by the Chinese Communist Party and has not been able to go back.

When she returned to the United States for good, she planned to officially retire. Those plans changed when she realized the labor movement here was taking off in a way she had never seen before. The energy that young people brought to the table was infectious.

“It is so fabulous,” Friedman said as she spoke about working with this new generation. “I can barely contain my exuberance.”

Central to Friedman’s organizing approach is fostering communication, not just between organizers and workers, but between the workers themselves.

“There’s a lot about organizing training that focuses on having your one-on-ones,” Friedman said. “And of course you need to [have those conversations]… but if you stop there, you’re not going to build power.”

OBSTACLES & HOOPS

Organizing coordinator Patrick Cate also applies this philosophy to his work at EWOC. Cate is much younger than Bergen and Friedman, though he’s familiar with the power of both retired union stewards and excited young workers. As one of three permanent staff members, he helps manage the nearly 100 volunteer organizers at EWOC, pairing up advanced organizers like Debra Bergen with less-experienced intermediate organizers and workers who know little to nothing about the labor movement, but know they want to unionize.

In order to officially be considered a unionized workplace by the National Labor Relations Board, “the obstacles and hoops you have to jump through are really specific — you have to get 30% of workers to petition, you have to get a majority, and there’s an election and these dates and none of the system is in workers’ favor,” Cate explained. “So generally they rely on professional career organizers who know how to work the model.”

Like Debra Bergen, Bob Lawson volunteers with EWOC as an advanced organizer. Lawson started out as a construction worker and union member himself — “I still have my dues book,” he reflected with a small laugh — before getting involved in the civil rights movement. As part of the Students for a Democratic Society effort to build a multiracial base, he began to mobilize poor white workers in the rural areas outside of Chicago back in 1966. Lawson continued his work in California through the United Farm Workers and later among public-sector workers in Illinois.

“What you learn as an organizer and the connections you make… you [feel] lucky,” Lawson said, still a little in awe of the privilege of a lifetime in activism. “I used to do this for free, and now I’m getting paid for this?”

He started volunteering with EWOC after he retired, interested in learning about what challenges workers face today. After decades of concerted corporate attack on American unions overseen by politicians from both political parties, he knew that conditions had deteriorated for workers.

“When I was growing up, unions were matter-of-fact,” Lawson said. “The political climate, I’d say, is much worse now at the institutional level.”

His professional life, like both Debra Bergen’s and Ellen David Friedman’s, is coming full circle now, as a volunteer speaking directly with workers — whether they be baristas, warehouse workers or home health aides.

“We can let people know that you can do organizing for a long time if you want,” Lawson said. “It’s a fulfilling life.”

For more about the EWOC, see workerorganizing.org.
LABOR BRIEFS

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

STARBUCKS SAYS IT WANTS TO NEGOTIATE WITH UNION

Starbucks said Dec. 8 that it wants to resume talks with the Starbucks Workers United union more than six months after their last bargaining session. “The current impasse should not be acceptable to either of us,” Starbucks executive Sara Kelly said in a letter to Workers United President Lynne Fox. “Anything that moves bargaining forward in a positive way is most welcome,” Fox responded. But Starbucks’ overture might contain a poison pill: The company wants to conduct sessions “without video or audio feeds so that all participants are comfortable with open, honest discussions.” Starbucks Workers United, which has organized around 370 of the company’s 10,000 stores and more than 9,000 workers since 2021, has insisted that live-streaming contract talks enables workers to know what’s happening. “We’ve been ready and waiting for a very long time,” the union posted on Twitter Dec. 9. “The company has still not formally responded to a single union contract proposal in over 17 months.”

MEDICAL RESEARCHERS STRIKE IN NYC, ORGANIZE AT NIH

More than 500 post-doctoral researchers at Mount Sinai Hospital’s Icahn School of Medicine went on strike Dec. 6, after more than a year of fruitless contract talks. “We love our research, but Sinai is leaving us no choice,” Andrea Joseph, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, said in a statement released by the Sinai Postdoc Organizing Committee-UAW. The union’s demands include a significant increase in minimum pay, better access to housing, fully paid parental leave and financial support for child care, and better health coverage. That same day, researchers at the National Institutes of Health voted by an overwhelming 1,601-36 margin to be represented by NIH Fellows United, which is also affiliated with the UAW. The union, which will represent more than 5,000 research fellows, is the largest new union of federal employees in more than 10 years.

UAW LOOKS TO ORGANIZE 13 NONUNION CARMAKERS

Trying to build on its momentum after winning large raises in a strike at General Motors, Ford and Stellantis, the UAW launched a campaign Nov. 29 to organize the 150,000 workers at non-union manufacturers in the U.S. “To all the auto workers out there working without the benefits of a union: Now it’s your turn,” UAW President Shawn Fain said in a video, telling workers that they could electronically sign union cards at the union’s website. The campaign targets the 10 foreign auto companies with U.S. plants and three electric-car manufacturers. The UAW’s strategy is to take campaigns public when 30% of workers at a plant have signed union cards. It said Dec. 8 that more than 1,000 of the 3,800 workers at Volkswagen’s Chattanooga, Tennessee plant, where it lost votes in 2015 and 2019, had signed union cards in less than a week.

DANISH TRANSPORTATION UNION BACKS SWEDISH TESLA STRIKE

Denmark’s largest labor union announced a sympathy strike in support of striking Swedish Tesla mechanics Dec. 5. Danish dockworkers won’t unload Tesla cars and truckers won’t haul them to Sweden, preempting a possible company scheme to evade Swedish dockworkers’ refusal to unload Teslas. “Even if you are one of the richest in the world, you can’t just make your own rules,” Jan Villadsen, chair of Denmark’s 3F Transport union, said, adding that employers have to comply with labor-market agreements if they want to operate in Scandinavia. About 600 mechanics at Tesla repair shops in Sweden have been on strike since October, after the notoriously anti-union electric-car manufacturer refused to bargain with their union, IF Metall. Swedish union electricians have stopped maintaining Tesla charging stations, and postal workers won’t deliver mail to company facilities. All this support for the strikers would be illegal “secondary boycotts” under U.S. labor law.

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SUPPORT THE INDY!

PEOPLE-POWERED JOURNALISM SINCE 2000
The undersigned current and retired union members, stewards, delegates, elected officers and staff of the Municipal Labor Committee, believe that affordable health care is a necessity of life and a right we should all have the same right for health care as our fellow citizens of New York.

