The Nation's new Digital Magazine format offers:

- The **Page-turning** experience of a print magazine

PLUS:

- Live **Web Links**
- **Multimedia** Access

**CLICK HERE TO VIEW IN THE ENHANCED READER FORMAT**
WE STILL NEED A FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN

How to Build the Political Revolution: A Forum With

Naomi Klein ★ Alicia Garza ★ Robert B. Reich
Frances Fox Piven ★ Rep. Raúl Grijalva ★ Josh Fox
Michael Moore ★ Kshama Sawant... and more
Remembrance of Elections Past

D.D. Guttenplan encouragingly describes Bernie’s “soldiers” as energetic, intelligent, and realistic in “The Future of Bernie Sanders’s Grassroots Army” [June 20/27]. Yet too many of them are planning to duplicate my mistake of 48 years ago. In 1968, I worked for Gene McCarthy. You all know what happened. Hubert Humphrey was not my candidate, and I chose going down in flames over selling out. Richard Nixon became president.

I know it isn’t solely my fault that we ended up with Nixon. Still, I will vote for Hillary—as will Howard Dean, Elizabeth Warren, Jerry Brown, and, no doubt, Bernie. To do otherwise risks killing what remains of the New Deal. We need a progressive Supreme Court. We need Obamacare. Hillary’s coziness with Wall Street and hawkish international posture give me pause. However, voting for her is the best we can do in 2016. A Trump presidency will make the Nixon presidency look like the good old days.

Ken Esch
Pittsburgh

Sign of the Times

Eric Alterman’s detailed article “Both Sides Do It” [June 20/27] states clearly what many New York Times readers like myself have been noticing: One of the major American newspapers has become a timorous provider of platitudes. If we are to have an aware citizenry, we need to find in the press clear and courageous statements about current events. This is especially true when a dramatic electoral season heralds the coming of a new president. Being objective does not mean refusing the responsibility to analyze and judge fairly actions and events.

Angela M. Jeannet
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Correction

Seth Freed Wessler’s “They Knew Something Was Going On” [July 4/11] attributed to Doug Martz allegations that former Bureau of Prisons director Norman Carlson attempted to influence the BOP’s contracting decisions after joining the leadership of a private-prison company. Other former contracting officials at the BOP charge that Carlson influenced decisions, but Martz did not make that claim.

letters@thenation.com
Black Lives Still Matter

Before Alton Sterling’s name became a hashtag, he was a friend, a father, a son, and, as his cousin told The Washington Post, a talented CD salesman who “could converse with everybody.” Philando Castile was a loved and respected figure at the J.J. Hill Montessori Magnet School, where he worked for more than a decade before he was killed by a St. Anthony, Minnesota, police officer in the presence of his remarkable fiancée, Diamond Reynolds, who live-streamed the immediate aftermath. In the wake of these black deaths, people once again filled the streets to make a simple, sadly radical assertion: Sterling and Castile’s black lives mattered.

Within hours, however, Micah Johnson had taken five more lives in Dallas, adding to the carnage of yet another week of wrenching American violence. The five police officers that Johnson killed were doing their jobs as public servants: This fact must be clearly stated and Johnson’s murder, and then the cops’ hunt for the shooter was boggling: An antiviolence march morphed into mass terrorism in all its forms: violence against public servants and acts of war; hate crimes and personal disputes that turn deadly due to the omnipresence of guns. What unifies all of this death is the grim reality that America is a horribly violent place.

The perversities of the Dallas attack are mind-boggling: An antiviolence march morphed into mass murder, and then the cops’ hunt for the shooter was confused by the fact that dozens of people at the march were toting assault rifles, exercising their so-called rights under Texas’s open-carry law.

The pervasiveness of the Dallas attack is mind-boggling: An antiviolence march morphed into mass murder, and then the cops’ hunt for the shooter was confused by the fact that dozens of people at the march were toting assault rifles, exercising their so-called rights under Texas’s open-carry law.

So if Dallas changes anything, it is only to remind us that in order to truly ensure that black lives are valued, we will also have to confront the broader culture of violence that has long gripped this nation.

Kai Wright
For a Bolder Vision

Cautious calculation won’t help the Dems win this year.

The committee drafting the 2016 Democratic platform voted to remove a reference to Donald Trump because, as Indiana member Carl Stevens explained, “This is our aspirational document.” Stevenson got it exactly right. The candidates and strategists planning this year’s Democratic campaign—not just Hillary Clinton’s historic presidential run, but fights for control of Congress and statehouses across the country—must keep the word “aspirational” in mind as they gather in Philadelphia on July 25–28.

It will be tempting for top Democrats—in a year when the Republican Party, which long ago steered itself out of the political mainstream, is veering off a cliff with Donald Trump—to simply say “We’re not them” and expect to reap an electoral windfall. But if the volatile 2016 campaign has taught us anything, it’s that the cautious calculations so favored by political insiders do not work anymore. Americans want something bolder and better from their politics. And if Democrats don’t put better on the agenda, too many swing voters might go for Trump’s “billionaire populism” and the slightly more managed extremism of GOP contenders for the Senate and House.

When polls show that 67 percent of Americans think the country is headed in the wrong direction, it’s not enough to rip on the guy who’s shouting the loudest about changing course. Nor is it enough to promise continuity, even when the outgoing Democratic president is personally more popular than anyone seeking to replace him. Divided government and gridlock, the controlling influence of big money, and the toxic intersection of celebrity candidates and a ratings-obsessed media have fed the anger of an electorate that has repeatedly signaled its eagerness for radical alternatives to the status quo. Consider this: No avowed democratic socialist in US history has won as much support in a presidential race as Bernie Sanders did in 2016. Americans may not be fully prepared for the cooperative commonwealth that Eugene Debs envisioned, but voters are a lot more interested in evidence of social progress to explain the greater progress we now see. There will be doubters—of the nominee’s commitment, and of the prospects for serious change. Clinton should answer them with a bolder vision and a sense of what could be accomplished if we’re prepared to tax billionaires and to ensure that no one who works 40 hours a week will live in poverty; to break up corporate monopolies and renew competition and honest entrepreneurship; to address climate change with the same determination with which we put a man on the moon; to amend the Constitution to get big money out of politics; and, finally, to guarantee the right to vote and to address structural racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-immigrant bigotry, because doing so will free all of us to build on the promise of an American dream that has been too long deferred. She should not hesitate to echo Sanders, who endorsed her on July 12, and Sanders and his supporters should not hesitate to prod the nominee to fully and consistently embrace progressive positions. That prod, especially on issues of economic and political reform, will make Clinton and the Democrats stronger.

As she prepares her acceptance speech, Clinton might also review the address of another Democrat who was nominated in Philadelphia. Warning that “economic royalists” had “created a new despotism and wrapped it in the robes of legal sanction,” Franklin Roosevelt used his 1936 acceptance speech to declare that “government in a modern civilization has certain inescapable obligations to its citizens, among which are protection of the family and the home, the establishment of a democracy of opportunity, and aid to those overtaken by disaster.”

“In the place of the palace of privilege we seek to build a temple out of faith and hope and charity,” FDR said from the podium in Philadelphia. That was righteous language—aspirational language. And Americans responded by embracing Roosevelt as they had no other president. Clinton and the Democrats who gather this year in Philadelphia owe it not to themselves but to America to aim every bit as high.

JOHN NICHOLS
Dear Liza,
I am a woman in my 20s, and I’ve been encouraged to apply for grants and fellowships intended to support people of color. They seem like great opportunities, but I’m not sure if it’s right for me to take them. On the one hand, my entire family is from the Middle East, I have a conspicuously foreign-sounding name, and I’d probably get some funny looks at a Trump rally. On the other hand, I grew up in Europe, went to top American universities, and consider myself a very privileged individual. I don’t think my “race” (whatever that might be) has ever significantly helped or hurt my career, and until recently, it never occurred to me that I might be considered anything but “white” in a personal or professional context. So I’m not sure where I stand. What matters more: that other people might see me as a POC, or that I don’t generally identify as one myself? For what it’s worth, a number of other people with my heritage publicly identify as nonwhite. —Person of (Some) Color

Dear PO(S)C,

opportunities to be well-paid for intellectual labor are precious. However, you are right to approach these particular opportunities with caution. I say this not because other people deserve them more than you: Though we all wish such fellowships, and affirmative action in general, were more precisely targeted to disadvantaged people—like working-class African Americans, or poor, rural white people—it is not your fault that they are not.

The problem, PO(S)C, is that reinventing yourself as a “person of color” would require you to define yourself in a way that won’t feel authentic to you. At a time when you’re still young and figuring out who you are, you don’t want to allow these institutions to figure it out for you, especially since you’re a political person, with your own ideas about race and privilege. Catherine Liu, a professor of film and media studies in the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, tells me that being anointed as a representative of elite diversity isn’t always good for people: “I’ve seen young people of color from very privileged backgrounds having trouble figuring out who they are.” Once you get a lot of career rewards for being a “person of color,” whatever that means, you may find you have to keep performing this identity.

Not only might this be limiting for you, it could also enmesh you in a neoliberal project that is at odds with your politics. According to Liu, whose recent work has explored problems with diversity, neoliberalism, and meritocracy, the presence of diversity in elite institutions is “meant to make these institutions seem more inclusive and tolerant.” This is a problem, because they aren’t; that’s what makes them elite institutions. Further, adds Liu, “once you become a representative of that diversity, you become an example of the system’s tolerance.”

You are right now, Liu emphasizes, being “recruited” for this project.

That said, you shouldn’t deprive yourself of funding that you—and your intellectual work—need in order to thrive. My guess is that your (narratively interesting, if not especially oppressed) background will give you an advantage even for fellowships not specifically intended to nourish diversity, and you should feel free to play it up. But don’t lose your critical perspective—or yourself or the system. When white women and people of color—or, in your case, women of ambiguous hue—allow ourselves to become symbols of neoliberalism’s tolerance and cosmopolitanism, we’re participating in the elite’s smug propaganda about itself. “Neoliberalism asks us to believe that our own narrative of success is a political triumph,” says Liu, “and this is just not true.”

Dear Liza,
I am a white American. This morning, a friend in London, the son of Bangladeshi immigrants, told me he had just been called “a fucking Paki.” He was pretty upset. With other friends in trouble, I would say “hugs,” “sending love,” “condolences,” or “I’m sorry, that sucks,” but none of those seems adequate. How should I respond?

—Feeling Awkward

(continued on page 8)
Uncovering the New Israel

Haaretz shines a light in places that many would prefer not to see.

Writing in the most recent issue of Foreign Affairs, Aluf Benn, editor in chief of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, surveys the Israeli landscape and concludes that recent transformations are rendering “the largely secular and progressive version of Israel that once captured the world’s imagination” obsolete. Benn notes that “Israel was always in some ways a fantasy,” though one with foundations in reality. Today, however, “that reality has changed, and the country that has replaced it is profoundly different from the one its founders imagined almost 70 years ago.”

I recently spent 10 days in Israel, where I spoke with Benn about the current state of the country as well as that of Haaretz—whose New Yorker editor David Remnick, in a lengthy 2011 article, termed “easily the most liberal newspaper in Israel and arguably its most important liberal institution.” Though Haaretz is often compared to The New York Times in terms of its stature, the analogy worked only when the center of Israeli society was secular and socialist. Today it is neither, and Haaretz represents an increasingly beleaguered opposition that is both Jewish and democratic in a country that is now Jewish if you’re an Arab and democratic if you’re a Jew.

Haaretz, however, appears to be in far better shape than the Zionist left for which it speaks. After a significant restructuring in 2012, the newspaper is now profitable enough, with a stable editorial staff of about 250 people. In a remarkable statement of self-confidence, Benn says he has no idea what the editorial budget is, and he is no less ignorant about why Russian and German investors have joined the famously left-wing Schocken family to help finance it. (Almost no American newspaper editor enjoys such isolation from financial pressures.)

Like the Times, Haaretz boasts a profitable paywall as well as an expensive subscription for its print edition. It provides its elite Israeli readership and the global audience for its English-language edition with an extremely nuanced and unsparing picture of Israel and the occupied territories. It also sponsors conferences, like the one in New York City last December at which Israeli President Reuven Rivlin gave the opening address.

But what Haaretz lacks is just what the Israeli center-left lacks: a compelling counter narrative to the one put forward by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and company, which is slowly and systematically undermining both Israeli democracy and any realistic hope for a two-state solution. As Benn explains, “At Haaretz, we are trying to ring the alarm bell for freedom of speech, and we are the only ones who bother to report about the occupation.” But it is fair to say that most Israeli Jews, who make up approximately 75 percent of the country’s population, do not much care. All things considered, most Israeli Jews are pretty happy these days. The economy is humming along nicely. The shekel is stable. Unemployment is extremely low. The biggest complaint one hears is that real-estate prices are skyrocketing in Tel Aviv (an influx of French Jews buying second homes is often blamed as a key cause).

