COPAGANDA

THE NYPD IS NOW PRODUCING, STARRING IN AND DISTRIBUTING ITS OWN MEDIA CREATIONS

BY JOHN TEUFEL — P8
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In this year’s Democratic primary, neither side could dislodge the other.

In recent years, DSA’s bloc of legislators have played key roles in passing the nation’s most far-reaching Green New Deal legislation, in winning new tenant protections and securing emergency unemployment compensation for undocumented workers during the pandemic and in derailing Gov. Kathy Hochul’s conservative pick to lead New York’s highest court. They have also been outspoken in their support for Palestine and have sponsored legislation that would eliminate tax-exempt status for charities that funnel money to illegal settlements on the Occupied West Bank.

With the cost of housing soaring in a district that is almost 80 percent tenants, Huntley contrasted his support for more aggressive laws to protect tenants with his opponent’s support for landlord interests.

“This district deserves better. Nobody can pay the rent,” said Cea Weaver, a longtime Brooklyn housing activist who took time off from her job to volunteer for Huntley in the final two weeks of the campaign. “We went to playgrounds, senior centers, from her job to volunteer for Huntley in the final two weeks of the campaign. “We went to playgrounds, senior centers, town halls — replacing one of the biggest obstacles to sweeping tenant-friendly legislation in the State Assembly with a tenant champion — but she vowed to push on.

“Next time,” she said. “It’s not like we’re going to go away for the next two years.”

Because DSA is a hybrid organization that combines electoral and non-electoral activities, its work is ongoing. Valdez’s victory, said DSA spokesperson Jeremy Cohan, will help boost the organization’s labor organizing campaigns while Huntley’s emphasis on affordable housing has opened new possibilities for tenant organizing in his district.

“Our theory of election campaigns is that the infrastructure should not disappear with the candidate,” Cohan added.

For his part, Huntley already sounded like he was ready for a rematch as he urged his mostly youthful supporters to not be discouraged. He reminded them that Michael Jordan didn’t make his high school basketball team the first time he tried out, that Barack Obama lost his first run for Congress and that Jabari Brisport had lost a City Council race in 2017 before winning his State Senate seat in 2020.

Speaking afterwards to The Indypendent, Huntley said, “We’ve planted the seeds that will germinate later.”
Why Jamaal Bowman lost AIPAC & 8 other reasons Squad member was defeated

By John Tablton

In June of 2020, Jamaal Bowman rode the tsunami of Black Lives Matter protests from the Bronx middle school where he was principal to Capitol Hill as the representative for New York’s 16th congressional district. Four years later, he became the first member of the Squad, a group of eight outspoken leftwing members of Congress, to lose their re-election bid, falling by 17 points to Westchester County Executive George Latimer. Here are nine reasons Bowman was toppled.

AIPAC

Any Bowman post-mortem has to start with the role of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the powerhouse pro-Israel lobby group that spent $14.5 million on the race — flooding the airwaves with ads lauding Latimer and denouncing Bowman. AIPAC’s largesse in turn allowed Latimer to exploit all his other advantages.

GERRYMANDERING

In 2020, 41% of registered voters in NY16 lived in the Bronx. After redistricting in 2022, that number dropped to 15% as the district shifted further north into whiter, more affluent parts of Westchester County. In this year’s primary, Bowman won the Bronx part of his district by 84-16%, while Latimer won Westchester by 63-37%. If the district lines had remained the same, Bowman likely cruises to re-election.

RACISM

With the district lines redrawn, Latimer didn’t hesitate to use racist dog whistles to paint Bowman as an “angry Black man” and a representative who was only concerned about his Black and Latino constituents. Latimer’s use of white grievance politics shouldn’t have been surprising. He once compared Andrew Cuomo to Emmitt Till when the former governor was being investigated for sexual harassment.

THE FIRE ALARM

Bowman pulled a Capitol Hill fire alarm last September en route to a budget vote. He later pled guilty to a single misdemeanor charge. The video footage of Bowman doing the deed is damning and served as perfect fodder for AIPAC attack ads.

THE BIDEN FACTOR

Bowman was repeatedly denounced in attack ads for not voting for the 2021 Infrastructure Bill. The legislative history around this is convoluted and mostly forgotten, but here goes. Once upon a time, there was a second much more ambitious piece of legislation called Build Back Better. It was backed by the president and presented as the signature domestic initiative of his presidency. It would have created an array of new government initiatives (permanent child tax credit, investments in child care, better Medicare benefits for the elderly, to name a few) to make life easier for ordinary Americans. It also could have helped Biden coast to re-election in 2024 and stave off a Trump restoration. Despite opinion polls showing these programs having broad public support, a handful of conservative Democrats blocked Build Back Better. Biden ultimately caved to their demands. The Infrastructure Bill was “decoupled” from Build Back Better and passed with Republican support over the objections of Bowman and other Squad members. For fighting harder for the Biden agenda than Biden and other party leaders, Bowman and his fellow Squad members have been branded ever since as disloyal. The conservative Democrats who obstructed Build Back Better for months have skated with no reputational damage.