We are opposed to the replacement of traditional Medicare, a public program fought for and defended for decades by unions and citizens, with a majority of retirees' concern. Advantage system run by a private insurance company that prioritizes profit over health care for all of us could not be protected, strengthened and expanded, not privatized.

Mayor Eric Adams, the New York City Office of Labor Relations and certain union leaders within the Municipal Labor Committee are advocating for a more virtual public-health care system via traditional Medicare, the city is pushing a privatized program that has proven to delay and deny care when it really counts. Medicare trust fund for private gain and costing more than necessary.

We call on Mayor Adams and the city administration to restore retirees' traditional Medicare benefits and cease their attacks on those of us who have given their all for the betterment of our fellow citizens of New York.
We are opposed to the replacement of traditional Medicare, a
December 2019

Visit bit.ly/medicare-now to add your name.
The streets are our roads.
Finding home in Bay Ridge's little Palestine.

By Liana Nafziger

The first thing I saw when I step off the R train and onto the platforms at Bay Ridge Avenue is a man hunched over the bottom of his backpack. Wearing the latest fashions but as unassuming as any person at a small festival, he seemed to be looking for something. It was a quiet, cold day in January and the streets were bare of any other humans.

Bay Ridge to me is home. I was raised here and even though I moved away for school, I always come back to this neighborhood. It's where I grew up and it's where I belong. It's the place where I feel most comfortable and safe.

Bay Ridge is a place of contradictions. It's a mix of old and new, traditional and modern. It's a place where you can find a small neighborhood market selling traditional Middle Eastern foods alongside a café serving up trendy smoothies.

One of the most notable Fifth Avenue staples is the Balady Market. Palestinian-owned, it is the largest Palestinian-owned supermarket in the United States. The market is filled with a variety of foods and goods, including fresh produce, meats, and cheeses.

As you walk through the market, you can't help but notice the colorful display of Palestinian flags and posters. It's a constant reminder of the past and a symbol of the resilience of the Palestinian people.

One of the most famous Fifth Avenue staples is the Al Aqsa restaurant. It's a small, family-owned establishment that has been serving traditional Palestinian food for over 30 years. The restaurant is known for its delicious falafel and koshari, and it's a popular spot for locals and visitors alike.

Bay Ridge is a melting pot of cultures, a place where people from all over the world have made their home. It's a place where you can find a sense of community and belonging.

The streets of Bay Ridge are alive with energy and activity, from the bustling markets to the lively cafes. It's a place where you can find a sense of comfort and belonging, no matter where you come from.

Bay Ridge is a place where I feel most comfortable and safe. It's a place where I can be myself and express my identity. It's a place where I can find a sense of community and belonging.

Bay Ridge is my home. It's a place where I feel most comfortable and safe. It's a place where I can be myself and express my identity. It's a place where I can find a sense of community and belonging.
On a cloudy day in the Bronx, a group of high-school students marched down Fordham Road chanting, “Congress, Congress, you can’t hide! You’re supporting genocide!” As they walked under the train station, commuters stopped in their tracks to watch approximately 70 high-school students who walked out of class donning keffiyehs and posters with Palestinian flags. Some onlookers in this working-class Black and brown community even joined the march while others chanted in solidarity.

Afrin, a 17-year-old Bangladeshi high-school senior, organized the Nov. 9 walkout as part of the global Shut it Down for Palestine days of protest calling on the Biden administration to demand a ceasefire in Gaza and to end all military aid to Israel. A few weeks later, there was a week-long ceasefire before Israel’s war on Gaza resumed with even more intensity than before. The death toll in Gaza is nearly 19,000 as of Dec. 14, with around 8,000 missing or trapped under the rubble (although it is becoming harder to accurately track the data, says the Gaza Health Ministry).

Working-class New Yorkers who normally lead protests and organize around local New York City issues are now joining the movement to free Palestine. They are drawing connections between their struggles and forging solidarity with Palestinians that face bombardment in Gaza and settler violence in the Occupied Territories.

“Our government doesn’t care about democracy — they are making things worse for us,” said Afrin, “Stop funding this genocide. That money is needed for us, for our education.”

New York City has one of the most racially-segregated and unequal school systems in the country, which advocates fear will worsen under Mayor Adam’s latest round of proposed budget cuts to the Department of Education (DOE). According to the Independent Budgeting Office (IBO) and DOE data, parent associations exacerbate these inequalities. Schools with wealthier parents are able to fundraise to provide field trips, teaching assistants, arts and music teachers, and after-school programs, whereas schools enrolling more students living in poverty receive significantly less funding and are often unable to offer arts and music classes as a result. The IBO found that parent-teacher association grants per school can range from $192 to $728,749.

“Schools like mine, we’re struggling because we don’t have resources for electives, clubs, sports materials, gym materials, badminton rackets or even enough teachers because we’re so low staffed,” said Afrin. At her high school, 83% of students live in poverty, and the PTA generated approximately $4,500 during the 2018-19 school year, according to the DOE.

It’s not only students who are speaking out against the genocide in Gaza. Tenants across the city are drawing connections with Palestinian liberation efforts. For example, members of Equality for Flatbush (E4F), a grassroots organization that fights police violence, displacement and gentrification, have attended Palestine protests across the city with posters declaring, “Black Lives for Palestine.” The organization predominantly consists of Black Caribbean migrant women and according to a recent statement, the group “stands in solidarity with the people of Palestine as they fight for their liberation from a genocidal Zionist apartheid state... We know that there is no equal sign between oppressor and oppressed. No equal sign between landlords and tenants or BIPOC and the NYPD.”

In Chinatown, tenants are speaking up. Liang Ming Xue is a member of CAAAV, which organizes Asian immigrant and working-class communities across the city towards racial, gender and economic justice and fights gentrification and displacement. Xue has been living in Chinatown for more than 20 years as a tenant and says he has consistently faced poor living conditions. The Asian and foreign-born population in the neighborhood continues to decrease as working-class tenants face evictions, displacement and rising rents, which they argue are due to the increasing number of luxury
apartment buildings in Chinatown.

While Xue, 70, has been unable to attend protests due to health concerns, he has been engaging in political education around Palestine with other CAAAAM members. "Israel leverages the concept of terrorism to justify making war and to displace Palestinians from their homes in order to push for Zionism," Xue said in Mandarin. "If the construction of luxury towers continues, then the Chinatown we call home is actually emptied of its original residents who face total displacement, and isn't this a parallel to what Palestinian people are facing in their homeland?" Xue called on the government to redirect resources from Israel toward building deeply affordable housing and addressing the needs of working-class communities.

