FLIPPED!

HOW TO DECODE THE RACIST SPEW THAT WILL BE UNLEASHED AGAINST KAMALA HARRIS

BY NICHOLAS POWERS — P8
CALANDER

Aug/Sep

THRU OCT 21 • FREE-WHAT-YOU-WISH LINEAGES: KOREAN ART AT THE MET In celebration of the 25th anniversary of The Met’s Arts of Korea gallery, Lineages: Korean Art at The Met showcases highlights of the Museum’s collection paired with important international loans of Korean modern and contemporary art. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART 1000 5th Ave MNHTN

THRU FEB 2023 • FREE EXHIBITION: JIMMY! GOD’S BLACK REVOLUTIONARY MOUTH The Schomburg Center is home to James Baldwin’s archives and is showcasing selections from his papers — spanning his entire life and career — for the first time. This exhibition, part of The New York Public Library’s celebration of Baldwin’s centennial birthday, also features items from other collections that showcase his passion and brilliance. SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE 315 Malcolm X Blvd MNHTN

SAT & SUN THRU SEP 15 • FREE THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY STREET THEATER SUMMER TOUR The Socialization of a Social Worker or The Fight for Social Justice will tour New York City’s five boroughs, performing in parks, playgrounds and closed streets until Sep 15. This original production tells the story of a humanitarian case worker finding hope and strength through collective action. For more, see theaterforthenuity.net or call 212-254-1109.

SAT AUG 17 • 5–10PM • FREE CELEBRATE BROOKLYN! LILA IKE | BOB MARLEY: ONE LOVE | LAILAI | DJ SWEET V BRC Celebrate Brooklyn! is hosting a pop-up event at Brower Park. The event will include a screening of the biographical film Bob Marley: One Love and performances by modern reggae artists Lila Ike, Lailai and DJ Sweet V. BROWER PARK Brooklyn Ave & Prospect Pk BXKN

AUG 23–25 • 3–8PM • FREE CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival is an annual salute to the legendary saxophonist in the neighborhoods where he lived and worked. Each year, some of the most prominent jazz musicians in the world come together to honor “The Bird” for his musical genius and contributions to jazz amongst other genies. MARCUS GARVEY PARK 8/23-24 TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK 8/25 MNHTN

MON AUG 26 • 8PM • FREE SCREENING: DANIEL CATAN’S FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS Catán’s enchanting opera, inspired by Gabriel García Márquez’s magical realist novels, follows a South American opera diva’s Amazonian journey as she travels by boat through Brazil. The Met’s 15th Summer HD Festival features performances from the company’s Live in HD series of cinema transmissions. 3,000 seats in front of the opera house and additional standing-room around Lincoln Center Plaza. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 55 minutes. THE METROPOLITAN OPERA 30 Lincoln Center MNHTN

MON SEP 2 • ALL DAY • FREE WEST INDIAN DAY PARADE The West Indian Day Parade is an annual celebration of Caribbean culture in New York City. The parade draws crowds in the hundreds of thousands as it winds through Crown Heights along Eastern Parkway. The day features food, dancing, music, drinks and stunning mas bands. IN FRONT OF BROOKLYN MUSEUM 200 Eastern Pkwy BKXKN

FRI SEP 7 • 10AM • FREE LABOR DAY PARADE Join the New York City Central Labor Council for their annual parade. Thousands of workers from over 200 union locals will join together to celebrate the power of organized labor across the workforce. Festivities will march north through Midtown on Fifth Avenue. 44th Street & Fifth Avenue MNHTN

FRI SEP 7 • 6–10PM • FREE BROWN NIGHT MARKET The night market has transformed the Bronx foodie scene and celebrates the Bronx’s identity. Featuring over 40 local vendors and attracting 4,000+ guests, this vibrant hub showcases diverse cuisines and supports local businesses. FORDHAM PLAZA 1 Fordham Plaza BRNXT

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NYC BRIEFS
BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

EARLY 2024 HAS MOST TRAFFIC DEATHS IN 10 YEARS

More people were killed in vehicle collisions in the first six months of 2024 than in the first half of any year since the city’s Vision Zero program began in 2014, according to an analysis from Transportation Alternatives and Families for Safe Streets released July 23. The groups said that 127 people, including 61 pedestrians and 51 motorists, had died in “traffic violence.” Transportation Alternatives cited the “deadly consequences” of SUVs and pickup trucks, which killed 43 pedestrians and nine bicyclists. To improve safety, they advocate congestion pricing in Manhattan, building safety infrastructure such as protected bike lanes, and “daylighting” intersections (banning parking close to corners to increase visibility). Another issue is reckless driving: The city had 186 drivers last year who got more than 100 tickets for driving more than 10 miles per hour over the speed limit, according to New York University researchers.

TWO GROUPS SUE TO REVIVE CONGESTION PRICING

Two lawsuits seeking to void Gov. Kathy Hochul’s June decision to stop the implement-ation of congestion pricing in New York City were filed July 25. One, by the City Club of New York, argues that Hochul violated the 2019 MTA Reform and Traffic Mobility Act, which authorized the program, because that law gave decision-making power to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, not the governor. The second, by the Riders Alliance, Sierra Club and the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, says that Hochul’s decision violates both the state law mandating that it reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030, and the state constitution’s amendment that established the right to clean air and a healthy environment. The governor “singlehandedly deprived millions of subway and bus riders of $15 billion worth of transit improvements,” New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, who helped organize the litigation, said in a statement. Meanwhile, on July 18, a Manhattan State Supreme Court judge temporarily barred the MTA from cutting bus service in response to a suit by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and Transport Workers Union Local 100.