In terms of security, Israelis remain uneasy about frequent “lone-wolf intifada” attacks, most recently the horrific stabbing murder of a sleeping 13-year-old girl on June 30. But the “security fence” (or “apartheid wall,” as some call it) has ended the threat of large-scale suicide bombings. As the Arab Spring gave way to festering violence and instability across the region and tensions between Netanyahu and President Obama escalated over the Iran nuclear deal, Netanyahu abandoned any pretense of moderation and froze the peace process. His far-right governing coalition has stepped up settlement construction and introduced a series of laws and initiatives to undermine and discredit the country’s remaining voices of dissent.

As Israel drifts further to the right, Haaretz represents an increasingly beleaguered opposition that is both Jewish and democratic. Causes for optimism are hard to find. Although the current coalition may remain stable until at least 2019, Netanyahu was able to retain power after the 2015 elections only by making big concessions to his hard-right colleagues in the Knesset. The Zionist Union (formerly the Labor Party) is split between a “me too” faction that would have gladly joined Netanyahu’s coalition...
ON WALL STREET, ALL PLAYERS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

EQUITY

ANNA GUNN
JAMES PUREFOY
SARAH MEGAN THOMAS
ALYSIA REINER

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS PRESENTS
"EQUITY" A BROAD STREET PICTURES FILM
STARRING ANNA GUNN, JAMES PUREFOY, SARAH MEGAN THOMAS, ALYSIA REINER
MUSIC BY ALEXIS & SAM
PRODUCTION DESIGNER DIANE LEDERMAN
CASTING BY STEPHANIE HOLBROOK, CSA
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ERIC LIN
COSTUME DESIGNER TERESA BINDER WESTBY
EDITOR ANDREW HAFITZ
LINE PRODUCER BRIAN DAVID CANGE
PRODUCED BY ALYSIA REINER, p.g.a. AND SARAH MEGAN THOMAS, p.g.a.
STORY BY SARAH MEGAN THOMAS & ALYSIA REINER AND AMY FOX
SCREENPLAY BY AMY FOX
DIRECTED BY MEERA MENON
WWW.SONYCLASSICS.COM
WWW.EQUITYMOVIE.COM

STARTS FRIDAY, JULY 29TH IN NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES!
COMING SOON TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU!
fueled in part by anti-
pean Union—a move
ting Brexit, the British
the weeks surround
England right now. In

Dear Awkward,

(continued from page 5)

Our friend is not
alone in facing
such ugliness in
England right now. In
the weeks surround-
ing Brexit, the British
vote to leave the Euro-
pean Union—a move
fueled in part by anti-
immigrant xenophobia
and racism—there has
been a dramatic increase
in hate crimes reported
to the UK police website;
and the Sunday after the
referendum, the Muslim
Council of Britain re-
leased a gallery of 100
hate incidents compiled
from social media.

I applaud you for ask-
ing what to say, Awk-
ward. To start, it can be
grounding to re-
ceive—and to give—
practical advice. Do urge
your friend to report
the name-calling, says
Rosie Simkins of the
group Stop Hate UK.

For possible insight
into your friend’s side of
this experience, I called
Priyamvada Gopal, an
Indian-born professor
of English at Cambridge
University who special-
izes in colonial and post-
colonial literatures, and
who has been on the re-
cieving end of this recent
upick in British racism
and xenophobia. Many
of her white friends
have been respond-
ing by saying, “I’m so
sorry.” While Gopal says
she understands that her
friends mean well, “I’m
sorry” changes me into
an object of compassion
or pity, she explains,
“and I feel diminished.”

This is partly because
the phrase occupies a
weird ambiguity: Is it an
expression of sympathy
or an apology? From
a white person, it can
sound as if you’re apolo-
gizing on behalf of white
people in general, and

I’m sorry” puts too
much emphasis on the
fact that you are white
and your friend is not.
“It creates a divide be-
 tween myself and them,”
Gopal says. “I don’t want
to be othered all over
again.” Instead, she says,
“What I would want is
some sense that the upset
is shared.”

The forecast, therefore, is bleak. All the more reason
to raise a glass to
Haaretz, which remains a lonely light
unto the journalistic nations even as Israel descends,
tragically, more deeply into darkness.

Netanyahu
is slowly and
systematically
undermining
Israeli democ-
and any
realistic hope
for a two-state
solution.
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS TELEVISION
WITH BILL MILLER

Looking for an internationally-oriented talk show with access to the world’s leading voices from the public and private sectors who discuss international issues that have local impact? Global Connections Television (GCTV) may fit into your programming very nicely! GCTV is the only program of its type in the world, and is provided to you at no-cost as a public service. You are invited to download any shows that would be of interest to your local audience, such as the general public or students, to mention only a few. You may request that your local PBS/community access television (CATV) media outlets air the Global Connections TV shows on a weekly basis.

Bill Miller is an accredited journalist at the UN for the Washington International and has written extensively on UN issues. He is the Principal of Miller and Associates International Media Consultants, which created the Global Connection Television concept.

Bill developed an interest in international issues and the UN when he served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. In his first year he worked as a community developer in a remote rural area; his second year he was Professor of Social Work at the Madre y Maestra University in Santiago, the country’s second largest city.

GCTV features in-depth analysis within a wide scope of current issues, topics and events including:

• GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS • CLIMATE CHANGE • ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY • TECHNOLOGY •
• FOOD SECURITY • EDUCATION • RENEWABLE ENERGY • GENDER ISSUES • POVERTY REDUCTION •
• PEACE AND SECURITY • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • HEALTH •

Global Connections Television (GCTV) is an independently-produced, privately-financed talk show that focuses on international issues and how they impact people worldwide. Global Connections Television features in-depth analysis of important current issues and events including climate change, environmental sustainability, economic development, global partnerships, renewable energy, technology, culture, education, food security, poverty reduction, peace and security, and gender issues.

Episodes are broadcast worldwide through cable, satellite, public-access television, and the World Wide Web. GCTV provides inside perspectives from the United Nations and other important organizations that showcase how these groups impact the daily lives of people around the world.

GCTV FOR BROADCASTERS, MEDIA OUTLETS & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Within the goal of providing important perspectives and initiatives from the UN and other organizations, Global Connections Television is provided to broadcasters, satellite systems, media outlets and educational institutions at no charge subject to terms and conditions found on our website. GCTV believes that by providing this invaluable content, the public can learn more about the world, its issues, and the men and women making a difference.

WWW.GLOBALCONNECTIONSTELEVISION.COM
info@globalconnectionstelevision.com
The New McCarthyism

On June 5, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order requiring all state entities to boycott businesses and divest their money from institutions that “participate in boycott, divestment, or sanction activity targeting Israel, either directly or through a parent or subsidiary.” Channeling the disgraced anticommunist crusader Joseph McCarthy, the governor will create a blacklist for the growing number of companies joining the BDS movement. After dismissing the movement as inconsequential for years, influential donors have now applied pressure to government officials and funded a string of anti-BDS bills in state legislatures over the past year. These people include Sheldon Adelson, who decries BDS as anti-Semitic, yet has no problem endorsing the same presidential candidate hailed by David Duke. Both the Koch brothers and Haim Saban attended one of Adelson’s infamous Las Vegas summits to plan strategy and raise funds to combat BDS. Like the Palestine Festival of Literature, which Laila Lalami describes at right, the growth of the BDS movement indicates that the dominant paradigms governing the debate over the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine are being reconfigured and reimagined on both sides.

—Samuel Metz

Letter From Palestine

The Palestinians in Hebron are locked in a nightmare.

“What’s the purpose of your visit?” the officer asked. The epaulets on his blue button-down shirt hung over his narrow shoulders. His eyebrows joined above the bridge of his nose.

“I’m here to give a reading,” I replied. I had come to Palestine with a group of writers and poets for a literary festival, with scheduled stops in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus, and Haifa. The officer glanced at the line behind me.

“How many are in your group?”

“I don’t know.”

“How many US passports?”

“I don’t know.”

He raised a suspicious eyebrow.

“Everything is ‘I don’t know’?”

But I really didn’t know. I had met the other writers at a hotel in Jordan the night before, and it hadn’t occurred to me to count them while we were on the bus from Amman to the Allenby border crossing, nor to ask how many were American. He swiped my blue passport in the machine, then looked up at me with surprise. “You were born in Morocco?”

Here we go, I thought. It had taken me 20 hours to travel to Palestine. I dreaded being deported by Israeli immigration, as had happened to some of my Arab friends. “Yes, that’s right.”

“My grandparents were born in Morocco.”

“Whereabouts?” I asked, grateful for the diversion.

“Casablanca,” he said. Then he looked at the screen again. “How old were you when you moved to the United States?” he asked. “Did you move with your parents or by yourself?... Is your husband American?... Are your children American?... Do you miss your husband and children?”

Then it occurred to me that I could ask questions of my own. “Your grandparents are from Casablanca, you said. Do they go back to Morocco for Hiloula?”

His face lit up. “You know Hiloula?”

“Oh, of course.” The veneration of saints is part of Jewish Moroccan culture.

“Do you know this song?” He sang a few words in Hebrew.

I took a wild guess: “‘Sami al-Maghribi’?” I don’t think I got it right, but he nodded anyway. Then he played a YouTube video of Moroccan Jews dancing at a party on his smartphone. A minute later, he printed out my visa and handed me my passport.

Not a dozen steps behind me, another writer from our group stood waiting. His name was Ahmed Masoud, and he was traveling on a UK passport. But because he had been born in Gaza, he was taken to a special room where he was asked for his Palestinian ID and interrogated for several hours. There was no discussion of music, no YouTube videos or fond remembrances, only forms and questions about the purpose of his visit. When he insisted that he was a UK citizen, he was told, “Ena Palesteeni, khabeebi.” You are Palestinian.

Masoud was deported that afternoon. He was prevented from reading his work to audiences at the cultural center in Ramallah or walking through the Old City of Jerusalem or taking selfies by the beach in Haifa, the way all the British and American writers did that week. Instead, he was sent back to London.

I had gone to Palestine fully expecting to see occupation and degradation, but I had not expected to witness my own privilege so starkly. My birth in Morocco had made the Moroccan-Israeli immigration official see me for who I was, while Masoud’s birth in Palestine had been enough to strip him of his individuality, enough to label him a threat.

The next morning, at the Qalandia checkpoint, I was stuck in line while the soldiers argued with another writer ahead of me. There, at eye level on the blue metal railing, I saw white and pink stickers displaying the Ayat al-Kursi, a Quranic verse that Muslims recite in times of extreme fear or distress. Every morning, Palestinian workers line up to go through these metal cages, and there is never any guarantee they will make it through. I thought of the people who had put the stickers on the metal, to give themselves courage or to inspire it in others.

In the Old City of Jerusalem, I was walking down the street with the journalist Sharif Abdel...
Kouddous when policemen stopped us and demanded to see his passport. What was his crime? Nothing. They just didn’t like the look of him. In Bethlehem, I saw the wall, an abomination that rises 25 feet and is covered with graffiti. One spray-painted message read “Happy Christmas From Bethlehem.” I was so busy looking up at the wall that I tripped on some empty tear-gas canisters.

In Haifa, which is within Israel’s 1948 borders, I saw a beach; I did not see any soldiers. In Hebron, I saw Palestinian shops with gates that had been welded shut by military order, and I strolled down a street where Palestinians are not allowed to walk, even if they have homes there. The families who live there are forced to enter them from the rear, like servants in a segregated city of the American South. There were no signswarning about this rule, however. Signs can be photographed and distributed. Still, even in the absence of signs, the sight of a street in which the only people standing around are soldiers or settlers is indelible in my mind. I listened to a Palestinian activist talk about the extreme economic hardship brought on by store closures, and then I heard him say, “Despair is a luxury.”

Later, I saw the word “Hope” scrawled on a wall that led to yet another checkpoint. If despair is a luxury, what is hope? Maybe it, too, is a luxury.

Before leaving Hebron, I bought artwork on Shuhada Street, where the shopkeepers put up netting to protect themselves from the trash thrown at them by the Israeli settlers living above. In some Native American tribes, dream catchers are used to keep out bad dreams, but the black mesh could not keep out the urine, bleach, or wastewater that the settlers dumped on them. The Palestinians in Hebron are locked in a nightmare. “Now that you have seen this,” a shopkeeper said to me, “tell the world about us.” I am trying.
WE STILL NEED A FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN

How to Build the Political Revolution
WHILE BERNIE SANDERS CAME ACHINGLY CLOSE, HE WON’T ARRIVE IN PHILADELPHIA WITH enough delegates to secure the Democratic nomination. Even so, Sanders and his supporters made an unprecedented insurgent bid—winning 22 states, 43 percent of the popular vote, and almost 1,900 delegates, and raising nearly $230 million, mostly in small donations. In doing so, they revealed to progressives our own strength—reflected also in the victories in the Fight for $15; against fracking and the Keystone XL pipeline; and in the rise of new social-justice movements.