Pro-Palestine protests bring together New Yorkers across age, race and ethnic demographics. Even the flags at protests capture this diversity. A group of Peruvian immigrants proudly waved the Quechua Wiphala flag at protests, a symbol of the worldview and philosophy of indigenous groups across the Andean region.

"As Peruvians, if we're against land theft from indigenous communities in Peru, how can we not be against land theft in Palestine?" said Yanett R., 32, a member of Kallpawan, a Peruvian diaspora group. "It's so blatant, and we have the proof for it for many decades now."

Last year, there were widespread protests across Peru after the impeachment and arrest of the former President Pedro Castillo amidst widespread inequality. Peruvian authorities killed and attacked protesters targeting indigenous and rural farm workers according to Amnesty International. Kallpawan and other groups organized a vigil on Dec. 8 in Washington Square Park for the martyrs of Peru, how can we not be against land theft from indigenous communities in Peru, how can we not be against land theft in Palestine?"

"It's easy for moments like these to slip by, but we can't let it happen again. Let's remember the importance of unity and solidarity. Let's stand together and fight for a better world," said Yanett R.

The protesters gathered outside the office of New York City Council member Grace Meng, one of the many representatives who have been criticized for their support of Israel. The protesters demanded that the government stop funding Israel and end all forms of bias in their policies.

"We are living through this because of the actions of those in power," said Xue. "We must stand together and demand justice for the Palestinian people."

The protesters were joined by other community members who have been fighting for justice and equality in their communities. They chanted slogans and held signs calling for justice.

"We are united in our demand for justice and equality for all people," said a speaker at the event. "We will not give up until we achieve our goals."
LYSTRUP, Denmark — Early in the morning of Nov. 14, residents of this quiet suburb watched through the wind and rain as something out-of-the-ordinary happened on Holmehaven Road. Fifty anti-war protesters blocked the entrances to the corporate headquarters of the Terma Group, one of the United States’ key partners in manufacturing the F-35 warplane, which is being used by Israel to rein bombs down on Gaza.

Mocking the company’s slogan, the demonstrators wielded banners that read “Terma: Allies in Innovative War Crimes” and “Stop the Genocide.”

“The world’s biggest [non-nuclear] bomb was used several years ago in Afghanistan. They killed a whole village — children, elders, innocent women... I lost a lot of my family in the war in Afghanistan,” Sohrab, an Afghan taxi driver who lives in the nearby city of Aarhus, said at the demonstration.

“Who is the victor here? It’s those who are producing these weapons,” Sohrab added. He initially passed by the demonstration on his daily taxi route. He later returned with thermoses of hot coffee and trays of cookies for the demonstrators. “If you are producing weapons that are killing innocent people, then you are as guilty as the people doing the killing,” said Sohrab.

COORDINATION ACROSS BORDERS

The action against Terma that took place in Lystrup was part of a larger decentralized global movement that has been ignited by Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza. The movement uses direct action to disrupt sites with links to arms manufacturers who supply weapons to Israel.

This marks the first time a furor of such militant action has been carried out on this large of a scale and by this many groups. However, blockades and other forms of direct action in opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine are not new. Since Zionist incursions began more than 100 years ago, there has been mass organized action against it in Palestine and the greater Arab world.

On Dec. 6 and 7, the Danish coalition that shut down the Terma Group three weeks earlier coordinated with activist groups to stage synchronized actions in Copenhagen, Netherlands, Scotland, France and the UK, specifically targeting weapon’s manufacturing offices and plants. The rapid growth of disruptive protests in Denmark have been catalyzed by an Oct. 16 call by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions to “halt the sale and funding of arms to Israel — and related military research.”

At the Lystrup protest, David, a stateless Palestinian living in Denmark, said, “Being here means demanding human rights, here in Europe and all over the world. As Palestinians we haven’t had our passports or citizenship in any of these countries. My passport says I am stateless. Palestinians constitute the world’s most extensive stateless community. As of 2018, of the 13 million Palestinians worldwide, nearly 8.7 million have been forcibly displaced. Many of the protests calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and before Oct. 7 Puma, which has been the sponsor of the Israeli soccer team since 2018, dropped its sponsorship in a major BDS win. The United Auto Workers has called for a ceasefire and pledged to look into their economic ties with Israel. And in the UK on Dec. 8, 89% of Queen’s University Belfast student union voted for a position that called for divestment from military and colonial projects and the ending
of all ties with arms firms. The motion also called for the removal of Hillary Clinton as chancellor. On Oct. 27, over 1,000 union members in the United Worker’s for a Free Palestine blockaded four weapons factories in the UK that supply components for the F-35 fighter jet. “Our movement is growing rapidly, gaining more momentum each day,” Jenny, a trade unionist at the action, told Middle East Eye. “We are escalating our tactics, and today’s blockades are seeing unprecedented numbers of people take part.” On Nov. 9 and 10, trade unionists across six countries and three continents blocked the flow of weapons to Israel. Kayed Awad, secretary-general of the Palestinian Transport Workers Union saluted the actions of solidarity, saying, “Unions have the power to influence and disrupt the arms trade and ongoing war crimes in Gaza. Long live the working class.” Although it is not a grassroots group, Yemen’s Houthis movement portrays a similar militancy. In protest of the situation in Palestine, the Houthis on Dec. 9 promised to target all ships heading to Israel regardless of their nationality. As a result, westbound ships have had to circumnavigate the Red Sea and travel all the way around Africa to get to Israel. FROM PROTESTS TO STRIKES There has also been a global outpouring of massive protests, with groups of tens and even hundreds of thousands marching in the world’s largest cities since Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. From Oct. 7–27, at least 4,200 actions for Gaza took place around the world, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Since then, protests have continued steadily, on track with Israel’s amassing of war crimes. South Africans marched in Johannesburg on Nov. 29, shutting down the Nelson Mandela Bridge. On Dec. 2, the group Armenian Nonviolence staged an action in Queens, New York. And on Dec. 7, Uniontown of Guietica, Spain, held a solidarity action calling for the ending of the genocide in Gaza. In Cuba, President Miguel Diaz-Canel led a protest of thousands along Havana’s iconic Malecon on Nov. 24 demanding an end to the assault on Gaza. The largest concentration of protest has been in countries throughout the Middle East, with demonstrations occurring despite authoritarian governments. A spontaneous rally was even held in Cairo’s Tahrir Square (a central site of the Arab Spring) which resulted in 200 protesters being arrested. The Brooklyn-based, Palestinian-founded group Within Our Lifetime Palestine (WOL) — which has already led more than 30 disruptive marches around New York City, almost always attended by thousands of protesters — has been organizing in coalition with our Action. WOL has released maps depicting clusters in Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn of locations with close ties to Israel. Since the group released the maps, their network of members and followers have organized direct actions at some of the pinpointed places. The anti-Zionist group Jewish Voice for Peace has been organizing shut-down protests at various key locations across the country, such as the Bay Bridge from Oakland into San Francisco, on Capitol Hill, and in New York City at Grand Central Station and the Statue of Liberty. In Washington, D.C., on Dec. 11, 18 elderly Jewish women were arrested after chaining themselves to the fence in front of the White House, demanding President Biden support a ceasefire. The protesters read the names of Palestinians killed by Israel since Oct. 7 as a part of a one-day global strike for Palestine. The strike call was announced by Palestinian National and Islamic forces, a coalition of major Palestinian factions, in response to the U.S. veto of the United Nations Security Council’s 14-1 vote in favor of a ceasefire in Gaza. Leaders of pro-Palestinian movements directed people to take the day off from work, to avoid spending money and to participate in protests. There was scattered participation around the world. More than 270 businesses closed in Detroit. Here in New York City, Balady grocery store in Bay Ridge, Duzan restaurant in Astoria and Fulton Mini Mall in Bed-Stuy were among those that closed their doors in solidarity. The one-day strike was most fully realized in the Occupied West Bank, where businesses, schools, government offices, universities, banks, factories and public transportation companies all participated. Instagrammer Shlomo Yitzchak @shlomoyitz promotes direct action against Israel and its allies. On the eve of the strike, he said in a reel, “We first tried with protests, which is really important when a government listens. Unfortunately, the governments we live under are not listening to our demands. … Direct-action campaigns are not about outsourcing our power and asking the governments that represent us to act on our behalf; direct action is saying, ‘If you are not going to listen to us, we collectively are going to step into our power together and use mass non-violence to force change.’ That is what’s happening right now.” Another one-day global strike call has been announced for Monday, Dec. 18.
"Looking Back on Almost 20 Years of BDS"