LACK OF LOCAL NETWORKS

Bowman was elected in 2020 as a political outsider. Latimer, meanwhile, has held various local offices in Westchester County since 1987. When AIPAC recruited Latimer with the promise of unlimited financial backing, he already had extensive local political networks in place that he could activate.

LACK OF CAMPAIGN INFRASTRUCTURE

For most of his time in office, Bowman was a tepid fund-raiser compared to some of the other Squad members who have large small-dollar donor followings. He had only about $200,000 in the bank when October 7 supercharged his opposition. AIPAC saw weakness and pounced.

HIS OWN CONSCIENCE

Bowman traveled to Israel in 2021 and visited the Occupied West Bank — something most visiting politicians pass up on when they travel to Israel — and later recalled being appalled by the oppressive, apartheid system Israel had imposed on the Palestinians. He began speaking out. As a former educator, Bowman has also said he couldn’t remain quiet while Israel killed more than 15,000 children in Gaza and left thousands more as amputees and orphans. For this, he paid the price.

Build Back Better for months has skated with no reputational damage.

October 7th Aftermath

AIPAC’s attack ads didn’t focus on Israel because much of Westchester County’s large Jewish population was already furious at Bowman for calling for a ceasefire and for labeling Israel’s assault on Gaza a “genocide.” Those voters came out in overwhelming numbers.
RGB Approves Rent Increases Amid Protests, Arrests

Once again, the city Rent Guidelines Board has voted to raise rents on the city’s roughly 1 million rent-stabilized apartments. On June 17, it voted to allow increases of up to 2.75% for a one-year lease renewal and 5.25% for two years. The increases, which go into effect Oct. 1, continue the board’s pattern under Mayor Eric Adams; during Bill de Blasio’s eight-year tenure, the highest one-year increase it approved was 1.5%. Hundreds of people protested outside the vote, at a Hunter College auditorium, and 10 were arrested, including Assemblymembers Marcela Mitaynes (D-Brooklyn) and Zohran Mamdani (D-Queens). The RGG’s staff had reported that landlords’ incomes for buildings containing at least one rent-stabilized unit had risen by 10.4% in the most recent year available, while their operating costs went up 6.1%. Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal (D-Manhattan) called the vote “an utter betrayal of the city’s tenants.”

Lander Eyes Congestion Pricing Lawsuit

City Comptroller Brad Lander announced June 12 that he is considering asking state courts to rule that Gov. Kathy Hochul illegally put the city’s congestion-pricing plan for Manhattan on “indefinite pause.” The plan to charge drivers going south of 60th Street a $15 toll was scheduled to go into effect June 30. “Halting the implementation of congestion pricing harms New York City’s goals of reducing emissions and improving air quality, and leaves a $15 billion hole in the MTA’s Capital Program,” Lander said in a statement. The comptroller argued that stopping the plan might violate a 2019 state congestion-pricing measure, environmental laws, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, if it delays improving subway stations’ accessibility. Gov. Hochul said she delayed the plan because the $15 charge would be too harsh on working-class people driving into the city. Transport Workers Union President John Samuelsen and the United Federation of Teachers opposed it on similar grounds.

Ramos Flushes Flushing Casino

State Sen. Jessica Ramos (D-Queens) announced May 28 that she won’t introduce a bill to let Mets owner Steve Cohen use city parkland to build a casino in her district. “We want investment and opportunity, we are desperate for green space, and recreation for the whole family,” she said in a statement. “We disagree on the premise that we have to accept a casino in our backyard as the trade-off.” Cohen, a billionaire hedge-fund manager, working with Hard Rock International, had proposed using a part of Flushing Meadows Corona Park to build an $8 billion casino next to Citi Field, and needed the state to enact legislation that added gambling to the parkland’s permitted uses. Instead, Ramos offered to introduce a bill to let the developers build a convention center and hotel on a parcel of land near LaGuardia Airport, enabling them to “still make a profit, albeit less.”

NYC BRIEFS

THE RENT IS TOO DAMN HIGH:

Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani (D-Queens) speaks to tenants protesting outside the June 17 meeting of the Rent Guidelines Board.