Looking ahead to next year, how do we build on this political revolution? What are the key battles to take on, issues to drive, strategies to embrace? On the eve of the Democratic National Convention, we asked a group of progressive activists and leaders—as well as our own readers—to mull these questions over. Their responses follow, and more can be found online at TheNation.com.

Build Independent Social Movements
by Naomi Klein

THE LEFT’S BIG TAKEAWAY FROM THE PRIMARY elections? We didn’t win, but we could have. We came that close. That’s thrilling. It’s also terrifying. Because if we can win, it means that we must win. That’s a heavy responsibility.

Right now, a great deal of post-Bernie campaign energy is going into plans to run progressive candidates at every level of the political system, from school boards to Congress. Many are also focused on reforming the Democratic Party to remove systemic roadblocks to a progressive insurgency in the future (such as the superdelegates and super PACs).

All of that is great, but we can’t let the electoral realm usurp the progress needed on two other important fronts. The first one is the need to build and support independent social movements. Politicians didn’t create the context for Bernie’s campaign; movements did. It was the organizing by social movements that won the early policy victories that made progressive laws thinkable, from statewide fracking bans to local minimum-wage increases.

And movements can keep winning victories even under a neoliberal administration. With strong enough organizing, everything from the draconian austerity measures in Puerto Rico to the Trans-Pacific Partnership can be defeated. Hillary Clinton may be a fan of fracking, but energized movements still have a very real shot at winning a comprehensive fracking ban during her presidency, as well as a moratorium on new fossil-fuel leases on federal lands. But it will take a ferocious fight—just as it did under President Obama.

The other front that cannot be forgotten is ideological and programmatic. This is the intellectual labor of birthing a forward-looking common policy agenda that connects the dots between movements: labor, antiwar, racial justice, climate action. This should not be mistaken for a laundry list of demands; what’s required is a coherent set of policies, capable of responding to our era of multiple, overlapping crises. Not only would such a vision create a firm basis on which to push the next administration; it would also provide a readily available platform for progressives considering running for office.

The space from which such a platform can emerge doesn’t exist yet; it will need to be fashioned in the coming months. That’s good news. It means that our movements have a chance to avoid repeating past mistakes, and that leadership from communities of color can and must be embedded from day one.

Naomi Klein is a Nation columnist and the author of This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate.

Put Race at the Center
by Alicia Garza

A VAILABLE, SUSTAINABLE POLITICAL REVOLUTION that could upend both the Democratic and Republican parties as we know them requires making new mistakes—not repeating old ones. The first and primary task is to ensure that the country is not run by a fickle fascist who is willing to use increased suffering and growing discontent to create even more suffering and division. That means connecting the coastal “political revolution” to Middle America’s suffering and anger—without succumbing to racism and xenophobia. That means not just standing on soapboxes, but engaging real people about the conditions in their lives and lifting up their vision on how to better their communities as a core component of a political platform. That means continuing to hold the Democratic Party accountable for its epic failure to address the needs of the majority of people in this country.

Second, white progressives in particular need to take seriously the task of engaging white working-class voters who have been abandoned by the Democrats and exploited by the Republicans. White progressives need to engage...
these voters in a fundamentally different way—one that doesn’t rely on preaching, smugness, or pity, but instead addresses the fears that many are responding to with a concrete plan for how to improve conditions for all of us.

Next, the political revolution must authentically engage and be led by people of color and immigrants. The communities on the front lines of the Fight for $15, #Not1More, Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and other movements cannot continue to be relegated to the sidelines. The Sanders campaign had white male progressives as its most visible front, and in many cases they alienated communities of color and immigrant communities with their “class only”—based frame.

Alicia Garza is a cofounder of Black Lives Matter and the director of special projects for the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

Deepen Our Roots
by Rep. Raúl Grijalva

If there’s one thing this campaign season has taught us, it’s that politics makes even stranger bedfellows than we thought. At its best, the progressive movement is flexible, creative, and better at horizontal organizing than our top-down conservative counterparts. We need to embrace that spirit and keep our eyes on our goals at the same time. A movement that tries to do everything accomplishes nothing—but a movement that works together and breaks down silos can be more powerful than ever. The progressive movement must focus on issues that bring together diverse constituencies and strengthen those horizontal ties.

We’ve already seen the power of this new organizing in Puerto Rico, for example, where Republicans attempted to use the recently passed financial-assistance bill to remove federal protections for a national wildlife refuge. By engaging mainland Latino groups that don’t normally work on environmental advocacy, we defeated that provision and made sure conservatives couldn’t use a humanitarian crisis to impose their anti-environment agenda. That kind of unusual coalition-building is only possible when grassroots organizations are flexible and willing to work together—and when it happens, success is much more likely.

I firmly believe this kind of success can be replicated across the board—and it can bring institutions and communities into the world of progressive politics for the long term. Building those connections is more than a matter of making a phone call and describing a single campaign. It takes genuine outreach, patience, a willingness to consider broadening your own mission—and, above all, a little faith that it can work.

Building these coalitions doesn’t mean having a few getting-to-know-you meetings or a handful of conference calls. For us Democrats, it means truly working arm in arm, every day across the country, with local environmental-justice leaders. It means empowering antiterror activists, civil-rights leaders, gun-violence-prevention advocates, and immigration reformers of all backgrounds. It means that when communities of color name gerrymandering and ballot access as among the most important issues they face, the campaign will do more than just listen politely; it will bring these communities on board and genuinely address those issues.

This campaign season presents us with a tremendous opportunity to build stronger connections between national, state, and local leaders. Anyone looking for insight and influence where it counts should look to the grassroots first. They don’t call it the front lines for nothing.

Democratic Congressman Raúl Grijalva is the US Representative for Arizona’s Third Congressional District, serving since 2003.

Crush Trump, Then Think Big
by Becky Bond

We are living in a movement moment, one that just came astonishingly close to launching Bernie Sanders into the White House. While we ultimately didn’t win the nomination, the Bernie campaign succeeded as a laboratory for testing tactics and strategies to transform grassroots energy into a powerful force for change.

Movements are about issues, but elections are about power. The 2016 Democratic primary taught our movement how to win elections with the help of digital and social platforms that connected volunteers and voters not only to the Sanders campaign but, more importantly, to one another.

Enabled by social-media platforms like Slack, Facebook, Reddit, and Google Apps, a new generation of leaders is teaching, testing, and entrusting volunteers to take on campaign roles typically restricted to paid staff. This movement has set its sights on local, state, and congressional races in 2017 and ‘18.

But while we’re looking ahead, we have to ensure that we deal Donald Trump a crushing defeat. This is crucial to discouraging copycat demagogues from running in 2018 and trapping the left in an expensive and hellish game of whack-a-mole, battling dozens of Trump wannabes.

Once we vanquish Trump and his politics of hate and xenophobia, we can go on the offense and replace neoliberals in government with populist progressives who will fight for the interests of working people.

There is an enormous capacity in the grassroots waiting to be tapped and put to work for the urgent changes we need to see. If we embrace a big organizing approach—asking people to do big things to win big victories, and scaling our campaigns to the size that Bernie Sanders showed us was possible—we can attain a revolutionary shift in what grassroots organizing can achieve. And if that happens, then anything is possible—including winning a primary campaign against President Hillary Clinton in 2020.

Becky Bond served as a senior adviser to the Bernie 2016 presidential campaign.
New Leaders, New Directions
by Deepak Bhargava and Dorian Warren

We are at a pivotal moment in time for progressives. Active social movements are reshaping our sense of what is possible and necessary—from the immigrant-rights movement to Black Lives Matter to the Fight for $15 and more. A presidential candidate who identifies himself as a democratic socialist made an unprecedented bid for the White House that opened new ideological space and political possibilities. At the same time, we must be honest with each other that here, as in Europe, dark forces are gathering that threaten to bring not only retrograde policies but also deep assaults on democratic institutions and practices. The emerging progressive movements, which have yet to achieve their long-term goals or consolidate power through mass organization, could be smothered and potentially extinguished by an electoral disaster this year.

Thus, in the short term, right-wing forces must be defeated decisively, and this demands a broad popular-front mobilization. Only if the leaders of progressive movements and organizations are willing to temporarily submerge their differences in pursuit of this goal will we avert disaster.

A Third Party vs. Big Money
by Robert B. Reich

The next move for Bernie Sanders’s political revolution is to set up a third party (shall we call it the New Progressive Party?), whose primary goal should be to get big money out of politics. Nothing else worth doing is possible unless we reclaim our democracy, and we can’t do that through our current Democratic or Republican parties, both of which are beholden to big money. The New Progressive Party should begin right after the November election (we mustn’t do anything in the interim that increases the odds of a Trump takeover of America), with Bernie as its chairman and his e-mail list of supporters as its core.

Unlike the spin-off organizations from past progressive candidacies, such as Howard Dean’s Democracy for America, the New Progressive Party would be explicitly political, recruiting and fielding candidates in the 2018 midterm elections for the Senate and House—as well as the presidency in 2020—who are committed to reforming our democracy. Rather than relying on fund-raising efforts at election time, the party would be funded by dues-paying members (say $1 to $5 a month, depending on your income) who are actively involved in establishing and participating in local and state chapters. New Progressives would be the lifeblood of the next generation of politics, carrying on Bernie’s political revolution by creating a new and vibrant center of countervailing power in America.

Robert B. Reich, a former secretary of labor in the Clinton administration, is a professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author, most recently, of Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few.
But building a long-term movement for change will require two big shifts. First, a race-conscious economic populism must become the center of progressive politics. Today’s movements are forcing the Democratic Party to face up to its own recent history, one in which the party, since the 1980s, has assumed a “color-blind” approach to racial justice; taken voters of color for granted; and, at times, advanced policies (particularly around criminal justice and so-called welfare reform) that produced direct racial harm. Racialized poverty and its impacts in communities of color need to become central, defining issues for progressives. This is the only antidote to the dog-whistling and dog-barking racist populism that Donald Trump has unleashed.

Second, we must recruit the very people living in these communities in order to develop leaders whose voices will shape the racial and economic policies that affect their families. This means building new forms of labor power and organization in black, Latino, Asian, Native, and Muslim communities. It means creating a new and positive agenda that is race- and gender-conscious, married to an organizing strategy that unifies the multiple progressive forces now on the move. Our task at this pivotal moment is to build durable mass organizations out of this abundant movement energy (including Bernie Sanders’s forces as one—but only one—element), and put grassroots leaders and constituencies in strategic relationships with one another to forge a unified political vision. There is no shortcut.

Deepak Bhargava is the executive director of the Center for Community Change. Dorian Warren is a fellow at the Roosevelt Institute and an MSNBC contributor.

Ban Fracking
by Josh Fox

Fracking is America’s primary battleground in the fight against climate change. In the name of protecting the climate and eliminating coal, the fossil-fuel industry is rushing to lock in our reliance on fracked gas for decades, with the Democratic establishment going along. But it’s a scam. Fracking emits massive amounts of methane, a heat-trapping gas at least 86 times stronger than carbon dioxide over a period of 20 years. Peer-reviewed research finds that shale gas is worse for the climate than coal or oil. That’s why we must ban fracking and start building renewables now.

Bernie Sanders made that call loud and clear, and it doesn’t just resonate with progressives. Most Americans and 75 percent of Democrats oppose fracking. As a member of the Democratic Platform Committee, I demanded that we reflect this opposition by including a national fracking ban. My proposal was rejected. But we achieved an astonishing victory with an amendment that puts a price on carbon and methane, incentivizes renewables, requires that new energy projects do not harm the climate, and gives local communities and Native Americans a seat at the table.

That’s monumental, but now Democratic leaders must stop winking at shale gas as a “bridge fuel,” as Hillary Clinton does. She took millions from the industry and worked hand-in-glove with it to export fracking as secretary of state. Many other supposedly green Democrats, from President Obama to Jerry Brown, also boost fracking.

This isn’t just hypocrisy—it’s climaticide in the service of the fossil-fuel interests. Al Gore once said that fighting climate change is a challenge to the moral imagination. So is political revolution. I witnessed this moral dimension firsthand as I was making my film How to Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can’t Change. I saw the powerful civic virtue of indigenous people raising outrage over oil spills deep in the Amazon; of activists in China risking their civil liberties to speak out against coal; of Pacific Climate Warriors blockading Australian coal ships with their canoes, chanting: “We are not drowning—we are fighting!”

Climate change will destroy many things, but in the end it can’t destroy the courage, selflessness, resilience, and love we need to survive it. It may even strengthen them, helping us rise to the occasion instead of succumbing to fear and selfishness. This is the essence of the political revolution that Bernie kicked off—and that we will carry on.

Josh Fox is an Oscar-nominated filmmaker whose latest film, How to Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can’t Change, is now available on HBO Now and HBO Go.
Still Feeling the Bern

by Michael Moore

Where we go from here depends, of course, on whether it’s President Clinton or President Trump. If it’s President Clinton, it then depends on which Hillary shows up—feminist Hillary (yay!) or Hillary the hawk (likely). If it’s President Trump, then we’re pretty much doomed. I think Trump will win. So, basically, think doomed. Not much more to say here. Except...