By Amira Guerguerian

The BDS movement kind of works as an umbrella organization, to provide guidelines, resources, liaisons and support, but not to delineate exactly what everybody should be doing," says Riham Barghouti. Barghouti's family has participated in resistance against the occupation of Palestine since the late 1800s. In 1948, her family was exiled from the Palestinian village of Safad. Barghouti grew up in New York, but has maintained close ties with Palestine. She lived there from 1995 to 2005, and was a founding member of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS).

At the time that the official BDS call that was issued in 2005, 170 civil society organizations had signed on to it, representing all sectors of Palestinian people: In Gaza, the West Bank and Israel proper, but also Palestinian refugee organizations working in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria at the time.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**THE INDYPENDENT:** Why are Palestinians so active?

**RIHAM BARGHOUTI:** People that are oppressed will always struggle for liberty. It's an inherent need; it's like air; it is like air. You can only subjugate a people for so long before they rise up. There's a continuous uprising; people can only bear the brunt of oppression for so long before something gives.

Tell us about the founding of BDS.

This builds off a long history of Arab boycott and Palestinian boycott against Israeli products and against companies that are profiting from Israel. As far back as 1936, during the Arab revolt against the colonization of Palestine, there were massive boycotts, refusal to engage with the British mandate authorities and so on, moving through to the First Intifada (1987-1993), where Palestinians burned their ID cards as an attempt to boycott the corporate and institutional bodies complicit in profiting from Israel, the dock workers in Barcelona and Italy refusing to handle cargo and weapons bound for Israel and major trade unions in Belgium refusing to transport weapons to Israel.

The current war on Gaza has galvanized long-standing Arab boycott campaigns with U.S. companies that seemingly support Israel suffering huge losses, such as Starbucks losing $1 billion dollars in worth. In Egypt and Jordan, businesses like McDonald's and Dominoes are reportedly empty. And most recently, Puma dropped its contract with the Israeli Football Association, after a five-year BDS campaign, within which athletes and football clubs around the world ended their ties to the global sports-wear manufacturer.

Compare the BDS movement to the South African boycott movement.

The South African call for boycott began in the 1950s. And it took a lot of time for people to accept it and to begin to work on it. Now, in relation, the Palestinian boycott call has progressed seemingly much quicker. But of course, we have social media and ways of reaching communication that weren't available, then.

Where we have more of a problem is that the interests of the U.S. and Israel are so strongly aligned. And it's multifaceted: There is the Christian Zionist belief system, in terms of the need for Jews to return to the Holy Land. You have the economic ties that are very strong. You have the military-industrial complex. You have geopolitical interests because for a while it was the only pro-US body in the Arab world — although that has changed significantly — but it's always been seen as the only by-product of the colonial system that still exists in the Arab world.

How do you address the criticism that BDS is anti-Semitic because it targets Israel?

Israel is attempting to make anti-Zionism and anti-Israel activism the same as anti-Semitism. And it's a false conflation. Anti-Semitism is a very real and dangerous form of hatred and discrimination against the Jewish people based on racist values, while anti Zionism is an opposition to an illegal, immoral and apartheid regime that currently exists in Israel. Jews and Jewish activists here in the U.S. and around the world are a part of this BDS movement. And they've been an amazing part; they showed some of the most powerful and inspiring actions, especially during the current Israeli war on Palestine.

How does what happens in Palestine affect the rest of us?

What's playing out right now in Gaza — the fighting that's taking place with the Israeli attacks and the Palestinian resistance to those attacks — is part of a much larger struggle in the region. And that's why it also could be potentially so hopeful, because a war is being played out in Palestine. And that war is connected to the United States, to Russia, China, Iran, Hezbollah — global interests. The event of a liberated Palestinian people will have a huge impact on the Arab world and on the global world. And if a successful genocide of the Palestinian people is allowed to continue, it will have a huge impact on the way that other oppressed people are going to fare.

You can listen to the full interview at soundcloud.com/the-indy-pendent/riham-barghouti-ga.