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NYC BRIEFS

CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONS BROKER FEES

A bill to ban landlords from forcing tenants to pay real-estate brokers’ fees to get an apartment has amassed 33 cosponsors in the City Council, but drawn fierce opposition from the real-estate industry. The Real Estate Board of New York brought more than 100 real-estate agents to a Council hearing on June 12. “The FARE Act, while well-intentioned, could lead to higher rents and reduced listing visibility, ultimately harming tenants,” testified Brian Phillips, an associate broker at Douglas Elliman. “I do not think there is any reason for me to pay one month’s rent or more to a person a landlord hired to post something on StreetEasy or Zillow,” responded Annie Abreu, a frustrated apartment-hunter from Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Speaker Adrienne Adams has not yet said if she’ll bring the measure to the floor. Mayor Adams, a former real-estate broker, has not yet taken a position on it.

LANDER EYES CONGESTION PRICING LAWSUIT

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Eric Garner, 10 years after
What happened to the cops who killed him?

By Theodore Hamm

Ten years ago on July 17, Eric Garner struggled to avoid arrest for the charge of selling untaxed “loosie” cigarettes near the Staten Island ferry terminal. NYPD plainclothes officer Daniel Pantaleo then placed the 43-year-old in a chokehold that killed him. Garner’s last words, “I can’t breathe!” became a rallying cry for the Black Lives Matter movement that erupted in 2014.

In early December of that year, a Staten Island grand jury decided not to indict Pantaleo, ignoring widespread protests against the NYPD and then-New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

After a protracted federal investigation also produced no indictment, the City’s Civilian Complaint Review Board brought charges against Pantaleo that resulted in his firing by NYPD Commissioner James O’Neill in August 2019. This added fuel to the cops’ hostility to de Blasio but did not diminish activists’ ire against the former mayor — given that it took five years to simply get Pantaleo off the force.

But as anyone who watched Ramsey Orta’s viral cell-phone video of the fatal incident can attest, Pantaleo was not the only officer involved in Garner’s death.

Although Garner’s mother Gwen Carr and the grassroots organization the Justice Committee have consistently pushed for accountability for the other officers involved, no one other than Pantaleo has faced meaningful disciplinary action. Despite clear negligence at the murder scene and blatant lies in their initial reports, many of the Garner cops have since been promoted.

The Indypendent calculates that since 2014, these same six officers have received over $7.5 million in salaries (plus overtime) from the city, an expenditure that increases substantially when including pensions and health care.

Let’s review the Garner cops’ handiwork.

A few months before the Garner killing, NYPD Chief of Department Phil Banks called attention to untaxed cigarette sales on Bay Street, near the ferry terminal. Prior to the mid-July incident, Banks ordered a crackdown. (Banks, later implicated in an untaxed liquor racket, is now the most powerful deputy mayor in the Adams administration.)

Starting in March 2014, Lt. Christopher Bannon of the 120th Precinct monitored the Bay Street site for the sale of loosies. Over the next two months cops arrested Garner twice for the low-level infraction.

On July 17, Lt. Bannon and Sergeant Dhanan Saminath sent officers Pantaleo and Justin D’Amico to 200 Bay St. Both Pantaleo and D’Amico knew Garner from previous encounters. D’Amico told CCRB investigators that he understood Lt. Bannon’s original directions to mean “make an arrest if he observed illegal activity.”

The two officers supposedly explained to the CCRB that on the ride over to Bay Street, “they did not speak to each other about the assignment.” Instead, “the only conversation that they had was about what was on the radio.” The duo parked over 300 feet from 200 Bay Street. From that distance, D’Amico maintained that he saw Garner make a loosie transaction — whereas Pantaleo said that a car blocked his view.

When confronted by the officers, Garner made it clear that he was sick of being harassed, ominously stating “I’m tired of it. This stops today.”

After calling in back-up, Pantaleo initiates the deadly encounter, choking Garner for about 10 seconds. As Garner asserts “I can’t breathe” 11 times, Pantaleo presses it. This stops today.

As Garner lay limp, none of the officers did anything to help him, with D’Amico later explaining that he thought the victim was “playing possum.”

Pantaleo repeatedly told Sgt. Saminath that he saw Garner selling a loosie and that instead of a chokehold, he pulled the big man down by his shirt. The lying had only just begun.

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, Sgt. Saminath texted Lt. Bannon that “Danny [and] Justin went to collar Garner [and] he resisted. While they were trying to gain control of him he went into cardiac arrest. … Might be doa.”

“They observed him selling a loosie.”