BRAD LANDER ANNOUNCES MAYORAL RUN

City Comptroller Brad Lander announced July 30 that he is running for mayor, becoming the third candidate to challenge scandal-clouded incumbent Eric Adams in next year’s Democratic primary. “We can replace a leader when they fail the basic tests of the job,” Lander said, citing the high costs of housing and child care. Lander, from Brooklyn’s brownstone belt, joins former comptroller Scott Stringer of Manhattan and pro-tenant state Senator Zellnor Myrie of Brooklyn in the race. All three are running to Adams’ left politically, but ranked-choice voting could likely prevent them from splitting the progressive vote. Socialist Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani (D-Queens) is also eyeing the race, and disgraced former governor Andrew Cuomo might jump in too if Adams is indicted or drops out.

ROCKAWAY BIRDS ATTACK NYPD DRONES

It could be a scene out of an Alfred Hitchcock movie. Angry birds at Rockaway Beach are attacking NYPD flying drones. The drones, deployed over city beaches after several people drowned this summer, are used to detect sharks in the water and swimmers in distress—but oystercatchers, shorebirds with a distinctive orange bill who nest at Rockaway, have been observed flying next to the drones, squawking and trying to kick them, ornithologist Shiloh Schulte told The New York Times. “Oystercatchers, in particular, are very defensive of their young, and they see drones as real predators for themselves or their chicks,” Dr. Schulte said. “They think the drones are some form of raptor.” The city’s beaches have had a shortage of lifeguards for years, and most of the drownings happened after 6 p.m., when the lifeguarding shifts end.
It’s Giuliani time!
Mayor Adams tries to recycle Rudy’s top deputy as city’s lead lawyer

By Theodore Hamm

Few events shocked New York City quite like the Abner Louima assault. In August 1997 at the 70th Precinct in East Flatbush, NYPD officer Justin Volpe sodomized Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, with a broomstick.

Normally a reflexive defender of the police, Mayor Rudy Giuliani visited Louima twice in the hospital and pushed for a full investigation. It was an election year.

Soon after the incident, Giuliani appointed a 28-member task force to address police-community relations. According to Village Voice legend Wayne Barrett, the combatative mayor thereby called attention to “systemic problems he’d never before acknowledged.”

In late March 1998 the task force issued a lengthy report with dozens of recommendations. Now in his second term, Giuliani scoffed at the report’s significant proposals (e.g., a city residence requirement for cops), accepting only a minor one — changing the NYPD’s use of “community affairs” to “community relations.” In Barrett’s view, Rudy had turned the Louima task force into “a joke.”

The mayor had at least one notable defender, however: Randy Mastro. Current Mayor Eric Adams, who has a dubious track record regarding NYPD accountability, recently nominated Mastro to serve as the city’s corporation counsel overseeing the Law Department.

As noted by The New York Times mainstay Dan Barry, Mastro — Giuliani’s deputy mayor for operations — claimed that Rudy’s “dismissive response” to the task force was appropriate. “The Mayor was underwhelmed by the report and rightly so,” insisted Mastro.

The deputy mayor further stated that the Louima report did not provide recommendations on how the community could improve its approach to the police. Police Commissioner Howard Safir, not known as a reformer, was more charitable, saying that the report would be “looked at and analyzed.”

In his effort to win City Council support for his bid to become corporation counsel, Mastro recently sat down with longtime WCBS reporter Marcia Kramer, who praised his “incredible credentials.” Not surprisingly, neither mentioned Louima nor any of the police accountability controversies during the Giuliani era.

Mastro instead emphasized that he is “a lifelong Democrat” who helped the Giuliani administration push through progressive same-sex domestic partnership legislation. He pledges to use the Law Department to advance civil rights and social justice initiatives.

The Adams administration is touting Mastro’s support for a full investigation. It was an election year.

On a more micro level, it’s possible that Adams may expect Mastro to allow the City to represent the mayor and/or his associates in sexual-harassment lawsuits. This was reportedly a point of contention that led to the departure of Adams’ initial corporation counsel, former Brooklyn judge Sylvia Hinds-Radix.

In Siegel’s view, the Law Department “should not represent any city officials accused of misconduct that falls outside of their official duties.” How the department handles claims against the NYPD also can either help reveal or conceal police misbehavior.

The Indy asked Mastro to explain how he would approach police misconduct and whether his office would defend Adams or others accused of non-official wrongdoing. Mastro opted not to respond.

Meanwhile, Mayor Adams recently claimed that he deserved an “A+” for his handling of police accountability.

The City Council is expected to decide whether Mastro will indeed become the city’s top lawyer by the middle of September.

ADAMS MAY EXPECT MASTRO TO ALLOW THE CITY TO REPRESENT THE MAYOR AND/OR HIS ASSOCIATES IN SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAWSUITS.
Keeping it reel

“People come to Maysles as strangers and leave as family,” says new head of Harlem’s only arthouse movie theater

By John Tarleton

On Malcolm X Boulevard in the heart of Harlem, Maysles Documentary Center is housed in a small storefront building with a sign above the front door that lists upcoming movie screenings.

When I recently met with the center’s new executive director Kazembe Balagun, he spoke excitedly about the youth trainings held downstairs as he guided me past the popcorn stand and into a small, 50-seat movie theater that feels like an enlarged version of a living room. Bala- gun then stepped behind the big screen at the front of the room. As he pushed against the wall behind the screen, it swung open — Batman style — and revealed a brightly lit room with several thick wooden desks that he and other Maysles staffers work from. On one of the desks sat a camera once used by the pioneering documentarian Albert Maysles.

“The great thing about working here is I’m at street level,” Balagun says of his position. “Anytime I step outside, I can have a conversation with our neighbors and really get a pulse of the community, and that informs a lot of our programming.”

Balagun is a longtime community organizer and cultural curator; he previously worked as the education director at the old Brecht Forum and as a project manager at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. I’ve known him for more than 20 years and was delighted to learn that this widely respected figure on the New York left would now be positioned to make a big impact from his new perch at the intersection of film, activism and social movements. So I made my way up to Harlem to see what he was thinking.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

THE INDYPENDENT: Talk about growing up in Harlem.