Part of a global BDS campaign yet, but it was a New York City hook. Eleven years later, the campaign succeeded in shutting down the store, and that loss of business led to the company declaring it will stop building settlements in 2014.

We've had city councils that withdrew contracts, local and community groups would remove their funds from these companies, you had apartheid-free zones in Italy that would no longer do business with companies that were profiting from the occupation.

Then there's academic boycott, with several academic associations having signed onto the divestment call. And there is the cultural component, with a number of cultural workers refusing to perform in Israel.

Just some actions taken in protest of the Israeli genocidal attacks on Gaza since Oct. 7 are the United Auto Workers calling for a ceasefire and pledging to look into their economic ties with Israel, the dock workers in Barcelona and Italy refusing to handle cargo and weapons bound for Israel and major trade unions in Belgium refusing to transport weapons to Israel.

What's playing out right now in Gaza — the fighting that's taking place with the Israeli attacks and the Palestinian resistance to those attacks — is part of a much larger struggle in the region. And that's why it also could be potentially so hopeful, because a war is being played out in Palestine. And that war is connected to the United States, to Russia, China, Iran, Hezbollah — global interests. The event of a liberated Palestinian people will have a huge impact on the Arab world and on the global world. And if a successful genocide of the Palestinian people is allowed to continue, it will have a huge impact on the way that other oppressed people are going to fare.
THE SECOND
NAKBA
ISRAEL IS ERASING
EVERYTHING THAT MAKES
GAZA FEEL LIKE HOME

By Amba Guerguerian

Since Oct. 7, around half of the buildings in northern Gaza have been destroyed or damaged. In the before and after photos, the sky looks the same, but that’s about it. Remember this city is at the heart of history, and has already been under a fierce occupation for decades, so Gaza has had many structures in it, and already had many new structures replacing old ones, already had bomb-damaged buildings and rubble. But now, much of that which was rebuilt, times over, has been obliterated.

Gaza, located at the crossroads of Africa and Asia, has been at the heart of many battles. It has spoken a variety of languages, practiced a variety of religions, has been destroyed, abandoned and reinvigorated many times. During the early Bronze Age, before Egypt’s upper and lower kingdoms were unified, the pharaohs constructed the first fortified Egyptian citadel outside of Egypt in Gaza, which was home to people called the Canaanites at the time. Later, Gaza was a bustling port of trade under the Greeks. Greek historian Herodotus described Gaza, which he referred to by the name of Cadytys, as a large metropolis with development extending inland beyond the city walls. Some who found themselves in control of Gaza let old structures stand, others adapted them, yet others destroyed them. Some who found themselves in control of Gaza let old structures stand, others adapted them, yet others destroyed them. Before the majority of its inhabitants converted to Islam in the seventh century, the city saw peaceful coexistence by Pagans, Christians and Jews under certain rulers, but the groups also struggled and fought between each other sometimes. Before the majority of its inhabitants converted to Islam in the seventh century, the city saw peaceful coexistence by Pagans, Christians and Jews under certain rulers, but the groups also struggled and fought between each other sometimes.

In the sixth century, Procopius of Gaza and many other famous scholars taught at Gaza’s academy of rhetoric and a school dedicated to mosaic art was founded in Gaza. Around 635 AD, the Muslim armies took the city from the Romans. Gaza played an important role in trade during the Middle Ages, particularly under the Mamluks. Even during its long period of Muslim rule, it was besieged multiple times by the Crusaders, who were once and for all driven out by Saladin in 1178. It witnessed a golden age under the Ottoman-appointed Ridwan dynasty in the 1500s, and Palestinian economy in general underwent significant development from the mid-1700s through the late 1800s under the Ottomans.

Gaza experienced destructive earthquakes in 1903 and 1914. And in 1917, during World War I, British forces captured the city from the crumbling Ottoman empire. Since then, its fate has been controlled by Western interests. Recent photography shows entire blocks in northern Gaza with every building on them collapsed. Some of those located most lucratively have already been fully razed. What will they do with all the rubble?

Inside of each destroyed building, many rooms, and inside of each room, the fostering of Palestinian life. The war on Gaza is making so many martyrs and also killing culture — decimating the structures that gave Gazans a sense of identity, a sense of time.

One of the remaining Gazan journalists, Besan Owda, posted an Instagram story on Nov. 29 during the week-long pause in Israel’s genocide. “I lost the hope of a ceasefire; I lost the hope of returning to the north,” she said. “But if it happens, what are we gonna do? Clean? Clean what? Rebuild? Rebuild what? There is no city. … Every place we loved, every place we memorized, the full image about our city and our life is now totally changed forever… forever, even the mentality of people, even how are they thinking, their way of living, their memories. They are reshaping our history, our society, by destroying everything. … What is gonna happen? What’s next? … What I am going to do with my life?”

I feel a calm sense of longing when I think about what Gaza used to be. When my grandmother was 14, she went with her mother on a school trip from Alexandria to Gaza. They visited her father’s cousin. He had a house on the ocean. “I knew he was rich, because he had what we didn’t,” she told me.

My grandmother and great-grandmother shopped at the American stores (which didn’t exist in Egypt at the time) and bought lace tablecloths made by the local women. What a delicate thing to get from Gaza. That was just 12 years after the Nakka, in 1960, so they also went to see a refugee camp.

“There were a lot of people, white tents,” said Teta. Many of those tents would eventually be replaced with structures, and those camps would become neighborhoods.

Around that time, Teta had a different Palestinian cousin who came to Alexandria to study (because Palestinians in the Gaza strip could study in Egyptian public schools for free until Gaza and Sinai were annexed from Egypt by Israel in the 1967 war). “My cousin was telling me, they would get up on top of buildings, and they could see their old houses, and they regretted leaving them.”

Old structures empower and glue communities. Structures themselves retain life, energy, memory. They morph. A place has a feeling. In an old place, you can feel all the centuries or millennia of life that’s been through it, and it’s instructive, because you then can place yourself in that history.

I’m thinking of Gaza and all the children’s rooms that were destroyed, the women’s closets. The embroidery that exploded. The tiles of the mosques.

In some cases, structures have already been bulldozed, cleared to make way for new real estate. In other cases, occupation soldiers have seized them. They’ve begun to use dead and exiled Gazans’ items as their own, to rewrite history.

Currently Israel flags whip through Gazan winds, standing on posts that triumphantly rape the earth they’ve been thrust into.