POLICE IMPUNITY: Black Lives Matter protesters demand justice for Eric Garner on the fifth anniversary of his death at the hands of NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo.

TIRELESS: Eric Garner’s mother Gwen Carr leads a march through Staten Island on the fifth anniversary of her son’s death.
Saminath's text further stated, but after Garner refused to comply, “Danny then tried to grab him and they both fell down.”

“Not a big deal,” Lt. Bannon responded to Saminath’s distorted account, “we were effecting a lawful arrest.” According to Hall Gate’s Nick Pinto, Bannon’s callous statement caused “an uproar” when it surfaced in the 2019 departmental trial. On the stand, Bannon claimed that he was simply trying to put his officers’ “minds at ease,” given that they had experienced a “bad situation.”

After leaving the crime scene, D’Amico returned to the precinct and filed false paperwork. In addition to claiming that there had been no use of force, his arrest report then charged Garner with felony cigarette sales, meaning he had 10,000 or more. At the 2021 judicial inquiry into Garner’s death, D’Amico said this was an honest mistake. “Due to the circumstances, I wasn’t thinking clearly,” he stated. Soon after Ramsey Orta’s cellphone video went viral, PIX 11 reported that the footage contradicted a police report that quoted both Sgt. Saminath and Sgt. Kizzy Adonis expressing doubts regarding the severity of Garner’s condition. Adonis, a Black woman, was charged by the NYPD with failure to supervise at the scene, eventually losing 20 vacation days. Saminath was not charged. Officers Mark Ramos and Craig Furlani, who piled on top of Garner and aided in handcuffing him, faced no penalties.

As of June 2024, Christopher Bannon is Lt. Commander Detective of the NYPD’s Central Robbery Division, a high-level unit that operates out of 1 Police Plaza. Adonis and Saminath remain sergeants with desk jobs. In the fall of 2022, D’Amico was promoted to detective at the 122nd Precinct on Staten Island’s South Shore. In 2023, Bannon added $93K in overtime to his base pay of $150K. Adonis and Saminath bumped up his same salary with an extra $90K. D’Amico added nearly $50K to his $104K salary. Ramos and Furlani both retired a few years ago at the 20-year mark. For the Garner cops, the case really wasn’t such a big deal, after all.

Meanwhile, Gwen Carr, a retired MTA train operator, continues to fight police brutality. In 2020 she pushed the state legislature to pass the Eric Garner Anti-Chokehold Act, outlawing the dangerous tactic. Two years ago, she launched the E.R.I.C. Initiative, a nonprofit that helps families affected by police violence.

Carr is also trying to sustain the national momentum for police reform, which has waned since the 2020 George Floyd protests. This past spring at the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Carr, along with relatives of Floyd and Tyre Nichols, denounced the lack of commitment by elected leaders.

“It’s too late for our children,” said Carr. “But we want to save other children.”

**Why police reform failed**

And what we really need

**By Alex S. Vitale**

ollowing the police murder of Eric Garner, and the massive protests against abusive policing, Mayor Bill de Blasio told us not to worry: the NYPD was going to reform itself. He insisted that a program of de-escalation training, implicit bias training, and body cameras, backed up by the work of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, would reduce abusive policing and restore public trust. Ten years later we have little to show for it. The NYPD continues to be a source of danger to those exposed to it, especially young men of color.

New York City spent tens of millions of dollars on these police reforms. But the city’s own research showed that implicit bias training failed to make any difference at all in policing, which is consistent with academic research findings over the last decade. It is a ridiculous effort that imagines that the problems of racist police practices are accidental, unconscious and based on the discretionary decision making of individual officers. But the problem is so much deeper than that.

First, there is plenty of explicit racial bias among individual officers. Second, the NYPD as an institution has been a central force in maintaining the color line and continues to have a deeply racist internal culture. These patterns endure regardless of which demographic group leads the department. And third, the core mission of the NYPD is racist in that it treats the problems of communities of color as being “crime” problems to be suppressed by policing and incarceration, while the dilemmas of better-off communities are understood to be social problems to be addressed in less punitive and violent ways.

For the NYPD as well as most city leaders, the harmful behavior of corporations, employers and landlords are considered non-criminal manners, despite the fact that they kill, maim, poison, and steal from people at rates far above conventional “street crime.”

De-escalation training has also been a failure. Over the last 10 years we have continued to see police escalate encounters over and over again, whether they involve young people hanging out on street corners, homeless people in the subway, or people experiencing a mental health crisis, even in their own homes (e.g. Win Ronzario). Nor have body cameras done anything to reduce abusive policing. The public rarely gains access to the footage in a timely manner and instead the NYPD edits and releases only clips that tend to show them in the best possible light. There is a clear conflict of interest in allowing the NYPD to manage the footage.