KAZEMBE BALAGUN: I learned how to swim at Jackie Robinson Pool on 145th Street. I did my first research project at Macombs Dam Library. I remember Liberation Books used to be near here. For me, Harlem was always a small southern village come up north. People were politically savvy, sweet and smart. We knew there was a larger world out there, and a Black world as well.

Is Harlem still a Black cultural mecca? Or has gentrification sapped its cultural creativity?

Harlem is still very much the voice of Black America. For a long time you had a “majoritarian consciousness” in Harlem of being a Black majority on top of Manhattan. That concentration of Black folks gave our churches, our civic organizations, our radical organizations a sense of being a center of deep democratic yearning and reform in this country. That was something that was widely expressed. You also always had a vibrant gay community, a vibrant Muslim community.

Fast forward to the late ‘90s and 2000s, and you see an influx of white folks. You can put in a Whole Foods or a Church of Latter Day Saints and say we lost Harlem. But I think this moment calls for is a reappraisal of that deep democratic coalition that is built around justice, that harkens back to the past while being both multicultural and Black at the same time. Harlem attracts people who are progressive-minded and want to be here for a reason. Whether you’re white or Black or other, you have to deal with the fact that Harlem is tremendously over-policed and under-resourced. There’s high maternal mortality rates, high asthma rates, no bike lanes. There’s so many different ways Harlem is under-resourced.

What role can an art-house cinema like Maysles play?

We’re going to continue to be a place of education where people can participate without money being an issue, a place where people can gather, debate — have good conversations based on good, wholesome information.

What makes Maysles special?

There’s a couple of things. One, there’s a multicultural community that respects and champions Black people. Also, we have a knowledgeable staff from the film curators to the projectionists, to the popcorn vendors.

Right now the process of movie production is entirely controlled by the 1%. Multinational companies like Amazon or Apple are controlling our desires and dreams. You can get caught up in the fantasy of watching a film.

The 1% wants us to focus on our screens. The goal of people’s artists is to look at the screen and also get people to look and “see” each other. We have a saying: People come to Maysles as strangers and leave as family.

What do you mean when you say that Maysles is creating a people’s democratic film culture?

With the films we screen, we are turning our audience into critics — and critics into artists. We are creating the basis for social reproduction of thought from the ground level up — so you take these tools and apply them to your own community. The thing about micro-cinema is that you can replicate it anywhere. You can have five seats in your living room, and that’s a micro-cinema. In the old school in poor countries, there might have been only one movie camera in the whole country, and the whole national liberation movement would have to use that one movie camera and share that. So if you have one camera in your whole neighborhood, that can be the basis for a unit to create a film. You are talking about the pooling of resources. The resources are not just technology though, but the people themselves.

What is it about watching movies that is special?

When you see a movie, you’re just laying back and allowing someone to tell a story. Your blood pressure goes down. Your heart rate goes down. If you’re in a theater, not in front of your computer, it’s even better. You get to relax with other people. You don’t realize it, but you all are breathing in harmony. You’re sharing a communal breath together, and that’s a powerful thing.

What kind of films do you want to screen?

I want to hit as many notes as possible. I want to have politically challenging films. I want to have contemporary films. I want to have avant-garde films. I also want to connect films to impacted communities. I want to start having kids’ days. I want to have family days. And in the summer I want to continue to have outdoor screenings, so people can have that communal experience together. We’ll also continue to do film festivals. We just wrapped up our Harlem international film festival. Our Black Panther Film Festival is in October.

See www.maysles.org for more.
Give me Liberty

NYC team chases first championship as WNBA soars in popularity

By John Tarleton & Ariana Orozco

It was the closing minutes of a hard-fought Sunday afternoon basketball game at the Barclays Center. The crowd of more than 10,000 fans chanted their team’s name — “Lib-er-ty! Lib-er-ty!” — as they waved rainbow-colored towels with the image of the team’s beloved mascot Ellie the Elephant.

“They are rushing too much when they don’t have too,” a fan said, shaking his head after another Liberty turnover.

With 1:31 left in the fourth quarter, Sabrina Ionescu, one of the team’s stars, drove to the basket and sank a floating jump shot over a taller opponent to give the Liberty a one-point lead over the Washington Mystics. The Liberty pulled away in the last minute. When the final buzzer goes off, the crowd let out a roar to celebrate their team’s 93-88 victory, its seventh in a row.

“Liberty!” — as they waved teal-colored towels, with the image of the team’s beloved mascot Ellie the Elephant.

“I think it’s really important to support our women,” said Gabby, Merit and a third friend, Miller, have been season ticket holders since 2021. They watched the team reverse its losing ways and make it to the finals last year before losing to the Las Vegas Aces. They have also enjoyed watching the queer-friendly scene around the team grow.

When Caitlin Clark’s name comes up, they roll their eyes. They acknowledge that Clark, with her long-distance shooting and razzle-dazzle passing, is talented. But, they add, it’s impossible to ignore that Clark’s popularity is fueled in part by her being straight and made it special.

“Obviously this is a huge queer space,” said Gabby. “It’s nice that you know like 40 people every game. All of your friends are here. You know you can be here and be yourself.”

“Nothing but love,” Miller said. “It’s not like when you’re at a game and you’re going, ‘Oh my god, this is cheaper than cornbread’.”

The team was owned by New York Knicks owner James Dolan, and it played at Madison Square Garden before Dolan banished it to White Plains, New York, where the Knicks’ developmental league team plays. In 2019, the Brooklyn Nets, the NBA’s other New York City franchise, bought the Liberty and moved it to its current home.

Landing in the heart of Brooklyn allowed the team to rebuild its fanbase. In 2021, the team rolled out Ellie the Elephant, the team mascot who has 100,000 Instagram followers and whose dance moves inspire intense Reddit debates among fans about the identity of the person underneath the costume.

“For Rylee and her son Robby, it was their first WNBA game. She said they were inspired by the media coverage of this year’s NCAA women’s college basketball tournament in which Clark carried the Iowa Hawkeyes to the finals for a second year in a row only to come up one win short.