“I think they want Gaza, because Gaza is beautiful, oh my God, the beaches are so beautiful, helius aev,” says my Teta on the phone a couple weeks into the bombing. “And I think Israel knew about the attack before it happened,” she adds, her friend Bara’a told her and she agrees.

I think about the blue sky and the buildings in Gaza and the roads that arch right into the ocean and sky and the fences and the bombs that are leaving so many limbs on the ground. I think about Gaza and I think about the blue skies and the bombs pouring out of them.

Saint Porphyrius, built in about 1150, is the oldest church still in use in Gaza. Located in a historic neighborhood in Gaza City, in the north, the church offered sanctuary to people of various faiths over generations. An Israeli strike hit the church on Oct. 20, killing at least 18 people who were sheltering there. The explosion damaged the church’s facade and caused a near-building to collapse.

The Omar Mosque, or the Great Mosque, is the oldest standing mosque in Gaza. After it was built in the seventh century, the Crusaders converted it to a cathedral. According to Gazan historian Rania Filfi, “Over the following centuries it switched between mosque and church, inscribing thus the history of its city in architecture.”

“The basilica of the cathedral remains today in the Great Omar Mosque in Gaza’s old city, despite the massive damage that the mosque sustained during World War L” Filfi wrote in 2009. Then, in 2014 Israel bombed the structure, and did so again on Dec. 8, leaving it a skeleton of itself.

I think about Gaza and I think about blue skies and sand and kites. I think about Gaza on Dec. 8, 1987, when people poured out of its barriers and began the First Intifada, a popular uprising.

I picture Gaza and I picture families sitting on top of rubble — shreds of fabric and parcels of kincherwe, the ashes of rec...
BEYOND BERNIE

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

S

en. Bernie Sanders gave me the “ick.” If you don’t know, the ick is when you desire someone, ravishingly, and they do that one thing that turns you off. Maybe it’s bad breath. Maybe it’s toe fungus or too many needy texts. In Bernie’s case it was wafting on the mass murder of innocent children. Ick.

I have not “canceled” Bernie. Or condemned Bernie. He is a decent man. He has deep political experience plus populist support built over decades. For years, Bernie was a North Star guiding activists from sectarian exiles. All that being said, the preeminent role he played in the left is over. Time to let go.

Even so, the left must keep the lessons he gave on how to build a mass movement in order to seize state power.

HEART BREAK BEAT

Imagine holding a photo of Bernie as Boyz II Men’s “It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye” plays. You tell him, thank you for believing in me. You wish him the best. Light the photo on fire and fling it.

Essentially that is what happened when on CNN’s Nov. 5 State of the Union, Bernie said, “I don’t know how you can have a ceasefire, a permanent ceasefire, with an organization like Hamas, which is dedicated to turmoil and chaos and destroying the state of Israel.” By the time of that interview, the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, had killed 10,000 Gazans, many women and children in what can now be called a crime against humanity. As this newspaper goes to press, it’s nearly 15,000. By the time you read this essay, the number will be higher. The innocents in Gaza join the roughly 1,200 Israeli civilians, also innocent, slaughtered by Hamas on Oct. 7.

Bernie’s statement did not go over well. Fair to say people screamed at their cell phones. Prof. Cornel West called it “pathetic.” Briauna Joy Gray, his former press secretary and host of Bad Faith podcast, said it was the “biggest political disappointment of our generation.” Left media was on fire. CNN moderates rejoiced at having Bernie, of all people, to use as a cudgel to browbeat progressives. Ick.

To be fair, the man called for a humanitarian pause, permanent peace and a two-state solution. He opposed an additional $10 billion in military aid to Israel, saying, “What the Netanyahu government is doing is immoral, it is in violation of international law, and the United States should not be complicit in those actions.” But in the rear-view mirror.

THE FUTURE CAN BE SEEN IN PROTESTS.

Bridges. Hundreds of actions supporting Palestinian pop across the world from Egypt to Iceland. As the left moves forward, Bernie shrinks in the rear-view mirror.

KIBBUTZ MON AMOUR

Remember the 1971 song “Thin Line Between Love and Hate” by the Persuaders? Well the left crossed that line. Or more accurately, it stepped over the line separating the Bernie we wanted to see versus the Bernie that actually exists. The position he always held was that Israel has a right to exist and defend itself while the occupation of Palestinians must end and a two-state solution be made real.

What you have to grasp is that the reasons the left swooned over Bernie but repudiates him now are connected. His defense of Israel and his economic populism are two sides of the same coin. The Bernie we know; finger waving, white tossed hair like a Muppet, deep Brooklyn accent and scourge of the 1 percent, has his origins, decades earlier, in Yiddish Socialism of the Lower East Side and the Israeli kibbutz. In 1963, Bernie worked a few months at Kibbutz Sha’ar Ha’amakim as a part of a socialist youth movement that was Zionist and secular.

Without pretending to be telepathic, one can guess that a young man of the left does not just up and fly across the Atlantic Ocean to Israel unless he had hoped to find there the living embodiment of a vision. He searched for the seed of a workers’ democracy, however small, in the kibbutz. He searched for the seed of a workers’ democracy, however small, in the kibbutz. He searched for the seed of a workers’ democracy, however small, in the kibbutz.

The anger at his response comes from the left is over. Time to let go. Berni’s call for a humanitarian pause instead of a ceasefire is in sharp contrast to other activists like Jewish Voices for Peace. It is the largest Jewish anti-Zionist group in the United States, and calls for the end to Israeli apartheid. They filled Grand Central Station in black shirts that read “Not in Our Name”, thunderously chanting against the siege of Gaza. They took over the Statue of Liberty, creating an event that rippled through the news in which they demanded a stop to the killing of Palestinians.

The future can be seen in protests. Millennials and Gen Z fill the anti-Zionist marches in Bay Ridge, over the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. Hundreds of actions supporting Palestine pop across the world from Egypt to Iceland. As the left moves forward, Bernie shrinks in the rear-view mirror.

How does one make sense of this? Look in the mirror. Everyone I know has a powerful attachment to a specific place, person or people...
that challenges their political ideals. Poets have a different time with this. Walt Whitman famously said, “I contain multitudes”. It is true. I do. You do. Bernie does. We all do. It is the price of being human.

The real question is not the banal one of betrayal. In the backlash to his refusal to call for a ceasefire is the plaintive, “How could he betray his own principles?” No, the real question is why the disproportionate hurt and anger? Why are we so hung up?