Finally, the Civilian Complaint Review Board has failed in its alleged mission of holding police accountable. The whole enterprise is doomed to failure. It is underfunded, lacks adequate power, and can only deal with complaints about individual officers, not policies and practices. The board’s investigations are routinely undermined by the NYPD, and the ultimate decisions on punishment are left to the NYPD leadership. When CCRB officials have attempted to actually use the office to hold police to account, they are pushed out because the political leadership of the city doesn’t actually want police to be held accountable.

Unfortunately, the abusiveness and impunity of policing are not some accident or oversight that can be corrected with a few tweaks to training and oversight. These are features, not bugs, and if we want to reduce the harms of policing, we need to reduce the role of police in our lives in as many ways possible by creating community-centered safety practices to reduce violence, serious forms of disorder, and other harms.
The worst offender here has been a man named John Chell, who currently serves as the NYPD's director of policy. Before that, he was a sergeant in the commands bureau, where he was known to have a thick New York accent who, in time, passed on to be assigned a pack of sick mugshots that only a bunch of rightwing nutjobs, for the simple reason that they are from a part of the country with a lot of cops. Indeed, it was the New York police department's (NYPD) director of policy, John Chell, who recently went on Dr. Phil (who was also in the news recently for “unmasking” with the LAPD as they beat the shit out of anti-genocide protesters) to push another fake tidbit. Chell's conspiracy theory, the “immigrant crime wave” (which is in itself a close cousin of the “Great Replacement Theory” embraced by white nationalists). As such, none of this uninformed speculation is hijacking this, radicalizing them to do this?" Chell also offered his own take on immigration policy, saying that protesters should be expelled and that people who supported their actions should be arrested.

In his tweet Daughtry called our flag “the greatest in the world,” according to a lawsuit, Daughtry served as a member of the people around at Columbia who were students of the university. No “funding source” (for what? keffiye and flags?) has ever turned up. There is no shadowy, deep-pocketed movement brainwashing your children. Of course, none of this unsubstantiated speculation has been true, and naively all the people around at Columbia were students of the university. No “funding source” (for what? keffiye and flags?) has ever turned up. There is no shadowy, deep-pocketed movement brainwashing your children. Chell also offered his own take on immigration policy, saying that protesters should be expelled and that people who supported their actions should be arrested.

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By René Feltz

Cries of “welcome home” greeted WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange as he disembarked from a chartered jet in the Australian capital of Canberra a free man after he pleaded guilty to a single U.S. espionage charge and was sentenced to time served.

The shocking scene on June 26 ended a 12-year-long legal ordeal that began when Assange published classified documents detailing U.S. war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, including video footage from 2007 showing a U.S. military Apache helicopter in Baghdad killing 12 civilians, including two Reuters journalists, Saeed Chmagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen. WikiLeaks titled the video “Collateral Murder.”

After Chmagh survived the initial attack, the video shows him trying to crawl away while the helicopter flies overhead. U.S. forces open fire again when they notice a van pulling up to evacuate the wounded Chmagh. Soldier’s chatter and laughter at the carnage in their crosshairs.

“We have individuals going to the scene, looks like possibly picking up bodies and weapons,” says one soldier. “Let me engage. Can I shoot?” another asks. They get permission, and fire.

“Should have a van in the middle of the road with about 12 to 15 bodies,” a soldier concludes. “Oh yeah, look at that. Right through the windshield! Ha ha!” His colleague responds.

When Assange landed in Australia he kissed his wife Stella and lifted her off the ground, then embraced his father while his legal team looked on. He did not address the media.

“Julian wanted me to sincerely thank everyone,” Stella Assange told reporters. “He wanted to be here, but you have to understand what he’s been through. He needs time. He needs to recuperate.”

Assange spent the past five years locked up in the harsh Belmarsh Prison in London, and faced up to 175 years in U.S. prison if he was extradited and convicted on all 18 counts he was facing. Before that, he had spent seven years in U.S. prison if he was extradited and convicted on all 18 counts he was facing.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government’s increasing use of the Espionage Act to prosecute and silence whistleblowers still casts a shadow over national security journalists whose work includes what Assange published the Afghan War Logs on WikiLeaks in 2010 and shared them with The Guardian, The New York Times and the German weekly Der Spiegel. The Biden administration appears to have pushed through the final steps of the plea deal as he struggles to mollify anti-war voters ahead of the November election.