“My son loves basketball, but I want him to love all of the sport — not just when he sees men playing it,” Rylee said.

“No one dunks in the WNBA or plays above the rim. To score points, its players have to constantly move without the ball and set each other up with nimble passes.

“It’s like male and female gymnastics in that way,” Rylee explained. “It’s the same sport, but we’re testing different skills.”

For Amiri and R.J., a pair of teenage basketball fans, affordable tickets are part of the draw.

“This is cheaper than the NBA,” Amiri said. “Shit, this is cheaper than cornbread.”

“I think it’s really important to support our women,” R.J. claimed. “We got mothers, sisters and they can play, you know?”

The New York Liberty was founded in 1997 as one of the WNBA’s eight original franchises.
Kamala’s path to victory

Why the Dems’ surprise nominee must lean into an agenda that addresses the concerns of America’s multifractal working class

By Vivian Price

Kamala Harris can kick Trump’s ass. Like devastate him. Like a spinning bird kick. She’ll say, “He’s a felon. He’ll sign a bill that says ‘I’m a felon,’ which means you can’t be a senator anymore.” He’ll give tax breaks to the rich. The rich hate Trump.

But there’s a catch. She can’t campaign as a centrist Democrat, warning low-income women that she’s a Black woman to sell reform to the rich. She can’t repeat Obama or Hillary. To win and win big, Harris has to campaign like Bernie Sanders.

Will he get older, white, working-class voters who feel betrayed by the fact that their non-voting working-class parents voted for the wrong post-war leader and were sold the same story as today? Why? The goal is to hold the swing voters and the election is to stop the rise of fascism. Choosing Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz (see page 13) as her running mate is a good sign. But Harris has to go further and champion the working class.

Trump and the Republicans will haul every racist and sexist label they can to make people think this is too good to be true. But there’s a catch. The truth is that the libertarian and Republican voters are more spread out, which means your average voter isn’t as predictable. They are often poor, renters and recently new to the country, so they vote for Harris. Trump’s base is shrinking. The left can put pressure on President Harris to put an end to this.

The path to victory is through a series of obstacles. The United States has a population of 342 million, 439 million are eligible voters, and 339 million votes were cast in 2020. In the last election, the votes were around city blocks. Harris had no telling Trump to get 74 million, and Biden got 81 million. I heard the news that Biden won at my Brooklyn playground. All the people who counted.

Yet outside of our cheers were nearly 80 million Americans who were not counted. Every day they work the cliff edge of poverty. They look in need of unpaid bills and sleep in cars or on friend’s couches. They lose their jobs and homes. Nothing they hear from Democrats or Republicans speaks to their needs.

The next obstacle is the Electoral College, which does elections in favor of Republicans. Democrats are packed in a few big states like California and New York, where they win uplopated districts. Republican voters are more spread out, which means your average swing state voter is in the right of the average voter nationwide. Even if a majority votes for the Democrats, like in 2020 when Biden beat Trump by more than seven million votes, they can still lose. In that election, Biden barely squeaked out an Electoral College victory. If that were to happen, the 2020 election would be the closest election yet. It would be a historical moment if the Democrats won in the 2020 election — just 50/50.

For Harris to win, she has to win from voters from both the Rust Belt and Sun Belt: natives of Great Britain and Georgians. She has to get multicultural voters and white, working-class voters to roll the dice on her. She has to show up at soup kitchens and talk with workers on food stamps. She has to win in Bernie’s base. She has to campaign on Black history. Bernie’s signature program for helping working families that was blocked by Congress in 2021, and she has to say, “When we come together, we can do it.”

Harris faces another big obstacle: the story that white voters have of Black people. If so, another battle royale in 2020. Behind she’s not even the Civil Image. Behind her argument that racism is baked into our culture. It is how slavery was justified. How else can one think they’re human beings if they don’t believe it. The master in Frederick Douglass’ memoir breathed “I'm a brute.” The imagery from “good Blacks” to “bad Blacks” who endangered the white race. Republicans have become the villains of their own playbook. They promote the image of “good Blacks.” See how well the system cuts.

As the smoke of the Civil War cleared and Southern plantations were uprooted, white-supremacist ideology emerged as the new base. From the “nigger” to the “nigger,” from “good whites” to “bad whites.” Democrats can now show that racism is baked into our culture. It is how slavery was justified. How else can one think they’re human beings if they don’t believe it. The master in Frederick Douglass’ memoir breathed “I'm a brute.” The imagery from “good Blacks” to “bad Blacks” who endangered the white race. Republicans have become the villains of their own playbook. They promote the image of “good Blacks.” See how well the system cuts.

But Harris, liberal usually on “Red Black” image for the gray cat. She’s a “good Black” image. The public was shocked when it was learned that she was a "Black" of the "good Blacks" variety. She didn’t have a "magical negro" in her campaign. She didn’t have a "magic negro" in her campaign.

HARRIS CAN WIN. BUT IF SHE RUNS SOLELY ON IDENTITY, ABORTION AND DEMOCRACY, WE GET A COIN-FLIP ELECTION BETWEEN A NARROW VICTORY OR LOSS.
Mr. Walz goes to Washington

By John Tarleton

During the two weeks that Kamala Harris weighed which white guy from Middle America she wanted to join her on the presidential ticket, many progressives swooned over Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a man previously known to few outside his home state.

Suddenly, Walz was everywhere on cable news shows using his folksy midwestern charm to skewer the Republicans as “weird.” He came with an everyman biography: Raised in a small town of 400, he was a high school studies teacher and football coach before being elected to Congress six times from a rural, Republican-leaning district.

As governor, he signed progressive legislation on abortion rights, transgender rights, legal marijuana, workers rights, paid parental leave, lower childcare cost, free school meals and free public college for families making under $80,000 per year.