**HOW TO BREAK UP**

Bernie rescued us. For years, the left was like an emo-teen, wearing Goth makeup and singing, “I Want to Know What Love Is” by Foreigner on repeat. We were divided by sectarian fights over minor ideological differences. We were in our Oppression Olympics phase. We were a hot mess.

And then came this rumpled man. He announced his 2016 presidential run at a quick press conference before lunch. It was so unassuming, so Bernie. The more he talked, the more we listened. The great transference began. The left’s suppressed hope for relevance was projected onto an elderly Vermont senator. In contrast to Obama’s Hollywood flashiness, Bernie wore Men’s Wearhouse suits. He radiated authenticity. He had shoted the same economic populist message for longer than many of us had been alive. Bernie got the left closer to the White House than it had ever been. In 2016 and then in 2020, he barnstormed across the nation. When he rose, our hopes rose too. A giddy, delirious joy made us drunk. Universal healthcare? Yes. Student loan forgiveness? Yes. A Green New Deal? Sure. Bernie showed us that left policies had mass appeal. His campaigns put Democratic Socialism on the map. He played a vital historical role at a crucial moment. He played a vital role in the casus belli。

Beyond simply examining the bureau’s role in X’s murder, Aziz’s legal team seeks to expose the “pattern and practice” of the FBI’s infamous COINTELPRO program of the civil rights-Black Power era. In so doing, the filing illustrates a notable shift in the historical understanding of the assassination, with the FBI replacing another government entity that many observers originally viewed as the central culprit.

As described by Aziz’s lead attorney David Shanies in the filing, COINTELPRO aimed to “disrupt” and “instigate violence” in order to “destroy groups or enemies perceived to be threats to the status quo, including the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers, and other Black activist organizations.”

Before he left office at the end of 2021, then-Manhattan DA Cy Vance, Jr. initiated the exoneration of both Aziz and the late Khalil Islam, two of the three men convicted for the murder of Malcolm X. During its review of the case, Vance’s office uncovered a substantial amount of exculpatory information withheld by the FBI at the time of the trial in 1966.

Hoover and his deputies appeared determined to protect William Bradley, known as William 25X, one of the five men from the Newark mosque of the Nation of Islam that carried out the murder at the Audubon Ballroom. According to the current filing, the FBI did not inform the Manhattan DA’s office that at least two witnesses described a gunman who appeared to be Bradley.

Aziz’s lawsuit names 19 FBI officials involved in the incident, investigation and cover-up, including Hoover as well as another familiar name in the organization, Mark Felt. The bureau’s Chief Inspector at the time of Malcolm’s murder, Felt later became the main source of leaks in the Watergate scandal. So much for law enforcement heroes.

The filing also questions the extent of Bradley’s relationship with the FBI. He had been on the bureau’s radar for at least two years prior to the assassination. Four years after X’s murder, Bradley participated in an armed bank robbery in Livingston, New Jersey. Although his accomplice got 25 years, Bradley went free after the Department of Justice intervened.

After uncovering Bradley’s FBI connections over a decade ago, independent researcher Abdur-Rahman Muhammad shared his findings with the late Columbia University professor Manning Marable. The elaboration that Bradley may have been an informant at the time of the 1965 murder surfaced in Marable’s landmark 2011 biography of X. Muhammad repeats that charge in *Who Killed Malcolm X?*, the 2020 Netflix series that prompted Vance’s office to open its investigation.

In order to illustrate the pattern of COINTELPRO operations, Aziz’s complaint details the FBI’s role in the cases of Black Panther leaders Geronimo Pratt and Fred Hampton. It also addresses the bureau’s use of informants in prosecuting members of the American Indian Movement after a 1973 armed siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. The filing then cites a Massachusetts case from the late 1960s in which the FBI’s reliance on a mafia informant led to the wrongful conviction of four men.

“This is the boldest and most audacious effort yet to determine the nature and extent of the FBI’s role in the assassination of Malcolm X,” says attorney Ron Kuby, whose mentor William Kunstler represented Aziz in the 1970s. “I wish Bill Kunstler were here to see it.”

Shanies tells *The Indypendent* that in the best-case scenario, the Department of Justice will begin the discovery phase of the case in about three months. The worst-case scenario, of course, is that government lawyers will drag it out for years. “It will be interesting to see the Biden administration’s response,” adds Kuby.

**FBI OR CIA?**

Given the role played by the bureau in the murder of Fred Hampton and frame-up of Geronimo Pratt, it seems highly plausible that the FBI helped orchestrate Malcolm X’s assassination. But for decades after the murder, many of X’s associates believed that the CIA was chiefly responsible.

Louis Lomax, a leading Black journalist in the civil rights era, speculated about the agency’s role in his 1968 book *To Kill a Black Man: The Shocking Parallel Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr*. In his posthumous work *To Kill a Black Man*, Lomax repeated the charge, detailing his own fear of Ali. In the book’s conclusion Lomax nevertheless stated, “I am convinced that the American government, particularly the CIA, was deeply involved in Malcolm’s death.”

In the early 1970s, Peter Goldman’s *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* came out. Goldman, a Newsweek reporter, spoke to many people in X’s circles. Writing in *The New York Times* Book Review, critic Orde Coombs observed that Goldman “knows that many [of Malcolm’s supporters] believe that the CIA had something to do with the assassination of this Black hero.”

A half-century later, the FBI’s role in the murder may fully come to light. Whether we learn of any CIA involvement remains to be seen.
LIFE UNDER APARTHEID, ISRAEL & SOUTH AFRICA

Roadmap to Apartheid
Directed by Ana Nogueira & Eron Davidson
Narrated by Alice Walker
Journeyman Pictures, Ubuntu Films, 2012, 96 minutes

Review by Eleanor J. Bader

When Hamas entered Israel on Oct. 7, most mainstream media outlets described the orchestrated massacre as an unprovoked assault on innocent kibbutzniks and concert goers. This, of course, ignored the context of the horrific carnage — Israel’s 75-year history of dispossession, deprivation and violence against the millions of Palestinians who live in the Holy Land.

Roadmap to Apartheid, an 11-year-old film, is an instructive and timely corrective. The film juxtaposes the reality of life in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza with the apartheid regime that existed in South Africa between 1948 and 1994. In the latter case, white Afrikaners exerted complete economic, political, and social control over the country’s majority-Black population and suppressed resistance by every means they had. But neither mass incarceration nor the creation of separate townships for the disenfranchised were able to keep world opinion from seeing the evils of apartheid; in the end, international boycotts, divestment and sanctions turned the tide from acceptance of white supremacy to support for Black freedom.