“It’s important to recognize that Julian’s release and the breakthrough in the negotiations came at a time where there had been a breakthrough in the legal case in the U.K., in the extradition, where the High Court had allowed permission to appeal,” Stella Assange noted. “There was a court date set for the 9th and 10th of July, an upcoming court date in which Julian would be able to raise the First Amendment argument at the High Court. And it is in this context that things finally started to move. I think it revealed how uncomfortable the United States government is, in fact, of having these arguments aired, because this case — the fact is that this case is an attack on journalism, it’s an attack on the public’s right to know, and it should never have been brought. Julian should never have spent a single day in prison.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. government’s increasing use of the Espionage Act to prosecute and silence whistleblowers still casts a shadow over national security journalists whose work includes what Assange was accused of doing: “obtaining and disseminating classified information.”

“This deal contemplates that Assange will have served five years in prison for activities that journalists engage in every day,” said Jameel Jaffer, executive director of the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University.
**LABOR BRIEFS**

**AMAZON LABOR UNION AFFILIATES WITH TEAMSTERS, ALSO, SEAN O’BRIEN TO SPEAK AT RNC**

Members of the grassroots Amazon Labor Union at Amazon’s fulfillment center JFK8 on Staten Island voted nearly unanimously in June to affiliate with the 1.3-million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters. ALU president Chris Smalls said they were “choosing a path to victory” and were “now stronger than ever before” in taking on the online retail giant. The agreement gives ALU sole jurisdiction over organizing Amazon warehouses in New York City’s five boroughs. This comes as Teamsters President Sean O’Brien said he had accepted Trump’s invitation to speak at the Republican National Convention, and that Democrats had not yet approved his request to address their convention. Usually a reliably Democratic voting bloc, the Teamsters have yet to endorse either Trump or Biden, who was the first sitting president to appear on a picket line when he backed striking members of the United Auto Workers, which has since endorsed him.

**ULTIUM CELLS WINS BIG UAW CONTRACT**

Members of the United Auto Workers at an Ohio plant that produces battery cells for General Motors electric vehicles ratified a new local contract in June and said they “want this agreement to become a cornerstone for current and future battery plants across the nation” by establishing new standards “with strong wages and benefits and historic health and safety protections.” Ultium worker Lori Lovitz claimed “the benefits are just the best benefits I’ve had in my life.” Most workers at the Lordstown plant will see an immediate raise of $3.59 per hour. Many will get a 30 percent raise over three years, and time-and-a-half pay after 10 hours of work on a single shift. This comes after GM agreed to include Ultium Cells workers in the UAW during a six-week strike against the Big 3 Detroit automakers last fall, and the UAW continues to expand its membership.

**FOUR MORE STARBUCKS STORES UNIONIZE IN NYC REGION SUPREME COURT SETBACK**

All four New York City-area Starbucks stores with elections in June voted by a landslide to unionize. Workers at the Nassau Boulevard store in West Hempstead, and the 444 Broadway, Water Street and Fulton Street stores in Manhattan joined more than 460 union stores nationwide. Also in June, hundreds of Starbucks Workers United delegates representing certified union stores held bargaining sessions in Atlanta and remotely to establish a framework “intended to be the foundation of each single-store contract” as workers came together to create a better workplace for all. Starbucks meanwhile brewed up a victory at the Supreme Court after the justices ruled 8–1 to overturn a 2022 federal district finding that the coffee giant had violated labor law when it fired workers in Memphis for union organizing. Starbucks sued after the National Labor Relations Board ordered it to reinstate the workers. Workers United said the ruling “underscores how the economy is rigged against working people all the way up to the Supreme Court,” but vowed “workers are continuing to organize.”

**NEW STUDY RELEASED ON BLM’S UNION ORGANIZING IMPACT**

While researching his forthcoming book We Are the Union: How Worker-to-Worker Organizing Is Revitalizing Labor, Rutgers Prof. Eric Blanc surveyed workers and found Black Lives Matter was the most commonly cited social movement that had a “major” influence on their decision to unionize in 2022 — suggesting they saw the “struggle for better wages and working conditions as, among other things, a direct way to challenge racial injustice.” Blanc concluded, “Leftists, in short, are justified in criticizing neoliberal anti-racism. But only focusing on this is one-sided and strategically unhelpful. The recent labor uptick has clearly exposed the contradiction between corporate anti-racism and working-class anti-racism.”