If the Democrats in Philadelphia want to ensure victory, they’ll declare Bernie Sanders their candidate—because, in every single poll, he beats Trump hands down. He’s the only candidate in either party with a “positive” approval rating. And don’t we all, deep down, really want to have the final battle played out, in our lifetime, on the great field of democracy: “The Capitalist vs. the Socialist.” I want to see what that would look like! I think the voter turnout would be record-setting.

And I believe that Bernie and socialism would win. The forces of capitalism and greed overplayed their hand and have ruined the lives of millions. I think most people would vote for free health care, free college, paid maternity leave, and an end to permanent war.

Noodle on this: Over 75 percent of the electorate are women, people of color, or young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 (or some combination thereof). There’s your good news. The Age of the Angry White Man is over, and what you’re hearing this year are the last wails of a dying dinosaur.

But this dinosaur could still win. If Clinton is the candidate, voter turnout on our side is not going to be of inspired, epic proportions. We’ll get out the vote only by pushing the fear of Trump. Is that how we want to win? Especially after this historic year, in which a democratic socialist won the primary vote in nearly half of the states in the country, his message resonating profoundly even with those who didn’t vote for him: Break up the banks! Tax the rich! Justice for Palestinians! Those words were all spoken in prime-time debates.

But Hillary got the most votes, and that’s who wins. That’s also what could give us President Trump. If you had the chance to stop a runaway train, wouldn’t you? Even if everyone kept telling you, “That train legally has the right to those tracks!” The bomb is ticking.

Michael Moore’s latest film is Where to Invade Next.

Build From the Bottom

by George Goehl

Senator Bernie Sanders’s presidential campaign showed us that millions of people are ready to embrace a bold progressive agenda. His defeat shows us just how much work remains to be done.

We must continue to wage big fights that can energize people across the nation. As Sanders hits the campaign trail for down-ballot candidates, we must continue training and running our own movement candidates. But we can’t do either without the creation of an on-the-ground, party-like political infrastructure.

Too few independent political organizations grounded on the state level endorsed Sanders. That’s in large part because so few of such groups exist in this country. While we have a storied history of community organizations, most are classified as charitable groups and thus are required to abstain from partisan politics.

To advance big progressive ideas, we need local and state “movement politics” organizations that are committed to people and principles, and ready to create tension with both major parties. Such organizations have significant reach, can hit the streets and knock on people’s doors in huge numbers, drive issues year-round, and do serious electoral politics—but they’ve been a rare breed on the left.

That’s starting to change. In recent years, organizations like TakeAction Minnesota, San Francisco Rising Action Fund, Rights and Democracy, and others have emerged on the scene. One of the most hopeful efforts, Reclaim Chicago, played a pivotal role in electing new progressive champions to city government as well as a new state’s attorney, Kim Foxx. Created in 2014, Reclaim mixes deep political education, rigorous organizer training, and thorough electoral chops to create a model that others are looking to replicate.

To win at the top, we must build from the bottom up—and that means supporting local progressive political organizations that can power this movement over the long haul.

George Goehl is the executive director of People’s Action.

Power to the People

by Rashad Robinson

It’s a mistake to think that progressive power comes from people—a noun. In truth, progressive power has always come from what our people do—verbs. We love our analysis over here on the left, but it’s our action that makes us powerful—and not just any action, but a very particular action.

It’s the action of standing up for one another, not just for ourselves; of standing behind people who are different from us, but whose fate we believe we share. This is the secret to progressive power. This is the behavior we must scale across our country if we want to make any political revolution real.

The new black leadership we have seen in the last year—from challenging racism in policing (Ferguson, Baltimore, New York City, Chicago, Texas) to challenging racism in politics (Rubio, Cruz, Trump)—has shown that black people are advancing systemic solutions, even when our cry is community justice. That leadership has made our whole movement stronger: more animated, smarter, more cohesive. It’s the same leadership that always takes our fights to the next level: against the pernicious influence of ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council), against the corporate backers of the Republican National Convention, against the powerful private interests that tried to end Net neutrality.
Those who reject our leadership because they fear us or dismiss us forfeit the power to accelerate change. The same is true for the new leadership we’ve seen from women, from immigrants, from workers, from LGBTQ people, and from all those who live at the intersection. When oppressed people win, we win for everybody. And when we stand up for one another, and stand aside to make room for one another, we are more powerful than climate deniers, predatory banks, greedy corporations, racist prosecutors, sell-out politicians, and slumlords. But if we buy into the rhetoric of blame and see one another as the causes of our problems rather than the champions of our solutions, we will be loud, but we will not be powerful.

Rashad Robinson is the executive director of Color of Change.

An Inside-Outside Strategy
by Dan Cantor and Jodeen Olguín-Tayler

 Republicans will come hard and fast at Hillary Clinton, hoping that misogyny will inflame the opposition against her just as racism did with Obama. It will be ugly—again. Regardless, we cannot repeat the mistake progressives made in 2009: relying too much on the “inside” power of a Democratic president and Congress. Progressives ceded the “outside game” to the right; Obama became the left pole of the debate as the Tea Party made what was once considered outrageous mainstream.

The GOP failed to block Obamacare, but they succeeded in mobilizing public sentiment and won the 2010 midterm elections decisively. Their “inside-outside” strategy was powerful: grassroots activists and mega-donors, right-wing media and think tanks, elected and insurgent candidates, all pulling in the same direction. Together, they defined the terms of debate.

It’s time to flip the script. The right stokes fear and anger. We’re for hope and love, plus a good plan. In 2017, let’s go on offense. The absurd, life-sapping inequalities that define our society—economic, environmental, racial, and gender—are not inevitable. We need a bold, impossible-seeming agenda that elevates egalitarianism and addressing climate change at home, and sensible internationalism and addressing climate change (again!) abroad. We need to combine the best of Bernie Sanders’s program with the demands of the racial-justice movement. Then comes the “outside” part: We mount campaigns in every state to make our ideas dominant in the national political debate.

The “inside” work includes the recruitment and training of thousands of candidates for local and state offices in 2017 and 2018. It includes forming close working relationships with the progressives in Congress and state legislatures who can drive media coverage. The Working Families Party and Demos Action have initiated discussions about the value of joint-issue and electoral campaigns with the leaders of netroots, community, environmental, labor, and youth organizations, as well as the Congressional Progressive Caucus. The response so far has been heartening. These leaders and organizers sense how precious the moment is. Are we creative enough, and tough enough, to turn possibility into enduring power and visible gains? Might we be on the cusp of a turning point in US political history? We can’t know the answers ahead of time, but we’ll confess to being the tiniest bit optimistic, even as we know that history doesn’t turn by itself.

We don’t have Fox News on our side. What we do have are terrific people, good ideas that would improve people’s lives, and a public that is more than ready to be with us. We lead with hope and love, but we go on offense to set the terms of debate. That’s how we turn 2018 into 2010—only this time for us.

Dan Cantor (dcantor@workingfamilies.org) is the national director of the Working Families Party. Jodeen Olguín-Tayler (jodeen@demosaction.org) is the vice president of Demos Action.

Put an End to Endless War
by Norman Solomon

Fifteen years into the war on terror, the toxins of perpetual war are in the bloodstream of the body politic. War without any hint of an end has become normal. A sustained leap of moral imagination and powerful activism will be necessary to lift the United States out of what Martin Luther King Jr. called “the madness of militarism.”

The recent sit-in by Democrats on the House floor for a gun-control measure was impressive. But there’s no serious talk in Congress about gun control at the Pentagon. Meanwhile, the Obama administration is on pace to exceed the number of bombs dropped and missiles fired by the George W. Bush administration.

From the outset, we should be clear-eyed about the foreign-policy outlook of the likely next president. Leading neoconservative hawk Robert Kagan, who will be a featured speaker at a Clinton campaign fund-raiser soon, commented two years ago: “I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy.” He added, “If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue, it’s something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else.”

Investigative journalist Robert Parry examined Clinton’s record and concluded in a Consortium News article this year: “In every meaningful sense, she is a neocon.” Clinton has never acknowledged the catastrophic results of the US-led intervention in Libya that she championed as secretary of state. She now advocates more US military involvement in Syria. And her confrontational stance toward Russia is ominous. On the home front, we cannot fund the public investment that’s desperately needed as long as the warfare state thrives. Budget realities mean that progressives must use clear messaging and effective organizing to build a crucial bridge that connects economic populism with antimilitarism. A political revolution to transform our country will require putting an end to endless war.

Norman Solomon is the executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy and the coordinator of RootsAction.org.
Support Local Organizing
by Billy Wimsatt

Let’s talk money. In 2016, over $4 billion will be spent on TV ads that will do little to turn out a single new voter in any battleground state. If we shift just 1 percent of that money ($40 million), we could fully fund all of the most effective grassroots groups in key states—from the Ohio Student Association to the Florida Immigrant Coalition—that organize year-round and actually turn out voters, too.

As Steve Phillips argues in Brown Is the New White, communities of color win elections—if they are properly invested in (studies show that face-to-face interaction substantially increases voter turnout). Ditto for millennials, the largest, most diverse, and most progressive generation in American history. A voter wave among these groups in 2016 and 2018 would undo GOP gerrymandering and make the 2020s a progressive decade.

Clinton needs these voters—not just to cast their ballots, but to enthusiastically volunteer. Millennials voted overwhelmingly for Sanders. Without Obama on the ticket, will the Obama coalition show up? No one knows. That’s why even Clinton should advocate for supporting local grassroots groups. They expand the electorate, personally reaching millions of unlikely progressive voters. They help people register and vote. They drive progressive wins down-ballot. And they won’t disappear in November. They’ll be here in 2017 to hold folks accountable—a permanent political revolution.

Why don’t we provide these groups with the resources they need? Most progressive donors have never heard of them. A new platform, Movement 2016, is now being launched to change that. The left needs a new center of gravity beyond Bernie—not just a charismatic leader, but a sustainable movement at the local level. That movement exists. We even have the money to sustain it—if we stop wasting it on TV.

Billy Wimsatt is the executive director of Gamechanger Networks and Movement 2016.

A “Step-Function” Year
by Steve Cobble

In his 1963 novel V., Thomas Pynchon wrote that “History is a step-function.” In other words, history is not linear; sometimes it jumps to a higher level or drops to a lower one. 2016 could well be a step-function year. So our first job as progressives is to prevent a historic drop by standing nonviolently against the racism, sexism, and proto-fascism of Donald Trump.

Our second job is to give history a chance to jump by keeping young people engaged. Bernie Sanders gave us a
COVERING AMERICA
ONE STORY AT A TIME.

MADDOW

THE PLACE
FOR POLITICS

MSNBC
2016

CHRISS MATTHEWS

FOR AMERICA

THE PLACE
FOR POLITICS

MSNBC
2016
“yuuuge” gift by opening the door to a skilled, diverse millennial generation that could change the course of American politics for decades. We need to keep the energy of young people engaged by focusing on issues that matter to their future: climate change, inequality, and democracy. We must stop new pipelines. Keep fossil fuels in the ground. Demand a $15-an-hour minimum wage and unionization as well. Make college tuition-free. End the drug wars and mass incarceration. Roll back Citizens United. Stop deportations. Pass small-dollar public matching funds for elections in city after city. This is the “outside” part of an inside-outside strategy for political revolution.

We must also strengthen the Bernie Sanders/Elizabeth Warren/Keith Ellison/Raúl Grijalva/Barbara Lee wing of the Democratic Party on the “inside.” We should start by passing a progressive party platform; then we should register every young voter. Let’s win key Senate races so that Bernie becomes a committee chairman with a majority behind him. Let’s help him elect progressives to the House. Let’s elect progressive district attorneys and get serious about taking back state legislative chambers from the right.

Progressives need an agenda for a left Tea Party. We need to give voters something to be for, so that the 2018 off-year elections don’t become the low-turnout disasters that 2010 and 2014 were. Our agenda won’t come from the White House or from Capitol Hill, but from the people.

Finally, we need a long-term popular-education effort to develop and spread a 21st-century democratic socialism that is green and racially just. The seeds of change have been planted—thanks, Bernie! Let’s not forget to water them.

Steve Cobble helped the Progressive Democrats of America start “Run, Bernie, Run!,” the effort to draft Sanders to run for the presidency.

For Jill Stein and the 99 Percent

by Kshama Sawant

Bernie Sanders’s insurgent presidential campaign has inspired millions of people and cracked the foundations of US politics. A new generation is discussing democratic socialism and the need for an alternative to our failed capitalistic system.

Campaigning for a $15 minimum wage, Medicare for all, and a free college education, Sanders defied the brutal neoliberal orthodoxy of both major political parties. Now the search has begun for a way forward.