Walz is not a radical. And like any capitalist politician, he contains contradictions. For example, he signed climate legislation to make Minnesota carbon-free by 2040. Yet, he also had state police arrest more than 200 non-violent protesters who were blocking construction of the Enbridge Line 3 oil pipeline across indigenous Ojibwe land — the very kind of infrastructure project that will lock fossil fuel usage well past Walz’s 2040 deadline.

Still, progressives saw someone who could effectively argue that their policies were common-sense examples of neighbors helping neighbors. Arguments for why Walz was the best VP choice filled social media. So too did denunciations of Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a conservative Democrat with close ties to business elites in the party, who was widely seen as the frontrunner to join the ticket.

When Harris announced on Aug. 6 that she had chosen Walz, progressives were both delighted and disoriented. After decades of being left-punched by a party establishment that routinely takes their policies and crowns them a lightning rod for Gaza protests.” After months of antwort demonstrationsthat had split the Democratic Party, one anonymous Harris advisor said, “Nobody wanted to rip that scar back open.”

What does it all mean?

The relationship between a president and vice president tends to be awkward. The veep is expected to be ready to take over the world’s most powerful political office on a moment’s notice if the president is incapacitated. Yet, they must never ever show any sign of coveting their boss’ job or thinking they could do it better. If she wins, Harris will be the one calling the shots, and Walz, like a proper soldier, will be expected to back both her good and bad decisions with equal enthusiasm.

How Walz beat out Shapiro for the number two spot will be analyzed for years to come. While many variables were involved, Shapiro’s strident hostility toward Palestinians and their supporters very likely played a role. When he was Pennsylvania attorney general, Shapiro went after Ben & Jerry’s for refusing to license their ice cream to be sold in illegal West Bank settlements. This spring, he compared campus antiwar protesters to members of the KKK.

According to a CNN report, Shapiro “had become something of a lighting rod for Gaza protests.” After months of antwort demonstrationsthat had split the Democratic Party, one anonymous Harris advisor said, “Nobody wanted to rip that scar back open.”

Kamala Harris

Continued from previous page

FROM COPMALA TO THE QUEEN OF THE DREAM

Buzz. I checked my phone. A text came in with an image of then-Senator Kamala Harris as an exaggerated super cop. In it, she has a test-me-motherfucker police stare. In the background, she cackles while arresting a Black girl, handcuffing her as thin as matchsticks. I shook my head. My Black mother, an Indian cancer researcher, and her father, a leftwing Jamaican economist, met and fell in love while at Berkeley in the 1960s. Harris went to her first protests in a baby stroller. She spent summers in Jamaica. She visited India. She learned about the world and its dangers. As a teen, her family took in a sexually abused friend. Maybe it taught Harris to never be vulnerable. Maybe that’s why she always finds the angle — she deftly dodges obstacles to get higher positions of power.

Like Obama, Harris eschewed her parents’ 1960s idealism for hard-nosed pragmatism. She did the law-school thing and positioned herself as a high social studies teacher and football coach before being elected to Congress six times from a rural, Republican-leaning district.

As governor, he signed progressive legislation on abortion rights, economic sanctions against North America, freed women from their husbands, and went from sellout to savior. To be honest, in 2020 when you trace the dots, a portrait emerges. Harris is a child of the Civil Rights Movement and the de-colonial movements sweeping the globe in that era. Her mother, an Indian cancer researcher, and her father, a leftwing Jamaican economist, met and fell in love while at Berkeley in the 1960s. Harris went to her first protests in a baby stroller. She spent summers in Jamaica. She visited India. She learned about the world and its dangers. As a teen, her family took in a sexually abused friend. Maybe it taught Harris to never be vulnerable. Maybe that’s why she always finds the angle — she deftly dodges obstacles to get higher positions of power.

Like Obama, Harris eschewed her parents’ 1960s idealism for hard-nosed pragmatism. She did the law-school thing and leveled up as a prosecutor, then a San Francisco District Attorney in order to “change the system” from within. Harris is a highly intelligent woman who carefully triangulates. She takes liberal positions and keeps her support from the elite. On her watch, the D.A’s office convicted people for marijuana possession. Yet few went to prison for it. Yes, she drove an anti-truancy program that snagged a few parents. Yet the reality was the street was a conveyor belt to crime. The kids had to be in school. She did not enforce Proposition 8, a 2008 voter initiative in California that banned gay marriage. When you trace the dots, a portrait emerges. Harris is a pragmatic liberal who knew that the first step in protecting the vulnerable was getting power and keeping it. Even if it that means sacrificing progressive ideals for popular support.

Harris is a liberal. She supports abortion, affirmative action and LGBTQ+ rights. In the Senate, she pushed for six-month paid family leave. At the same time, she has long been...
I’m a retired Brooklyn College professor, a grandparent and a union and climate organizer. I’ve been involved in leftist political organizing for more than 50 years, and I must say that I (mostly) love doing the work. I feel connected to the world and its future in profound ways, and I keep meeting fabulous people who are also committed to the work. My focus changes over time, but the basics of working for a just and sustainable world are constant.

Of course we are in a crisis! Climate change, economic inequality, attempts to roll back past victories against racism and sexism, as well as global crises, are brewing up a storm. Of course Kamala Harris and Tim Walz won’t save the world, but they will protect it way more than their opponents. Their election may give climate protection a fighting chance. They are likely to support workers, women and people of color more than any administration in U.S. history. And they are way better powerbrokers to organize against than the Republicans. I’m delighted to be able to join their campaign and work for their election and the down-ballot candidates running with them. I wish there were a truly leftist and viable party but, alas, there is not.

I’ve canvassed a lot over the years: for third party candidates in the early ‘70s and for Kerry, Obama, Biden and lots of local races since then. I like canvassing because you meet people, hear their stories and learn how they frame issues. I don’t get to initiate a conversation at most of the doors, but when I do, I usually start by asking the person what the most important issues to them in the particular election are. I can usually riff off their starting point, make a human connection, share some of my thoughts — but mostly I learn from them. I love checking out their porches, their apartment buildings, their kids, the playgrounds, the local stores. The further away the community is from my own experience, the more I enjoy canvassing and the more I learn. I love getting out of my bubble and discovering over and over that most people are good and interesting.