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Team up: Amazon Labor Union President Chris Smalls leads a 2022 Labor Day march in Lower Manhattan. The ALU recently affiliated with the Teamsters.
Standing together
Encampment arrestees confront legal system with solidarity

By Renée Feltz

Underneath the blue tiles that spell out “Columbia University” at the 116th subway stop, someone recently painted in red, “Divest Now!” The art echoed chants at a picket line upstairs, outside the gates of Barnard College.

“One, we are the students
Two, we won’t stop fighting
Three, we want divestment now, now, now NOW!”

At a closed hearing underway on campus, several students faced hearings about the future of their academic careers, which they say were unfairly jeopardized due to their participation in protests against the genocide in Palestine.

The Columbia University Apartheid Divest student coalition says they are being “selectively isolated” by Barnard president Laura Rosenbury and the Barnard disciplinary office at the same time the schools have neglected harassment and attacks targeting Palestinian, Arab and Muslim students.

But resistance to the ‘Palestine exception’ in higher education remains strong in New York as students say they’ve learned the “power wielded by collective organizing.”

This collective power shaped how they responded when Manhattan District Attorney’s office recently dropped 31 of the 46 criminal cases against people charged with occupying Hamilton Hall for 17 hours and renaming it Hind’s Hall after a six-year-old girl brutally killed by Israeli forces in Gaza.

District Attorney Bragg cited the fact that many protesters wore masks, and lack of video footage and other evidence as the reason for the decision not to prosecute many of the students.

Thirteen others arrested in the building — many of them alumni — were offered deals that would have led their charges to be dismissed, but refused them “in a show of solidarity with those facing the most extreme repression,” said the Columbia University Apartheid Divest coalition.

Lack of specific proof was also given as the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office reason for dropping felony burglary charges against seven of the CUNY 22, a group of students and faculty arrested at the Gaza Solidarity Encampment at City College after they refused to remove a Palestinian flag they had hung on a flagpole or take down their tents. Administrators called in the New York Police Department, who violently raided the peaceful protest with tear gas alongside CUNY police, who “broke the ankle of an undergraduate student, broke the teeth of two protestors, attacked and burned many students, faculty and at least one journalist with pepper spray at close range, and beat many more with batons” according to CUNY For Palestine.

The encampment’s demands included a call for CUNY to divest from Israel’s decades-long occupation of Palestine, just as it and Columbia had divested from apartheid South Africa. So far neither school has made this commitment and students say they continue to organize, nine months into Israel’s U.S.-backed assault on Gaza.
A Palestinian poet takes flight

By Amba Guerguerian

I had the best Arabic teacher. He made me love the Arabic language,” says Finan Suwwan Al-Abed about why she started writing poetry.

“When we moved from Palestine to Jordan, I was so attached to him that he was saying, ‘Please let me keep Finan, let her stay, let me adopt the girl, and she can be my child!’ My dad would laugh and laugh,” said Suwwan, who moved to Jordan from Nablus in the West Bank in Occupied Palestine, where her family had lived for generations, when she was 10 years old in 1980.

When she was eight years old, an Israeli informant began to work as a teacher at her school, and once he was exposed, students took it upon themselves to strike. Suwwan’s brother fervently promoted the strike. “My father used my grandmother’s house to make the first school in the village; he was responsible for setting up electricity in the village, which he provided from his property via a large generator.

“When there is something deeply I feel, I write about it,” said Suwwan, who began to write poetry as a teenager.

In 1993 Suwwan moved to Western North Carolina and has lived in the area ever since. She married a Palestinian-American with whom she has three children. With work and childrearing, Suwwan had no time to try and promote a career in literature, but she has never stopped writing poetry. “Sometimes in the car I get an idea and I just pull over and write it down,” she says.

Gaza

The roses wailed
The scent of death, my homeland, is within you
And the sorrow is unveiled by laughter, not in tears

The roses wailed
My murderer
I am the offspring of the pine, where our names are carved
My murderer
I am the child of the olive, rooted in this earth
My murderer
I am the son of wheat, my skin kissed by its tan.

The roses wailed
We never loved sadness, nor craved it
Our wounds, oh my child, even if they cease to bleed
The scars remind us of the knives

The roses wailed
The scent of death, my homeland, is within you
And the sorrow is unveiled by laughter, not in tears

Today, even if you plant gardens of yearning upon my doorstep
I shall not read any words of love

If you wish for me to read your letters, inscribe Gaza

First Time: Palestinian poet Finan Suwwan Al-Abed
The indydependent

The resources should be left in the ground.”

A contingent of Indians, however, believe that...
On the road again

Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping Choir have been performing in front of crowds of as many as 20,000 people as the opening act for Neil Young and Crazy Horse in their latest nationwide concert tour.