There was always a fundamental contradiction built into Bernie’s campaign: trying to carry out a political revolution against the billionaire class while running in a party controlled by that same class. In the primary elections, the (un-)Democratic Party exposed itself as completely hostile terrain for the 99 percent, with a leadership that fought Sanders every step of the way.

Though Bernie didn’t win, he did create a huge opening for a different kind of politics. We cannot back Hillary Clinton—to do so would be to abandon all the vital energy and momentum we have built over the past year. We will not defeat the right by supporting corporate Democrats. After all, the massive anger at the corrupt antilabor establishments of both parties is what helped create Donald Trump’s base of support.

#Movement4Bernie and I launched a petition months ago calling on Sanders to run as an independent in November if he is blocked by the party’s leadership.

But time is running out. Now it’s up to us. That’s why I’m endorsing Green Party candidate Jill Stein. I don’t agree with Jill (or Bernie) about everything, but she is fighting for the same political revolution and campaigning on the same issues. Stein deserves our strongest possible support, and through her campaign we can strike a blow against establishment politics, while laying the groundwork for a new mass party of the 99 percent.

See you in Philly!

Kshama Sawant is a Seattle city councilwoman and a member of Socialist Alternative.

Don’t Bet on the Presidency

by Karen Lewis

Putting all of our progressive eggs in the presidential basket is a hierarchical and dangerous move. Right now, Republicans and Democrats are simply two branches of the party of money, neither with much obligation to ordinary people. Progressive power comes from organizing block by block, and taking our fights to the streets.

But while I place little faith in the presidential election, I do see glimmers of electoral hope. It lies in changing the political landscape of statehouses and municipal and county boards. Running candidates for these offices will require grooming lots of folks who can tolerate the vagaries of our broken political system. It will mean turning up for elections like this one, in which you may not like the top of the ticket, but can still cast your vote in local races down-ballot that have more impact on our lives. Progressives must not overlook the issues of black and Latino voters, and we need to ensure that they’re a part of the policy table and not just props for PR. We must begin to build a critical mass before turning to ideas like a third party.

Here in Chicago, we’ve endured a series of vicious attacks on the very soul of public education. They have come from a mired class that not only actively promotes nonunion, privately owned charter schools, but interferes in the day-to-day operations of the district. We’ve been fortunate that the rank-and-file members of the Chicago Teachers Union have recognized these attacks and struggled tirelessly, often under oppressive conditions, to provide our students with the schools they deserve. In 2012, nearly 90 percent of teachers voted to strike, the result of an immense organizing effort on the part of the union. The coalition that the CTU helped build—uniting teachers, parents, racial-justice organizers, and students—has gone on to win further struggles in Chicago, including the recent ouster of Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez. The fight for a fair education system contributed to an important electoral victory.

But building such coalitions takes time. Progressives (continued on page 24)
As the limits of Bernie Sanders’s campaign demonstrated, our ascendant economic populism has to broaden its appeal to engage the diverse Obama coalition. While Sanders was able to attract new white voters to the Democratic fold by weaving a compelling narrative about how a rigged system fails ordinary Americans, he was never quite able to weave in the role that strategic racism plays in the rise of inequality.

As Ian Haney-López and I wrote for The Nation, it’s up to progressives to challenge the orthodoxy that racism is wholly beneficial to white people and solely harms people of color. The fact is that, in our interconnected society, racism is bad for white people too. It’s the missing piece of the class-warfare story. It explains how the elites enrolled white majorities in the GOP’s trickle-down economic plan: by relentlessly linking government, and now unions, to “undeserving” minorities. The result has been an impoverished public infrastructure, a shredded social contract, and the transfer of trillions of dollars to the richest 1 percent.

How can progressives accomplish our agenda—free public college, expanded Social Security, collective bargaining for a new economy—when we don’t have a public, a social, or a collective? How can we have a real democracy when we don’t have a demos—the united people of a nation?

Real revolution will come when we combine our stories of race and class, creating a multiracial progressive movement that is finally unafraid to engage the questions of our time: “Who is an American? And what are we to one another?” We have to admit that these questions are harder for us than in Sanders’s model social democracy, Denmark. The United States is different: We are the world’s most radical experiment in democracy, a nation of ancestral strangers with ties to every community on the globe. We will have to find a sense of community across difference. This challenge affects all of our issues, from criminal justice to environmental regulation. To succeed, our movements have to commit to neutralizing the right-wing story of racial hierarchy and distrust, while promoting our own vision of an America where we all have an equal say and an equal chance.

Heather McGhee is the president of Demos.
need to realize that the political process in this country moves at a glacial pace, unless you simply hijack a party. Think of the Tea Party activists who infiltrated the Republicans and not only jerked them screaming to the far right, but bred the mainstream acceptance of a yearlong clown show of epic proportions. We need to cultivate a new generation of leaders who believe in progressive issues, especially fighting against the privatization of public services and the neoliberal assault on democracy. In Chicago, we’re developing those leaders through a sustained coalition-building struggle, in the streets and at the ballot box.

Karen Lewis, a 22-year chemistry teacher at Chicago public schools, is currently the president of the CTU, Local 1 of the American Federation of Teachers.

A Different Sort of Tea Party
by Bill Fletcher Jr.

The second challenge is to develop a long-term, state-by-state electoral strategy. Those who have answered Sanders’s call for a political revolution must fight not just for Congress, but for governorships, state legislatures, and county and municipal governments. This strategy requires significant research into the economic and political conditions and social movements in each state. Progressives would need to build electoral organizations analogous to the Tea Party in each state (including the institutional support such efforts receive from right-wing donors and think tanks), which can successfully work with social movements to lay the foundation for a new progressive majority. In many respects, this was the founding notion of the National Rainbow Coalition in the 1980s. None of this planning will succeed, of course, unless progressives learn from one mistake made by the Sanders campaign: Women and people of color cannot be an afterthought. We are either at the table or not at the table. Progressives would need to build electoral organizations analogous to the Tea Party in each state (including the institutional support such efforts receive from right-wing donors and think tanks), which can successfully work with social movements to lay the foundation for a new progressive majority. In many respects, this was the founding notion of the National Rainbow Coalition in the 1980s. None of this planning will succeed, of course, unless progressives learn from one mistake made by the Sanders campaign: Women and people of color cannot be an afterthought. We are either at the table or not at the table.

(continued from page 22)

Many people have written about how my generation feels plugged in and connected, yet alone. Our participation in rising movements and in the Sanders campaign has been fueled by a deep desire to find community and identity in a country that is increasingly unable to respond to our aspirations and tells us that we must fend for ourselves. But the political trends of recent years—Occupy, Black Lives Matter, #NotMeUs—are half-complete expressions of a different kind of country, built on millions of people acknowledging that our fates are intertwined and that we can better realize our true potential together—not divided, not alone.

The lesson of our history is clear: Nothing can stand in the way of millions united across difference to fight for freedom and justice. But there is a major hole on the left. The generation that powered the political revolution needs to lead its next phase, and they require a vehicle that speaks to and is led by people like them—capable of disrupting an establishment unable or unwilling to represent the people; helping to elect candidates from their communities on a transformative agenda; and forming the kind of multiracial community necessary to take on the twinned sins of greed and racism, which have always deprived Americans of a country that belongs to all of us.

Waleed Shahid works with the Working Families Party and has written for The Nation, In These Times, Dissent, and Colorlines.
VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO WILL FINALLY GET RELIGION OUT OF GOVERNMENT

FFRF, a 501(c)(3) educational association with 24,000 nonreligious members nationwide, works to keep state and church separate. Phone today to join, or ask for a sample of Freethought Today, FFRF’s newspaper:

1-800-335-4021  FFRF.ORG/DONATE

☐ I would like to become a member (includes 10 issues of Freethought Today newspaper).
☐ I would like to donate to FFRF's Legal Fund. $____________________

Name
Address
City / State / ZIP  Phone / Email

Make payable to “FFRF.” Dues and donations are deductible for income-tax purposes.

Membership Dues
☐ Student  $25
☐ Individual  $40
☐ Household  $50
☐ Gung-Ho  $100
☐ Sustaining  $250
☐ Sponsoring  $500
☐ Life Member  $1,000
☐ "After Life"  $5,000

FFRF.ORG  FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION
End Militarism—and Occupation
by Phyllis Bennis

Despite our frequent elections, the United States’ militarized foreign policy continues to wreak death, destruction, and dispossession on people and nations around the world. Any political revolution worthy of the name must seek to reverse that reality.

In order to end Washington’s permanent wars, we need to reignite dormant social movements and connect them with emerging ones. The self-defined peace movement, facing serious challenges today, must remobilize in tandem with rising movements fighting against racism and inequality, and for immigrant, gender, and labor rights, climate justice, and beyond.

This effort should include three major campaigns. First, a call for a massive reduction of the military budget. This year’s planned $619 billion Pentagon budget is about 40 percent of the military spending of the rest of the world combined—and that’s not even counting the $179 billion we’ll spend on veterans this year. Communities facing job losses when unnecessary weapons systems are canceled or bases are closed should be compensated with redirected military funds for job training and refitting factories.

Second, a demand to replace the so-called global War on Terror with nonmilitary solutions. You can’t bomb terrorism out of existence; you can only bomb cities and people—and killing people simply creates more terrorists. We should call for getting all US forces out of these wars; funding and staffing new diplomatic instead of military approaches; an end to “train-and-equip” policies that leave whole regions flooded with lethal weapons while doing little to protect people from terrorists and repressive regimes; an arms embargo on all sides in Syria’s civil war; and a major expansion of funding for refugees, the internally displaced, and other victims of the region’s wars.

Third, we need to broaden efforts to end the US support—military, economic, and diplomatic—for Israeli occupation and apartheid. Successful work by a growing and empowered movement for Palestinian rights—perhaps the most engaged and creative component of our antiwar/antimilitarism mobilization—has led to important shifts in the public and media discourse, as well as the mainstreaming of criticism of Israel. We need to transform those changes into a serious policy shift: cutting US military aid, ending the US-granted immunity for Israeli officials in the United Nations and under international law, and supporting the powerful BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) movement bringing nonviolent pressure to bear on Israel to stop its violations of international law.

Phyllis Bennis, of the Institute for Policy Studies, is the author of Understanding ISIS and the New Global War on Terror.

Many flowers will blossom from the energy unleashed by the Sanders campaign. The Vermont senator would be well-advised to create a vehicle both to drive these defining-issue battles, and to identify and support Sanders Democrats up and down the ballot. Wherever possible, these Sanders Democrats should take control of state parties. Then we can begin to reshape how our democracy actually works.

Bill Fletcher Jr. is a racial-justice, labor, and international activist, and the author of “They’re Bankrupting Us!” and 20 Other Myths About Unions.

Embracing the New Populist Moment
by Robert L. Borosage

The Bernie Sanders campaign is the latest and largest wave of a rising populist tide, gaining force from the Occupy movement, the Dreamers, Black Lives Matter, the Fight for $15, the Wisconsin showdown, and more. The failure of the political establishment has been exposed, but the center still holds.

So what’s next? First, Sanders is right: Beating Donald Trump is vital to ensuring that bigotry and nativism do not poison and discredit the new populist moment. Once Trump has been defeated, the progressive movement should focus on defining issues and politics from the bottom up. The next movement waves—climate change, student debt, protests against systemic inequality and brutal policing—will continue to shake the establishment. Battles over these defining issues will deepen the understanding that there is an alternative. At the national level, this will start with a pitched battle over the Trans-Pacific Partnership in the lame-duck Congress, followed by challenges to the Wall Street–Washington revolving door in executive appointments, as well as skirmishes over real immigration reform, fair taxes, and rebuilding America.

In states and localities, the Sanders movement should join with insurgents in communities of color to drive real change—campaigns to establish a living wage; to save public schools; to make clean-energy, clean-water, and mass-transit investments, paid for by taxing the rich; and to enact sweeping criminal-justice reform. Those fights will set up insurgent candidates to challenge those standing in the way, from city councils to the statehouses to Congress.

Many flowers will blossom from the energy unleashed by the Sanders campaign. The Vermont senator would be well-advised to create a vehicle both to drive these defining-issue battles, and to identify and support Sanders Democrats up and down the ballot. Wherever possible, these Sanders Democrats should take control of state parties. Then we can begin to reshape how our democracy actually works.

Robert L. Borosage is the president of the Institute for America’s Future.
Svetlana Alexievich was born in western Ukraine in 1948 to a Belarusian father and Ukrainian mother, both of them rural schoolteachers. She grew up in Belarus and, after graduating from high school, worked at various newspapers before studying for a journalism degree at Belarusian State University. Alexievich graduated in 1972, but she eventually abandoned the journalistic strictures of chronology and contextualization in her first book, War’s Unwomanly Face, which was published in Russian in 1985, the first year of perestroika. For that book, Alexievich interviewed scores of women rarely given the chance to be heard, and then edited their stories about personal and collective tragedy into a collage of voices that openly challenge the heroic Soviet myths of the Great Patriotic War. More than 2 million copies were eventually sold.

When Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature last year, it was an acknowledgment of what she had already proved in each of her five books, collectively known as the “Red man” cycle: Her writing is sui generis, blending the force of fact with the capaciousness of fiction to create a new, vital literary compound.

In her Nobel lecture, Alexievich offered this characterization of herself as a writer: “Flaubert called himself a human pen; I would say that I am a human ear.” What she detects are the moments when a voice cracks, breaking through reticence and occlusion, saying something contradictory, enigmatic, strange. When T.S. Eliot was writing the poem that became The Waste Land, he gave it the working title “He Do the Police in Different Voices,” a phrase plucked from Dickens’s Our Mutual Friend. “I ‘read’ voices,” Alexievich has written. She goes from person to person, voice to voice, hearing people talk about their lives in different voices, becoming individuals. At a time when populism is in vogue, and populist politicians claim to speak for “the people,” Alexievich goes in the opposite direction: People should be allowed to speak freely for themselves. We need to read her, and listen to them, in all their variety.

The following interview was conducted in May in English and Russian and translated by Bela Shayevich. —John Palattella

When did you start gathering stories—not necessarily to write them down, but just to gather them?

I’ve been doing it since childhood. I used to live in a village, and I always loved listening to old people. Unfortunately, it was always women who were talking, because after the war very few men were around. I spent my entire life living in the village. The village is always talking about itself, people are talking to each other as the village makes sense of itself. If we want to talk about beginnings, there they are. My Ukrainian grandmother would tell amazing stories. She lost her father, and as children we would always listen to her stories.

When did you sense that you should start writing stories down?

After I graduated from the journalism department—because even though journalism is a good profession, for me it was very constraining. It focuses on the surface, banalities, events, and I wanted to spend a longer time talking to people in depth, and to ask them about truly important things, like love, death, and war.

Did you come to have this attitude before school, or during it?

Well, first of all, before my father went to the war he was studying in the journalism department, and after the war he returned there, so for me there was never a question about what I would do for a career. I was always meant to study the humanities; I was no good at math or sciences. When it came time for me to work it was Soviet times, and journalism wasn’t that free or interesting of a space. There was a lot of censorship, it was difficult.
At the end of your third book, *Voices From Chernobyl*, you write that the Zone—the officially designated exclusion zone around the site of the destroyed nuclear reactor—is “a world within the rest of the world.” You then write that it is “more powerful than anything literature has to say.” You make a similar remark in your Nobel lecture when you paraphrase your teacher, the Belarusian writer Ales Adamovich: “You must give truth as it is. A ‘super-literature’ is required. No artist can live up to reality.” What, then, of literature?

It’s not that I got frustrated with literature per se, it’s just that the relationship one has to literature as a young reader changes. And don’t forget that I did end up working as a journalist for seven years and listening to people’s stories. When I heard those stories, they were more powerful than anything that you would read in fiction.

It’s not just me; it’s other kinds of artists, musicians—everybody is searching for new forms. It’s because of the nature of our times: So many things are happening and changing at the same time. It’s not a time when literature is only about great heroes. The little man has taken center stage, and there needs to be new ways of talking about that. When I was traveling around to all the villages, talking to people when I was a journalist, I really fell in love with the everyman, the ordinary people. They became more important to me. It’s not that I don’t socialize with the intellectuals—I talk to them too. But the so-called ordinary people took center stage. They’re just regular people, but they are absolutely amazing.

This little man, these ordinary people—who are they? When did they appear on center stage, and what would new forms allow us to understand about them? The little man or woman, they’re not heroes. They’re not great leaders. They are every day men and women—ordinary people. I was thinking of little people, because I was thinking: Why do ordinary people disappear without a trace? Why doesn’t anyone ask them anything? Nobody asks them what they think about grand ideas. They’re just asked to die for them.

When I started asking them, I realized how stupid it was to call them “little people.” We’re all equal heroes of our own life. The stories of many of them shake you to the core. Their human experience is great experience. I can’t speak for art as a whole, but in my genre, they expand the human knowledge. And after working for so many years, I never say “little person.” I never think in those terms. And I think they took center stage during World War I, when masses of people took part in history.

In “Remarks From an Accomplice,” the first section of your new book *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, you write: “I’m searching for a language.” You’ve finished this book, but are you still searching for a language?

Every book requires its own language. For instance, this cycle, the “Red man” cycle—that’s one thing. The new book I’m writing now is about love. It demands a completely different kind of language than in my previous books. I want to capture every facet of a person. There’s so much that goes into how people talk and what they say. How they’re speaking depends so much on what they were doing, what they were thinking about, what they were reading. It even depends on whether I’ve come to talk with them in the evening or in the morning. A lot goes into it.

I understand that. Yet contextual tidbits aren’t present as facts in the text. If they’re important for finding a language, then why omit them?

In the past, I tried to keep them, but when you have the stories accumulating, I’ve found that it doesn’t work. All those circumstances seep into the language itself. I will sometimes give notes on how a protagonist is behaving, what they’re doing emotionally, but the text has to be very concentrated, and those kinds of details dilute it. Other books in the genre, such as those of Adamovich, will have more text directly from the author; but in my opinion, those are the weakest parts of the book, because next to the stories that the protagonists are telling, they’re nothing. They’re not nearly as powerful.

In your first book, *War’s Unwomanly Face*, you relate the story of Nina Yakovlevna, who was the subcommander of a Soviet tank battalion during World War II. You write about how she edited the transcript of your conversations with her, sometimes cutting entire passages:

> Secondhand Time

Thereafter, I was more than once faced with the coexistence of two truths in the mind of the same person: a personal truth repressed in the depths of conscience, and a truth that’s borrowed, or contemporary, latent in the spirit of the times, in its imperatives and requirements. The first was hardly ever able to resist the pressure of the second…. Each time, I was struck by the mistrust between what was simple and human and the desire to replace life with an ideal image. A simulacrum.

It’s one thing for someone to sense internally that mistrust—the contradictions between the personal and the public—and another thing to voice it, especially if he or she lived in the Soviet Union with its party lines. What made it possible for people to voice those contradictions to you? Not just to think them, but to feel the need to voice them?

In the Soviet Union, this was just a matter of ordinary, everyday experience. There was the subjective experience—what was happening to people—and then there was the canon, the script that their lives supposedly adhered to. When I would first begin talking to people, what they would tell me would be according to the script—saying
THE JOURNEY

Travel to Havana and to Cuba’s scenic Pinar del Río Province on this unique trip specially curated for Nation travelers. Immerse yourself in Cuban politics, culture, and history at private seminars, concerts, and performances, featuring prominent Cuban professors, government officials, health professionals, farmers, community activists, musicians, artists, and dancers. You will travel under The Nation’s OFAC people-to-people license, beginning your tour with a chartered flight from Tampa to Havana’s historic José Martí International Airport on November 12, 2016, and returning on the 19th.

THE DETAILS

The all-inclusive cost of this weeklong tour is $5,585—$5,990 per person (double/single occupancy) and includes round-trip chartered airfare from Tampa to Havana, six nights at the Hotel Capri, one evening at a private residence in Viñales, Cuban visas, all transportation within Cuba, tours, seminars, lectures, concerts, most of your meals, and many other captivating events and activities.

YOUR HOSTS

Dr. Katrin Hansing

Dr. Hansing, former associate director of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University, is an associate professor of sociology & anthropology at Baruch College. She has spent the last 13 years conducting research in the Caribbean, especially in Cuba. She has authored many publications including the book *Rasta, Race, and Revolution: The Emergence and Development of the Rastafari Movement in Socialist Cuba*.

Charles Bittner

For almost two decades, Charles Bittner has served as The Nation’s academic liaison. He’s hosted seven previous Nation trips to Cuba and teaches in the sociology department at St. John’s University.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Settle** into the historic, newly remodeled, four-star NH Hotel Capri La Habana, centrally located in a vibrant part of the Vedado district and its nearby jazz clubs and bohemian cafés.
- **Discuss** Cuban foreign policy and the coming changes with Carlos Alzugaray, former Cuban diplomat and expert on US-Cuba relations.
- **Enjoy** the beautiful Viñales Valley, stay in a private home for one night of dining and interaction with your Cuban host family, tour a bucolic private farm, and join the locals for their nightly fiesta in the town center.
- **Explore** La Habana Vieja, the oldest neighborhood in Havana, and discover Morro Castle, one of the oldest and most important Spanish forts anywhere in the Americas.
- **Visit** the Latin American Medical School, where Cuba trains thousands of doctors from all over the world, and the prestigious University of Havana for a private tour of the grounds and classrooms.
- **Attend** private music and dance performances all week long at venues throughout Cuba, and savor the tastes of traditional Cuban food at the island’s finest restaurants and markets.
- **And** much more! See the full itinerary at Thenation.com/Cuba.

October dates SOLD OUT! Don’t miss the November trip!

JOIN THE NATION FOR A WEEK OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN HAVANA, CUBA! November 12-19, 2016

THENATION.COM/CUBA

SPACE IS VERY LIMITED — PLEASE REGISTER TODAY!

For information or to register, contact Charles Bittner at charles@thenation.com or 617-833-1435.

Travel on The Nation’s OFAC license #CT-2104-307579-1

Join the community of Nation travelers to Cuba on Facebook at “Cuba | The Nation”
what they were supposed to say, like a man telling a story the way a man is supposed to tell a story—and it would be my job to get them to remember and to tell their own personal story. And it would be very difficult.

In your Nobel lecture, you say, “It always troubled me...that truth is somehow splintered.” You seem to be suggesting that truth doesn’t fit into one heart or one mind; it’s varied and strewed about the world. Yet isn’t a splintering of sorts also the genius of the polyphonic texture of your books? We hear variations on truth throughout them: variations that people have lived, variations in the mind and stories of one person and across the minds and stories of different people. You lament the fact that truth is splintered, yet your method depends on that splintering. What do you make of that?

From my childhood, I remember talking to people, and the stories they told me were more interesting than what’s in books. People tell me extraordinary things, and I realize that there is nothing in the world about which we know anything for sure. Each person screams out his or her truth. You have to listen to everyone. As an artist, you have to listen to both the executioner and the victim.

I’m trying to show the multiple variations of the entire life. I don’t want to be like other authors and say that there are only a few story lines in literature. A story is like a human face. We have as many stories as human faces. You might have similar facial features, but they’re all a little different.

In “Remarks From an Accomplice,” you describe a mother who went to Chechnya during the first war there to bring back her son, because she didn’t want him to kill people. “The government no longer owned her soul,” you write. “This was a free person.” Do you still meet people like that mother, or could she exist at only a certain point in Soviet, and now Russian, history? Have people like her become anachronisms?

It’s a complicated question, because I will say that during Yeltsin’s time, when there was democracy, mothers really did stop believing in the propaganda and would take it upon themselves to travel to Chechnya to rescue their sons, their children. The most amazing thing is that Chechen women would help them.

Today, when mothers receive the coffins of their sons, Russian soldiers who were fighting in the Donbass in Ukraine, none of them want to be interviewed. It’s very rare to find one willing to speak to journalists. In despair, a journalist friend of mine asked some of them why they wouldn’t talk, and the women replied that if they talk, they won’t receive the death benefits—the money, the good money, they receive after their sons die. I have never encountered that before. Not in Afghanistan. In the days of the Afghanistan war, mothers would seek me out, wanting to speak to me. They were different. But now, in Putin’s Russia, where fear has once again taken over, it’s hard to find a free person.

If I were writing this book now, I can’t imagine being able to get the kind of interviews I did in Secondhand Time. Now there’s some kind of perversity, there’s this element of money. And day in, day out, Russian television is telling the people that we’re surrounded by enemies; we’re in a besieged fortress. Something is happening to the people. They’re different now.

Divided Realms

by JOHN CONNELLY

How to explain the inexplicable Hungarians? Why have so many of them backed Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s decision to ward off migrants and refugees by installing barbed-wire entanglements on the country’s borders with Serbia and Croatia? As a signatory to the United Nations’ 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Hungary is obliged to offer them protection. Yet 66 percent of Hungarians say that refugees present a danger to Hungary, and only 19 percent believe they have a duty to take in people who are fleeing from danger themselves.

Just a generation ago, nothing captured the spirit of 1989 better than Hungarian border guards applying wire cutters to the fences separating their country from Austria. That summer, thousands of East Germans rushed to Hungary hoping to escape communism, causing a panic back home that led to demonstrations and the opening of the Berlin Wall in November. Their migration was a counterpoint to an earlier one in 1956, when an estimated 200,000 people escaped Moscow’s suppression of the Hungarian Revolution by fleeing across an open border to Austria, and then on to dozens of countries willing to take them in as new citizens.