This year I plan to spend all of October canvass-ing across the Midwest in some of the “swing states.” I went to grad school and did politics in the Midwest in the early ‘70s, so I have lots of friends with whom I can stay (though not more than four nights each). I plug in to the local AFL-CIO canvassing operation wherever I am. I know that working people — and that’s the demographic I am usually assigned to canvass — need to have conver-sations on what differences the Democrats and the Repub-lians have on offer. Because the Democrats are such poor communicators, many people need to know the dif-ferences in the policies of the two parties and how it will affect them in their daily lives. Put me in a working-class community and I’ll connect around unions, work and family.

You can join the canvassing and voter turnout operations of many different groups, even if you can only go on day trips outside of New York City. Philadelphia, the largest city in the largest swing state, is only 100 miles away. There are also several competitive congressional districts in the suburbs outside New York City that need to be turned “blue” in order to flip control of the House of Representatives to the Democrats. The Harris-Walz team is highly imperfect. They are not leftists, for sure. But they give us a chance at survival and an opportuni-ty to keep trying our best to turn the tide toward a just and safe world. Let’s put our collective shoulders to the wheel and make it happen!

Here are some organizations that you can connect with to canvass, make phone calls and send out postcards: Working Families Party, Stand Up Pennsylvania, AFL-CIO, Seed the Vote and Movement Voter Project.

Nancy Romer, professor emerita, Brooklyn College, CUNY, is a life-long activist. She is presently on the executive council of the Professional Staff Congress of CUNY (AFT), the union local that represents 30,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York, and co-chairs its Environmental Justice Working Group. She’s lived in Brooklyn for over 50 years.
PARIS — In the spring of 2023 a protest movement against French President Emmanuel Macron’s drive to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64 flooded the country’s streets. Workers, from sanitation to railway, to office employees, participated in weeks of strikes. Young antifascists kept Paris and other French cities ablaze for over a month, but this movement lacked widespread participation from the youth — children of immigrants — living in the outskirts of Paris, and Macron prevailed, using a constitutional provision to bypass a vote in the National Assembly.

These same demonstrators rejoiced just over a year later on Sunday, July 7, when the leftist coalition beat Marine Le Pen’s far-right and Macron’s centrist coalitions in France’s snap parliamentary elections. Macron shocked many in early June when he dissolved the French legislature and called new elections. He hoped to strengthen his party’s advantage over the far-right National Rally party and was counting on left parties to remain divided which, in France’s two-stage voting process, would push their supporters to vote for centrist candidates in the second round of voting.

Instead, the left quickly united into a four-party alliance, the New Popular Front, and finished a strong second in the first round of the election — trailing the openly fascist National Rally but well ahead of Macron’s centrist coalition. In the days that followed, the left and center formed an uneasy alliance with 200 parliamentary candidates from their ranks withdrawing from races in which they had finished in third place in the opening round. This was in order to prevent the far right from gaining a parliamentary majority that would allow them to govern France for the first time since the early 1940s when it collaborated with the Nazi occupation.

The strategy worked spectacularly, with the New Popular Front winning the most deputies (182) in the 577-seat parliament followed by Macron’s coalition (168 seats) with National Rally lagging in third (143 seats) after many thought they would win a decisive majority. Compared to the previous 2022 parliamentary elections, the left gained 49 seats, the center lost 82 and the far right gained 54. France Insoumise, the most militant of the four parties in the NPF, also won the most seats of any party in their coalition.

Tens of thousands of New Popular Front supporters who gathered in public squares to watch the election results were stunned by their victory and burst into antifascist chants of “No pasaran!” (They shall not pass!). The New Popular Front drew its inspiration from the Popular Front government of the mid-1930s, a coalition of several socialist parties that passed sweeping social and economic reforms before collapsing in the run-up to World War II.

For the present-day French left, this marked the first time it had won a political battle against Macron since he took office in 2017.

“When we heard the coalition won, I cried. You can’t know the joy that there was in Paris. All of Paris shouted. We thought [the far-right] was going to win,” said Farida Belabbas, cofounder of La Fleche d’Or, a center for radical culture and politics in Paris.

“Fifty-two percent of the votes for the Popular Front came from the low-income neighborhoods!” boasted a young Arab-French organizer at the Fleche d’Or as she spoke to a roaring crowd just after the election results were announced.

“All the leftists at the Fleche d’Or jumped on their bikes and rushed to Place de la République. There were fireworks. It was great. There was joy! You could see it on everyone’s faces. This is history. The people won. We retook the streets. We are reclaiming our power,” says Belabbas, the daughter of an Algerian revolutionary who fought in that country’s 1954–62 war of independence against France.

The New Popular Front’s platform includes lowering the retirement age back down to 60 (where it was before Republican President Nicolas Sarkozy initially raised it in 2010), scraping Macron’s pension re-
forms, raising the minimum wage by 14%, and freezing the price of basic necessities such as food and fuel. It aims to cover the costs of children’s education (including meals, transportation and extracurricular activities). This would all be funded by increasing taxes on the rich.

The front has also promised to recognize Palestine as a state and to push for an arms embargo against Israel. The New Popular Front – which in addition to the main leftwing and green parties also included the support of several trade-union and antifascist groups – agreed to a single joint slate of candidates going into the first round of the elections, making the French left the strongest and main challenger to the fascists.

The ability of the left-green coalition to prevail in the second round was largely due to the fact that the banlieue, the impoverished neighborhoods dotted with large housing blocks on the periphery of Paris, came out to vote in their favor. They did so despite the fact that the banlieue is more separated than ever from Paris. “It is now quite difficult to cross the highways and enter or exit the banlieue,” said Belabbas. Yet “it’s the first time the youth of the banlieue voted! And it was decisive.” It is these mostly non-white people from Paris’ low-income neighborhoods that are worst discriminated against by the far right and that have been worst affected my Macron’s neoliberal, often anti-democratic reforms. During his presidency, Macron has implemented a little-before-used loophole in the French constitution called 49.3 that enables him to pass through laws without an assembly vote. He used it to push through the retirement reform, to make class sizes bigger in the French education system, to change the law so that only French citizens don’t have to pay for health care, to conservatively reform unemployment benefits and to cut taxes on the wealthy.