BY REVEREND BILLY

We got the call from Neil Young and an email from his agent Marsha Vlasic from Independent Artists. Three weeks later we were the opening act for Neil Young and Crazy Horse, the stage at the center of a tour called Love Earth, which was invented by Neil and partner Daryl Hannah.

Our “Earthalujah!” wasn’t the only statement from radical activists on this tour. In each of the 30 cities, the local earth activists were given big open-air shade structures where they could sing or table their writings, talk to people. The Village was always placed where people couldn’t avoid it, between their cars and the empty seats of the amphitheater. The Love Earth Tour caravan of sound people and equipment, food and safety folks, office workers, truck and bus drivers ... are streaming down highways over a five-month period. As I write we’re in a pause halfway through. We begin again on July 8 in Toronto, then onward, coming to an end at the Hollywood Bowl on Sept 29.

We have interrupted our regular Sunday “Earth service” at the Earthchurch on Loisaida Ave in the East Village. Fifteen of us went off in two tour buses, opening in San Diego on May Day. Now for the second half of the Love Earth Tour we will rotate in new singers. The half-hour performance opening for Neil was made possible by the songs and sermons we developed over two years in our home in a converted bank building on Avenue C. The choir created a song form in which they could sing two or even three songs simultaneously in a gospel jazz idiom. My improvisations as preacher came out of this atmosphere of ecstatic improv, directed by Savitri D.

Savitri also created the script for our 29 minutes.

SONG: “The Nowbird” — two minutes — A conversation with a bird that keeps shouting “a tree is the opposite of a cup.”

SERMON: Two-minute preacher’s welcome — the suppressed feeling of mortal danger we all have in our everyday life.

SONG: Three minutes — In the “The Great Outdoors” — Francisco Benitez is a punk who reappears in 2044 to confront tourists at a scenic area.

SONG: “Where Do I go?” is a stem-winder of a gospel song that brings down the house. The content reminds the audience of places we go to find the mystery of life when we’re nine years old. “I go to the mountain, I go to the tree next door ...” Based on “The Poetics of Space” by Gaston Bachelard

SONG: “Beautiful Earth” — A lover of the Earth wants to make sense of all the fire and flood, “Earth won’t you please translate?”

SERMON: Five to seven minutes. I rotated sermons, sometimes a costly error in approach, but the point was always that each of us has a radical action inside and each of us knows that to love the Earth and survive is to live by the only law that matters, but that this is mysterious law to us, as it should be. This law is unknown.

SONG: “I’m Filled with the Fabulous Unknown” — Two minutes — Our theme song for the past year.

SERMON FAREWELL: Addressing the sea of rocker fans: “You look like a movement to me!” I counsel the public to work together, stop being passive and alone, be active in new communities.

SONG: “You’re Not The Only One” is an improvisation, the nine singers take four different phrases and riff, but it ends on a signal, abrupt climactic ending.

EXIT: A one-word sermon on the amazing sound system “CHANGE!”

Reverend Billy is taking a break from his duties as The Indypendent’s advice columnist. For more, see revbilly.com.
Free summer events & destinations

**THURS JUL 18 • 7PM • FREE**
**LEIZ’S BOOK BAR GRAND OPENING & AUTHOR TALK**
The first author event at Liz’s Book Bar will include a discussion between author Joseph Earl Thomas and Brooklyn Institute for Social Research’s Paige Sweet. Thomas is known for his works on literary realism and expanding the genre beyond depicting Black suffering to be a more holistic representation of marginalized experiences.

**FRI AUG 2 • 6PM • FREE**
**BOOK LAUNCH: BEYOND POLICING WITH PHILIP V. MCBRiRRI AND THENJiWE MCBRIARE**
Come join us for a book launch for Beyond Policing with Philip V. McHarris, in conversation with Thenjiwe McHarris, where they reimagine a world without police and explore community-based safety models, decriminalization and crisis-response teams.

**THE PEOPLE'S FORUM**
320 West 37th St.
MNHTN

**MONUMENT PLAZA**
315 Smith Street
Bklyn

**MARCH 20 • 6PM • FREE**
**MCHARRIS**
FRI AUG 2 • 6PM • FREE
**BKLYN**

**NOLAN PARK**
Govenors Island

**FREE SHORT FERRY RIDE AWAY:** The 13th annual New York City Poetry Festival will be held at Nolan Park on Governors Island on July 13 and 14.

**THE JUL 10 • 7PM • FREE**
**LIEZ’S BOOK BAR GRAND OPENING & AUTHOR TALK**
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**315 Smith Street**
Bklyn

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**CALENDAR**

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