Not so long ago, Eastern Europe’s civil-society movements demanded that all people be able to travel freely; open borders were considered a human right. Yet today, Hungary has been joined by Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic in an effort to bar Muslim migrants from crossing into the European Union, even though refugees from these countries were welcomed in Western Europe during the Cold War and after. The arguments defending Hungary’s new barbed-wire barriers hark back to a time before the concept of human rights was enshrined. Orbán has tapped into...
a consensus throughout Central and Eastern Europe that Muslim migrants from Syria and Iraq cannot integrate because they are not Christian. And if anyone needs proof, the argument goes, then just consider what refugee mobs did to women in Cologne on New Year’s Eve. Countries in Western Europe are also putting up barriers, but the exclusiveness, while cruel, isn’t total. France feels overburdened, but it has not said that it will accept no refugees at all. (In May, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo announced plans to build a refugee camp in the capital city.) The same is true of the Scandinavian nations.

The notable exception is Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel has insisted there will be no limit set on how many refugees the country will absorb. Germany is much wealthier than its neighbors, but it’s still a relatively small and densely settled place, about 17 percent smaller than California but with twice the population (80 million). Yet last year, it took in over a million migrants, chiefly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. According to a report leaked in February, the country will absorb some 3.6 million non-Europeans by 2020, by the German government’s reckoning.

Leading politicians in her own coalition have accused Merkel of dividing Germany, but she has held her course with support from the center and the left, especially the Green Party. In February, one Green-governed state rejected the federal government’s demand that economic refugees be returned to Afghanistan, arguing that there was no airport in that country where it was safe to land. Despite pervasive doubts about how Germany will someday assimilate the hundreds of thousands of newcomers, 90 percent of Germans say that their country should continue to offer refuge to people fleeing terror and war.

For all of its resonances, the Cold War isn’t the most helpful precedent for understanding the paradoxical attitudes in Europe today toward migrants and refugees. A better one is the migration crisis that shook the continent in the decades just before World War I, when instead of clamoring to get into Europe, migrants were desperate to get out. As the University of Chicago professor and MacArthur fellow Tara Zahra explains in her superb book The Great Departure, between 1846 and 1940 as many as 58 million people left Europe for North and South America, with most of them abandoning the Eastern European countries that have recently turned against accepting migrants.

In fin-de-siècle Vienna, newspapers featured regular reports sounding alarms about the mass exodus, but the causes resisted easy explanation. Matters came to a head in 1890, when agents at the Oswiecim rail hub in what is now southern Poland were put on trial for fraud. Oswiecim was the final stop in the empire before migrants changed trains for the German Empire and points west. Austrian officials alleged that gangs of profiteers were descending on unsuspecting peasants at the train station and diverting them to travel offices that were supposedly run by the government, complete with portraits of the Emperor Franz Josef hanging on the walls. Here the agents, clad in imperial uniforms, requisitioned passports and billfolds in return for documents of passage, leaving the travelers nearly penniless. Next door was a tailor who outfitted men in the type of suit supposedly required for entry into the United States. Nowadays, we tend to refer to Oswiecim by its German name: Auschwitz. As it happened, the five travel agents put on trial were Jewish. They were all found guilty and sentenced to three to four years in prison.

Politicians in the Austrian Empire didn’t care equally about population loss. Because of the primitive farming methods used in the empire’s eastern provinces, arable land there couldn’t support the population. Commentators from the western provinces where German or Italian was spoken viewed the migrants as surplus population and argued that their departure would contribute to social peace by relieving the misery on small farms. But the intellectual elites from those eastern lands were anything but sanguine. In 1893, the Czech agronomist Vilem Tekly bemoaned the state’s failure to stop his fellow countrymen and -women from abandoning their farms by the thousands. No one in Vienna seemed even to know how many were leaving. The “statistical central commission,” Tekly claimed, released “its publications at a snail’s pace and only in German, as if the other nationalities did not exist.” The only solution was to make the Czech lands self-governing, similar to Hungary, which the Habsburgs had accorded de facto independence within the Austrian Empire in 1867.

The monarchy’s compromise on Hungary betrayed its weakness. Originally a family from southern Germany, the Habsburgs had conquered or inherited vast territories in Central and Eastern Europe over many centuries. Yet by 1867, the arch-conservative dynasty was lagging behind dynamic economic and military powers like Britain and France; and in order to manage its huge war debts, it cut a deal with the strongest and most troublesome of the empire’s subject nations. From that point, the realm was divided: the east under the control of elites in Budapest, and the western territories—soon called simply “Austria”—ruled by a more diverse government in Vienna.

The populations and politics of the resulting Austria-Hungary were enormously complex. Hungary comprised today’s Hungary and Slovakia, but also parts of Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine; while Austria included the Austria, Slovenia, and Czech Republic (also known as Bohemia) of our day, but also southern Poland and parts of Croatia, Italy, and Ukraine. The halves were united in the person of the emperor and by a common defense and foreign policy, but they were governed very differently. In return for their cooperation, Hungary’s elites were allowed to treat their lands as a political nation, single and indivisible, and to do whatever was necessary to make the many ethnicities within their realm into Hungarians. Tekly wanted the Czechs to do likewise in his native Bohemia. But the leadership in Vienna, old-school and culturally German, was agnostic on the question of nationality, promising equality to all the various “national tribes” of the empire’s Austrian lands.

If there was anyone more anxious than Tekly about Austria’s population loss, it was Leopold Caro, a Polish economist descended from a Sephardic rabbinical family who converted to Catholicism as a young man. Beginning in the 1890s, Caro fretted over the fate of the Polish people, who like the Czechs had no state, but unlike them were scattered across three empires: Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. That had been the case since 1795, when these states not only wiped the Kingdom of Poland from the map but also determined to “abolish everything which could revive the memory” of its existence. In 1908, Caro published a book describing the challenges of maintaining Poland without a formal state. Just a few decades earlier, he explained, it was widely accepted that Poles living under Russian or German rule would speak their own language and create their own culture. But more recently, German and Russian authorities had demanded that the Poles “dissolve in the vast sea of German and Russian statehood.” In response, Caro noted, an ethno-nationalist reaction had arisen among Poles insisting that the “entire people be Polish.” Poles managed to maintain their identity despite the suppression of Polish schools in Russia and Germany, even if it meant conducting clandestine classes in Polish language and literature.

For Caro, everything had to be done to prevent Polish peasants from leaving Austrian Galicia. (Like Tekly, he expected his people would have their own state, probably under
Habsburg rule.) Caro was equally worried about the Poles being threatened by another nation living within their own—the Jews. The Jews were dangerous, he claimed: Besides running travel agencies, they sold supplies and liquor and lent money to naïve peasants at exorbitant rates, causing them to go bankrupt and try to emigrate. Caro demanded that moneylenders be banned from the countryside and that the state guarantee Polish peasants credit at fair prices. These policies, he asserted, would encourage Jews to seek “more honest” trades involving the kind of manual labor that they supposedly despised.

Caro’s writing epitomizes the strain of racist ethnocentrism that took hold of popular opinion throughout East and East Central Europe in the late 19th century. Yet national identity was understood quite differently only a generation earlier: Caro’s father Henryk had fought in the 1863 Polish uprising against the czar and was the first Jew buried in Krakow with Polish orthography on his gravestone. At that time, it wasn’t unusual for Jews to be celebrated as Polish patriots. But when Leopold Caro came of age in the late 1880s, the pressures of ethnic exclusivism—fed by concerns for the survival of a people newly defined in racial terms—made it seem impossible for a Jewish-Polish patriot to also be a Polish nationalist.

Although they may have been otherwise nonchalant about the emigration of Slavic populations, Viennese bureaucrats did care deeply about its impact on the military draft. The government certainly had the tools to rectify it: In the 1867 Constitution, men eligible for military service at age 21 were the one exception to the general principle of freedom of emigration, or Freizügigkeit. Yet in 1913, as Zahra notes, an estimated 120,000 recruits were missing from the annual call-up, 80,000 in Galicia alone. That same year—23 years after the Oswiecim trial—Austria’s minister of war exclaimed: “From the military point of view the best thing would be to close all of the travel agencies.” Yet the work of the profiteers continued unimpeded.

What was Austria’s problem? Why couldn’t an empire hold on to its citizens—or at least register those who were leaving? Zahra looks for answers by following the migrants across the Atlantic to the New World, beyond the gates of Ellis Island and into the overcrowded, fetid neighborhoods of New York City. For many Austrian migrants, their first night’s shelter was a boardinghouse on Greenwich Street subsidized by the Austrian government. But the facilities were not welcoming. A New York City Health Department report from 1903 described “old and dilapidated” buildings, leaky roofs, damp walls and ceilings, and filthy bathrooms. “Women slept in an unventilated attic with 13 beds.” Evidently this state of affairs did not perturb the Austrian consular officials or their superiors in Vienna. A new home was established on East 80th Street in 1907, but the following year it too was cited for violations, and after another year its representatives were barred from welcoming immigrants at Ellis Island.

Yet there were organizations in New York that were solicitous toward the newcomers. As Zahra explains, “self-identified Polish, Slovak, Czech, or Hungarian associations, homes, and cooperative societies increasingly offered assistance and community to migrants.” It turns out that Tekly was right: It took organizations founded by ethniccs to care for fellow ethnics. But why did these associations care about people who had abandoned the homeland? Because, in their eyes, they hadn’t abandoned it. These immigrants may have left their farms, but they still embodied the larger Polish and Czech nations; they were an extended arm of their strength, adding to the national welfare through remittances, but primarily through the physical example of themselves—and their children—as Poles or Czechs or Slovaks. To this day, the governments of Poland and Hungary support educational and cultural activities directed at people of Polish and Hungarian descent living abroad. Their work differs from that of the Goethe Institut or the Alliance Français, which support cultural activities like language courses in other countries but not the physical ethnic presence of the German or French nation abroad.

Austria’s neglect of its citizens in New York City reflected and reinforced the indifference toward emigration in Vienna. Ultimately, multinational Austria was a structure sustaining a dynastic family that did not discriminate against any of its peoples, but that did not discriminate in their favor either—facts that explain why the empire seemed dysfunctional to its ethnic nationalists, but has looked better to every generation since. Indeed, the extremest descendants of those nationalists who committed crimes, such as ethnic cleansing and genocide, that were barely conceivable in 1910. Had Caro not died of old age in 1939, the Nazis would have identified him as Jewish instead of Catholic.

The Great Departure is the final volume in Zahra’s trilogy about how national movements in East Central Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries desperately tried to awaken often indifferent peoples to a sense of national identity. (The previous volumes are Kidnapped Souls and The Lost Children.) Zahra explains in Kidnapped
Souls that in the early 20th century, bilingual inhabitants of the Czech lands seemed especially impervious to nationalist stirrings, often refusing to tell census takers whether they were German or Czech. And why should they have done otherwise? Speaking German or Czech with equal fluency, thousands leveraged their complex identities to maximum effect, depending on whether a situation rewarded a German persona or a Czech one, or simply indifference. Zahra is a touch nostalgic about the Bohemia of this period, when bilingualism and a fluid sense of identity were sheltered by a non-nationalist state. Yet did such indifference, and its accidental benevolence, ever stand a chance against the pressures of nationalism, the most potent ideology of the past millennium?

We will never know, because World War I settled the matter. Woodrow Wilson’s call for what came to be known as national self-determination, issued while the war was still raging, strengthened the impetus for the emergence of nation-states from the ruins of the Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanov, and German empires. Unfortunately, Wilson was ignorant of the ethnic complexity of Eastern Europe, as well as the radically different understanding of “nation” prevalent there. When he promised Eastern Europeans self-determination, he mistook their regions for bounded countries like the United States or France, and thought their nations defined by a common citizenship. In fact, in Hungary, Galicia, or Bohemia, various ethnic groups lived inseparably mixed, claiming the same towns and villages as their own. For example, Germans and Czechs were equally at home in Prague; the same was true of Ukrainians and Poles in Lviv. And when Central and Eastern European nationalists spoke of the nation, they meant the ethnic group, a tribe that a person could only be born into and that spoke a common language. In Western Europe and the United States, by contrast, nations were political communities that governed a given territory.

For those people who might have been indifferent, the governments of the new states created after World War I—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania—inculated national identities through public education and founded colonial societies to keep those who emigrated firmly in the nation’s orbit. On the other hand, no one minded when non-nationals left. While maintaining a commitment to the free movement of people, for example, Yugoslavia’s government made it more difficult for Yugoslavs (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes) to leave than ethnic Hungarians. Poland was delighted to bid adieu to ethnic Germans while endeavoring to Polonize hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians in its eastern territories.

None of these new nation-states embraced the Jews living within their borders: Nowhere were they made to feel they belonged, and everywhere the dominant ethnicity hoped they would leave. Zahra reminds us of the desperate attempts to escape that many Jews made, often encouraged by local regimes. Poland explored sending Jews to Madagascar, while Romania made 270,000 of its Jews stateless. The ultra-nationalist Czechoslovak Second Republic (1938–39) set up an Institute for Refugee Welfare to encourage the emigration of Jews, whose property would then be transferred to the Czechs expelled from the Sudetenland—an area of Czechoslovakia that the Western Allies had granted to Nazi Germany. These are notoriously difficult matters to sort through, but Zahra makes a remarkably deft nonjudgmental judgment: “Was the institute a humanitarian organization to be credited with rescuing Jews? Or was it a collaborationist organization that facilitated the expropriation and deportation of Jews from Czechoslovakia?” Arguably, she writes, it was both: “In the end, there was a very thin line between the rescue, deportation, and expropriation of Czechoslovakia’s Jewish population, just as there was an ambiguous frontier between rescue and removal at the international level.”