“We have pushed these rights through political struggles, and now he’s throwing them away,” Belabbas told The Independent. “The seven years of Macron has profoundly broken France. We’re seeing a destruction of the social-welfare state.”

**You cannot underestimate the role Palestine played in the elections.**

**Ahead of the French elections, the New Popular Front was strengthened as its parties and supporters hosted demonstrations in the streets attended by masses — worker, student, pro-immigrant, antiracist and anti-imperialist groups, and anyone else that wanted to defeat the fascists and centrists — as well as by community assemblies and canvassing events. In the seven days between the first and second round of the elections, not only did people begin to demonstrate every day, but the various leftist factions, led by those from the banlieue, made an extra effort to organize and speak to the people living in the low-income parts of Paris.

This was not the first time that those marginalized people — mostly Arab and African immigrants and their children — were facing an election against the far-right, but it was the first time that they came out to vote in such high numbers.

“You cannot underestimate the role Palestine played in the elections,” says Belabbas. “The Israeli far right has power in the politics of France. And [Palestine] is an issue that hits the elections.” Belabbas told cut taxes on the wealthy.

“Pay for health care, to conservatively that only French citizens don’t have to education system, to change the law so without an assembly vote. He used it to through laws called 49.3 that enables him to pass laws through, making the French left the strongest and main challenger to the fascists.

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**Ahead of the elections, the Leftist organizations around France also hurried to put together people’s assemblies and other forms of community gatherings where speakers from leftist political parties and groups encouraged attendees not only to vote in the upcoming elections, but to continue to push for their demands through various means of protest.

At an assembly in Paris on June 13, where even the overflow room was so packed that people waited outside to be let in, a speaker from the far-left organization Revolution Permanente encouraged participants to do more than just vote.

“I live in the banlieue, and life is hard,” she explained, listing hurdles such as the difficulty of finding a good education for her children.

“The minimum thing we can do is vote,” she said, “but we also need to form our own parties and have our own demands, and not just demand reform from politicians. … We need to organize wherever we are — at school, at work, in the neighborhood, on the streets.”

A/H/sc/e.sc/a.sc/d.sc /o.sc/f.sc /t.sc/h.sc/e.sc /e.sc/l.sc/e.sc/c.sc/t.sc/i.sc/o.sc/n.sc/s.sc, leftist organizers around France, started giving a speech. Talsoumi asked. “Or are we here because already, now, right sick because we are scared of what France might become?”

Urgence Palestine, started giving a speech. The founder of a prominent leftist pro-Palestine organization called Urgence Palestine, started giving a speech.

 Quotes have been translated to English by the author.
Hell on Earth
Polio and skin diseases spread as Israel destroys water tanks and wells

By Amna Guerguerian

At the outset of Israel’s genocide in Gaza, health officials and some news outlets warned that the indiscriminate destruction of the Strip, including that of the water systems, would result in outbreaks of disease that would kill more people than the bombs that have now rained down on the walled-off territory since Oct. 7.

The moment has arrived. The Gaza Strip was declared a polio epidemic zone at the end of July after sewage-water samples taken a month earlier by the World Health Organization came back positive.

According to the WHO, only 16 of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are somewhat “functional” — in some cases, that means patients are being treated on the hospital floor by health professionals who are overworked and undersupplied.

The decimation of the health system via the destruction of its critical infrastructure, mass displacement of people and a shortage of medical supplies has prevented children from receiving many life-saving vaccines, such as those against polio.

And skin diseases are spreading even more rapidly than they were up until recent weeks. At the end of July there were around 103,000 reported cases of lice and scabies in Gaza and 65,000 of skin rashes, according to the World Health Organization. And according to the UN Development Program, more than one million cases of acute respiratory infections have been recorded since October, along with more than 500,000 of acute diarrhea and more than 100,000 of jaundice.

Such a health disaster was inevitable considering the conditions in the overcrowded tent camps that house hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, where temperatures are unbearably high during the summer, and people don’t have access to soap. The sanitation system has collapsed; pools of open sewage lay among the rubble.

Seventy percent of all sewage pumps in Gaza have been destroyed, and not a single wastewater treatment plant is open. The Israeli army destroyed more than 40 water holes, and a shortage of medical supplies has prevented children from receiving many life-saving vaccines, such as those against polio.

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Seventy percent of all sewage pumps in Gaza have been destroyed, and not a single wastewater treatment plant is working. A video recorded by an Israeli soldier from the combat engineering corps, tweeted by Palestinian reporter Younis Tirawi on July 26, shows the calculated demolition of a chief water facility in Rafah.

“The Israeli army destroyed more than 40 water holes and put more than 90 out of service. ... They also bombed all nine major water tanks,” reported Palestinian journalist Bisan Ouda in an Instagram video on Aug. 4. “Now, unfortunately, the water share per person in Gaza is only three liters of water for drinking, washing, cleaning and cooking ... while the international average is more than 30 liters of water per day.”

Khan Younis and nearby Deir al-Balah (which means “monastery of the date palm” in Arabic and dates back to the 13th century BCE) are where the polio-positive sewage was found. Four days later, Israeli bombed a tent camp at the Al-Aqsa Hospital there. “Do you see how we try to put out the fire after the bombing to schools and tents. Do you how much we suffer as we die, as we watch our loved ones die? Do you understand what it means not to have water,” tweeted Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha.

The following day, Israel conducted strikes on two United Nations-run schools in the western part of Gaza City. According to the Palestinian Civil Defense in Gaza, 80 percent of the killed and injured in the strikes were children.