The parallels with Israel are unmistakable. And while the film could have interrogated anti-Semitism and the reasons Zionists want a homeland in the Middle East more thoroughly, it otherwise provides a cogent overview of the region and the political turmoil that has roiled it for more than seven decades.

As the film unfolds, viewers see the ways in which Zionism has twisted the desire for a safe haven for Jews into a catastrophe for Palestinians, with home demolitions, a denial of electricity, clean water, work permits and medical care used as weapons to weaken the Arab population. What’s more, checkpoints that stall for Palestinians, with home demolitions, a denial of electricity, has twisted the desire for a safe haven for Jews into a catastrophe more than seven decades.

Unfortunately, Roadmap to Apartheid does not offer a road map to peace in the Middle East. But it does show the power of mass mobilizations and international solidarity to pressure governments to cede power and right wrongs. Inshallah, the cries and protests of today’s peace movement will lead to lasting justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. Inshallah, the cycle of death, property destruction, environmental calamity and torment will end, and nations will finally turn words into plowshares, making war no more.

Available to rent or buy on Prime Video. Available for free on youtube.com.

SECOND NAKBA
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ype books and family heirlooms fluttering about — their rubble, inside of their homes. Rubble has become a character of life in Gaza. I picture families in Gaza sitting in the frames of their homes on top of the rubble that once was their lives. And they will begin, as groups of helpers amassed, to remove the rubble, old sinks and walls and memories, and to reconstruct their homes. I saw a picture the other day of a woman sitting on a mattress on a pile of rubble in the bombed-out frame of her home with her baby on her lap and a clothesline hung behind them. The significance of the clothesline gave the immense sense that she had reclaimed her home. The caption reads, “Israel must be proud about their speed to kill, they can do it before a cup of tea is ready.”

Israel has destroyed Gaza’s main courthouse, legislative building and dozens of other centers of administration. The municipality headquarters, located in the center of the old city, stored historical archives more than 150 years old, which, according to The New Arab, “held key documentation of the city’s urban development, including mapping engineering studies of the water and sewage networks.” Gaza’s central library has also been bombed. The Islamic University of Gaza, an independent Palestinian university established in 1978 in Gaza City, was the first institution of higher education to be established in Gaza. On Oct. 11, Israel bombed four of its buildings, completely destroying some.

Imagine a bomb hitting a library. Books, some older than the occupation itself, will burst into a million pieces, broken sentences and punctuation marks floating to the ground. Or a music classroom or recording studio. The metal of the doumbek will melt; the strings of the ouds will scream and pop.

Imagine a room full of old women gathering to mourn and the bomb hits, and because they died so abruptly those elders’ oral histories that their relatives hadn’t yet recorded are gone. Open mouths shattered into the air, whispers amongst the rubble.

I picture Gaza and I picture birds flying in the sky, light falling through leaves in a courtyard before a cloud floats by. I picture the roots of the olive trees talking to each other. I picture my grandmother laying on the beach.

I picture a blue sky over Gaza before the occupation began and Gazans bustling around their allies and mosques and churches and synagogues and I hear the oud and I can smell the falafel and the conversations drifting out of coffee cups and hanging around on the architecture of the buildings that had been around for centuries already and now are rubble.
Dear Rev,

The new climate agreement in Dubai. They say that there is hope. But we have been burned so often. What’s your take on it? Can we relax a little bit?

— DARLENE

Dear Darlene,

The oil barons are doing with super-storms and wildfires what the Israelis are doing with American bombs. COP28 makes you wonder, do the super-rich believe that they can steer the planet’s heat itself? Yes, they are climate-makers now, which must be something like being God.

It’s a sort of science-fiction logic. They believe that their pollution keeps the indigenous people of the Global South down. “Keep ‘em busy with those disasters and droughts and starvation, and then give ‘em enough of a reparation allowance that their governments look like they’re trying.” While up North they flood themselves with orgasmic hallucinations of wealth.

Well, Darlene, COP28 does send me off into surreal flights. But when I discovered that Prime Minister Netanyahu was siphoning money to Hamas so that our tax money was shooting from both sides, I start seeing manipulative dramas everywhere.

The petro states and the corporate CEOs believe that the destruction descending on the poor in the South is their arrangement with the natural world. The Great Stall (the first COP was in 1995) has worked so far. Oil industry profits in 2022 were an astronomical $4 Trillion. It’s hard to exaggerate the dominant presence of the Oilies. There were 2,500 of them registered at COP28, representing annual profits larger than the total revenue of the Chinese government. How does a Pacific island drowning from sea-rise negotiate with that?

Once again, as in the 27 previous climate negotiations called COPs, the delegates were fed those mushy promises. COP28 publicity hacks called the agreement “unprecedented,” but they say that every year. The “Net Zero Emissions by 2050” — the fake goal that leaves the horror to the young and the unborn — that’s still the single material fact of all this, and the deadly nature of it fits nicely with the thousands of dead and dying children In Gaza.

If the oil people believe that the Earth is operating on a schedule that they can predict, and even direct, then… Well what do they believe? The answer is nothing. They are zombie junkies. Making money is their drug of choice, creating so much of it that they preside over the Earth from a second layer of super-government. Planet Oil.

This current toxic wealth surge will get them a few years of triumphant quarterly reports. But if the Earth needs to act out later — what then? Is their hubris so extreme that they believe they can bribe the Sixth Mass Extinction? Well Darlene, we need to thank the suits for throwing us that rhetorical bone, “transition out of fossil fuels.” What a great phrase! We’ll try to save the children with it.

The Earth will win! Earthalujah!

— BILLY

REVEREND BILLY TALEN IS THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING. HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE REVEREND? EMAIL REVBILLY@REVBILLY.COM AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.
THE INDYPENDENT

THE INDYPENDENT is an absolutely unique voice in New York City — providing bold, original reporting and analysis of struggles for justice here and beyond.

In 2023, we continued publishing our print edition while expanding our online presence and hosted a weekly, one-hour prime-time radio show on WBAI. We look forward to continuing to do more great work in 2024. But, we need the support of our readers more than ever.

With your help, we can provide more incisive coverage of more movements, print and distribute more papers, build a more dynamic online presence, and train more up-and-coming progressive journalists.

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