“This is the same exact scenario that we’ve seen in the past few days. What we know for a fact right now is that there is [a] concentration of attacks on evacuation centers,” Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud said. “The Israeli military is not giving any prior warning to people inside these evacuation centers.”

(When the Al-Ahli Hospital was bombed for the first time on Oct. 7, the mainstream Western media covered it, so Israel denied fault, accusing the Palestinian Islamic Jihad of using it as a staging ground for rocket attacks on Israel. Evidence has since come up that it was an American-made missile that struck the hospital. Hospital bombings now receive little to no coverage from Western outlets.)

The official death toll, around 40,000, does not take into account thousands of dead buried under rubble nor the indirect deaths due to destruction of health facilities, food distribution systems and other public infrastructure. Even that number, though, is likely a serious undercount, points out a recent study by the medical journal Lancet, because the destruction of infrastructure in Gaza — including the major funding cuts to the UN Relief Work Agency’s back in January — has made it extremely difficult to calculate all the “official” deaths.

After applying a “conservative estimate” of four indirect deaths per one direct death, the Lancet study found that “it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186,000 or even more” people have been killed in Gaza, or 8% of the pre-October population.

TWO POEMS FROM GAZA

UNTITLED

translated by Mosab Abu Toha

The death of a girl means that a tree in the garden of heart has withered, that a major malfunction has struck the mood of the dawn, and that someone will sleep in an undying eclipse, will not perform his morning practices.

The death of a girl means that a dance has ceased forever, a song has gone astray, a laugh muted after which countless smiles will die out.

The death of a girl means that someone will walk in the streets on his own, eyes welled up, heart-broken, and too melancholic and about to weep people think he’s bad.

The death of a girl means there is a shortage of food for the impoverished, a raging thirst striking the throats of birds, a summer followed by no winter, and an everlasting arthritis in the joints of Time.

The death of a girl means that a poem will be unread, a painting will be unpainted, a love will be orphaned, an embrace will be postponed, and that there will be grief in a present tense that never stops.”
J.D. Vance’s elegy to greed & ambition

Hillbilly Elegy
By J.D. Vance

By Ariana Orozco

Donald Trump has named Ohio Senator J.D. Vance as his 2024 running mate. Even more so than former Vice President Mike Pence, the 39-year-old endorses far-right political views, including conspiracies about the 2020 election, opposition to abortion rights and denial of human-related climate change.

Vance was initially part of the “Never Trump” movement in 2016, going so far as to call his now-boss “America’s Hitler.” Despite his early opposition to Trump’s presidency, just a few years later Vance changed his tune and went on to support Trump in his 2020 campaign. The two became even closer in 2022 when Vance successfully courted Trump’s endorsement for his Senate race.

This cunning shift in opinion is not unexpected. In his 2016 memoir, Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, Vance outlines the only two principles he feels are important: get more money and get more power. This Wolf-of-Wall-Street-type ambition mixed with the book’s unflinching portrayals of white Appalachian poverty makes his cozying up to Trump unsurprising.

Hillbilly Elegy is a personal account of Vance’s upbringing in Appalachia and offers his opinions on how rural America transitioned from a Democratic bloc to consistently Republican. He criticizes national policies like Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush’s perfunctory home-owning legislation for trapping already poor people in a cycle of debt accumulation. However, in addition to the occasional policy analysis, Vance spends the majority of his political tirades railing against individuals themselves, describing the process by which people become reliant on welfare. He posits that, as a result, these people become lazy, self-hating and apathetic — unlike himself, thanks to his grandparents who inculcated him with an unflinching work ethic and desire to escape Ohio. It is Influencer Strategy 101: Act like me and have what I have.

Part of the reason that Hillbilly Elegy has sold over 1.6 million copies is that Vance’s misanthropy is understandable. It is difficult to deny the effectiveness of Vance’s vignettes — scenes of his drug-addicted mother, his alcoholic grandfather and the realities of generational poverty seem to establish his authority on the issues of a broken America. In fact, many of his stories are in line with existing literature about poor white people. The chapter in which Vance forgives his mother for her choices bears an uncanny resemblance to a similar scene in the short-story collection Trash by Appalachian author Dorothy Allison. In both, the writers buckle to the unbearable trauma caused by their mothers and mother-figures while accepting that they must forgive them to move on with their lives.

What sets Vance apart is not his experiences, but rather his conclusions. Where Allison frees herself from hating “white trash” upbringing, Vance’s book concludes more blistering than it begins; he sinks his teeth into identity politics, claiming that people do not want him to succeed because he is a white man. This fuels much of his rage towards immigrants and minorities. The populist reckoning he begs for is not against billionaires like his backer Peter Thiel. Instead, he seeks to replace America’s hillbilly underbelly with a class of Black and Brown people who he believes have received the benefits he deserves.

There are many aspects of Hillbilly Elegy and JD Vance which will appeal to potential MAGA supporters. Donald Trump cannot pretend to know what poverty feels like, and certainly not what it feels like to crawl out of it. JD Vance, on the other hand, provides proof that MAGA Republicans can cross over to a white-picket-fence lifestyle. “Believe me,” he tells the reader, “I did it.”

Vance realizes that the easiest way to escape poverty is to cause it, and gleefully explains how he employed this tactic to ruthlessly climb America’s economic ladder. He achieved his personal reckoning by transforming himself from a backwards hillbilly to a spry Silicon Valley tycoon. These men wear pink, date non-white women, and, like the stock-brokers of The Wolf of Wall Street, don’t want to be blamed for simply playing the game. Vance is a new type of masculine hero: a guy who views his brain as his greatest asset and wants to slash taxes so he can reap more of the rewards he believes he is entitled to.

Vance straddles the line between red-hot American and neo-conservative yuppie. Like Trump, his true nature is not nearly as important as his ability to dog whistle to various disgruntled groups. For an increasingly rage-driven political system, Vance is the apparent heir to Trump’s devoted MAGA following.
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