Eastern European countries are attempting to deter immigration today for the same reason they tried to halt emigration a century ago: to protect themselves as ethnic nations whose existence has been threatened over the centuries, first by imperial powers like Austria, Russia, and Ottoman Turkey; then by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union; and recently, for some, by the European Union. Such sensitivity to foreign domination may not be unusual, but the ethnic nationalism behind it is.

Its origins lie in the national revolutions that swept through different parts of Europe many generations ago. In Western Europe, the nation constituted itself by opposing the native monarch. When the French Revolution unseated the French king, legitimacy, or the right to rule, was transferred from him (and the divine) to the people—the nation. Questions of culture and language were secondary, because in the 1790s there was no dilemma as to what France was or whether the French people had a right to French territory. Primary was the idea that all Frenchmen were citizens with equal rights.

In Central and Eastern Europe, by contrast, nationalists agitated against the foreign power occupying their territory. Czechs pitted themselves against the Austrian Habsburgs, Romanians against the Turks, and Poles against the Russians. But by what right did Czechs claim that the Kingdom of Bohemia was theirs? Until the 1860s, European maps showed Bohemia as part of Germany, smack between Berlin and Vienna. The only basis for Czech nationalism was a shared ethnic identity, reflected most evidently in language. Czech nationalists argued that Czech speakers had arrived in Bohemia centuries before the Germans, and therefore had a right to the land as its original owners. Similarly, Romanians claimed that they were descended from Roman colonists, thus long predating the Turks, Russians, and Magyars. These stirrings of original tribal ownership and unity were even felt in what would later become the German Empire under Bismarck. In the early years of the 19th century, Germans inhabited numerous tiny states like Hesse, Hanover, and Prussia, and they felt deeply humiliated by the presence of French troops occupying their lands, first during the Revolution and later under Napoleon.

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, nationalists based their views on the work of German philosophers, above all Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), who taught that nations were indeed ethnic, united in holy language and culture. Even nations lacking a state had a mission before God and history. (In German, the bond between the people and the nation is so close that the two share the same noun: Volk.) After Napoleon was defeated in 1815, the German national movement continued to expand. In these same years, Eastern Europeans studying at German universities absorbed Herder’s ideas. They may have lived as stateless subjects of the Ottoman or Habsburg empire, but Herder taught them that they were a great people poised to realize their historical destiny. Eastern European national movements thus emerged alongside their German counterpart and racked up some small successes in the ensuing decades—right up to the big bang of 1918, when the Allies lifted them into ownership of their own states. Such ideas sparked Caro’s notion that Poland was an indivisible nation in which each member owed a duty to the whole. The Polish people shared a past but had no known origin, because the ethnic nation was like an extended family, with one generation passing on its identity to the next. Such notions persist to our own day, and explain why Eastern Europeans cannot imagine Middle Eastern refugees being fully integrated into their own nations. How can members of a different tribe settle on “our” land as if they suddenly belonged to our tribe?
Yet Germany, the country where these ideas first took shape, is now accepting large numbers of Afghans, Syrians, and others. The sociologist Harald Welzer explains the mental adjustment on the part of Germans that Merkel’s Willkommenskultur requires: “No American would say that someone who immigrated from Anatolia was not American. In Germany, a country that has refused to think of itself as a land of immigration, even that person’s granddaughter would be counted as a person with ‘migration history,’” or Migrationshintergrund.

If Germany is breaking with a long national history, it’s because of Auschwitz and everything it evokes; if Eastern European countries are abiding by a dominant strain of nationalism, it’s because of the Oswiecim trial and everything it evoked. In both cases, the issue is genocide—in the first case physical, in the second cultural. For Germany, the future carries special obligations to ethnic others because a German state once tried to destroy them; for Eastern Europeans, the future involves vigilance against ethnic others to make sure their states do not face destruction in whole or in part. Paradoxically, it was the fear of destruction that impelled some of these nations to want to join the European Union after the implosion of the Soviet Empire.

Zahra refers to the West as the “free world,” and her book captures well the ambivalent freedoms it has offered to migrants. Even 19th-century American commentators who celebrated immigrants for invigorating the body politic favored certain “races” over others, and the enthusiasm for sharing American freedom with non-Americans waned in the 1920s, when immigrant laborers were seen as endangering rather than enhancing prosperity.

Zahra also describes the ambivalence of Austrian immigrants who arrived in the “free world,” only to return home. Many came to prefer a semi-incompetent Austria that offered basic health care, accident insurance, and old-age pensions to a life in the United States toiling away amid social insecurity. Perhaps the travel agents were innocent of false advertising, but the same could not be said for America’s image makers.

The gulf between the United States’ rhetoric and the freedom it was willing to share only grew in the years after World War II. On December 23, 1981, President Reagan encouraged Americans to place lighted candles in their windows to show solidarity with the Polish people. But in the years that followed, Zahra reminds us, Reagan’s government refused to recognize the status of the tens of thousands of Poles who had been stranded in the United States since the Polish government declared martial law on December 13, 1981. Reagan’s intransigence left them in limbo—or, more accurately, in a kind of purgatory. Zahra’s trenchant analysis calls to mind a discussion I once had with an East German academic behind the Berlin Wall in the 1980s. He noted that the United States was erecting barriers on its southern border; he made this point not as an argument in defense of walls, but as a relevant factor to consider when contemplating the one dividing Germany. I and the other Westerners scoffed: “The barriers in Texas were being built to keep people from entering, not leaving. But he was right: One cannot complain about a country’s refusal to let people out if one’s own nation refuses to let them in.

The Cold War ended with the “free world” victorious but not satiated. In 2001, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom and created the instability that is a direct cause of the refugee crisis in Europe today. But while the United States has the greatest capacity to accept refugees, it is doing next to nothing to help. As the German journalist Bernd Ulrich wrote in Die Zeit in December, “The Americans are behaving more hysterically about the refugees that they will not take than the Germans are about the refugees they are taking.” The rhetoric in Germany is about dignity and not freedom: “Every human has a dignity given to him by God,” Merkel proclaimed at a conference of her Christian Democratic Union party last December.

To call Merkel and the CDU conservative, as American newspapers often do, is deeply misleading. Far from our own knowing-nothing, antistate, anti-immigrant Republicans, Merkel is a progressive, and more: She is a revolutionary who wants to shatter the ethnically exclusive idea of national belonging that took root among Germans many generations before Auschwitz. Border controls, she tells her citizens, will throw Europe back to a time of “nation-statism,” or Nationalstaatterei. For Merkel, what many thought was the only solution to Europe’s last great migrant crisis a century ago is the wrong solution for today’s crisis. Her revolution will require massive investment and an even stronger state with thousands of additional bureaucrats, including language teachers, therapists, work counselors, and above all police officers. Will Germany be able to integrate over 1 million migrants? We may not know the answer for at least 20 years.

With a genius for the dialectics of realpolitik that her fellow Prussians Bismarck and Karl Marx might have respected, Merkel eulogizes the ideals of the EU but worries above all about satisfying the German electorate and maintaining power. She will not lead Europe back to petty Nationalstaatterei, but the constituencies of her own nation-state are never far from her mind. That’s been especially true after the drubbing her party suffered in the local elections on March 13. In Baden-Württemberg, a Christian Democratic stronghold since 1946, the party slid from 39 to 27 percent, placing it behind the Greens in the region, while the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) jumped from 0 to 15 percent. In the formerly East German Saxony-Anhalt, the AfD scored 25 percent, becoming the region’s second-strongest party.

Germany has not closed its borders, but then it hasn’t needed to. Merkel criticized Austria for putting up barbed-wire fences along its border with Slovenia in late February, but because of those fences, the number of refugees entering Germany has become a trickle, falling from more than 1,000 a day to around 200. In a move that some observers have compared to the reconstitution of the Habsburg Empire, Austria arranged a joint policy with the Balkan states to plug the “Balkan route” into Europe. Today, refugees gather at the northern Greek borders with Macedonia, facing barbed wire meant to keep them from the path to Germany. For the time being, their numbers are limited. Under German pressure, the EU has leaned on Turkey to stop the refugee flows to the Greek Aegean islands, as well as to take back any refugees who nonetheless make it there safely. The EU provides cash to host the refugees in Turkish camps, and to help process those from Syria who might qualify for asylum; it has also agreed to open talks on Turkey’s delayed application to become a member of the European Union.

This relief, if not Turkey’s EU application, is sure to be temporary. Karl Kopp of the refugee organization Pro Asyl says there is so much war and misery across the regions that border the Aegean and Mediterranean that people seeking shelter will come any way they can. The only thing Europe can decide is whether they arrive on its shores alive or dead. Reports indicate that at least 2 million people—and possibly as many as 6 million—are on their way, and if the Balkan route remains closed, they will come by way of North Africa, and then through either Italy or Spain. Austria is already fortifying its border with Italy.

There are reasons for hope, but also reasons for despair. Angela Merkel preaches that the European Union is a wealthy area of 500 million people that can easily share the burden of refugees. Thus far, however, member states haven’t succeeded in redis-
Strange Reversals

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

One day in the early 1990s, I ran into my friend Faye Hirsch—an astute critic—who breathlessly informed me that she’d just come from a studio visit with a genius! I’d never heard anyone, and certainly not Faye, say such a thing in my life. “Well, if Faye says so, I’m willing to entertain the idea,” I thought. But while I could eventually see what she’d meant—prodigious energy, check; implacable ambition, check; dazzling technical facility, check—it was hard for me to be quite as enthusiastic about the work of Nicole Eisenman as Faye was. Her style seemed so retro: There was something very 1930s about many of Eisenman’s paintings, something reminiscent of Paul Cadmus, Reginald Marsh, and Isabel Bishop in the “epic, obscene panoramas” (as Terry Castle has called them) that she was painting in those days—canvases and murals “in which po-faced naked giantesses squat, squat, and break a new vocabulary for them: “genocide,” “the Holocaust,” “ethnic cleansing.” Organizations pledged to protect human rights were also established, but as we have seen in recent months, UN conventions that lack international cooperation are dead letters. In Europe, only Germany has learned the lessons of the past century.

Distribution more than 1,500 refugees, and every new terror attack inflames the xenophobes. History provides no clear lessons, but it does issue a warning. The refugee crisis that Zahra discusses could not be resolved by managing the migration of peoples, because in the 1920s international borders were sealed. But solutions were eventually found, along with an art fixated on a bygone style that was itself already so indebted to premodernist modes of representation. Two steps forward, but only one step back; two may be one too many for me.

Although Eisenman and I have crossed paths socially now and again, this wasn’t a conversation we’d ever had. But now I wonder, in retrospect, whether she didn’t eventually come around to seeing things in a similar way. She recently had two shows in New York City—a presentation of recent work at the Anton Kern Gallery and a bigger (though still not big enough) survey, “Al-ugh-ories,” at the New Museum. It was telling that the museum show, curated by Helga Christoffersen and Massimiliano Gioni, included only one work from the 1990s, though a painting from 2000, Dysfunctional Family, harks back to Eisenman’s earlier style, albeit in a slightly more sedate manner. The little brownish “conversation piece”—as informal group portraits used to be known—could have been a Saturday Evening Post illustration, if the weekly champion of midcentury middle-American mores were apt to promote households in which Mom does the knitting with her skirt hiked up to reveal an undie-free crotch while Dad sucks on a giant bong and Junior, his face conveying disinterested curiosity, smashes his baby penis to bloody bits with a hammer.

But the bulk of the show—paintings dating from 2004 through 2014 and a couple of new sculptures—represents a distinct shift. Not that Eisenman has abandoned her historicism; far from it. If anything, her range of references is wider and deeper than before. But now she’s almost always working out her raucously polyvalent approach to contemporary figuration by way of the various modernists who revised the pictorial tradition—Ensor and Munch, Picasso and Matisse, Guston and Baselitz—rather than trying to make an end run around them through a peripheral tributary. The same was true of a much larger traveling show organized by the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, and which I saw at the ICA in Philadelphia in 2014. Its emphasis was on the early 2000s. In an interview with Eisenman, Masimiliano Gioni, included only one work from 2000, though a painting from 2000, Dysfunctional Family, harks back to Eisenman’s earlier style, albeit in a slightly more sedate manner. The little brownish “conversation piece”—as informal group portraits used to be known—could have been a Saturday Evening Post illustration, if the weekly champion of midcentury middle-American mores were apt to promote households in which Mom does the knitting with her skirt hiked up to reveal an undie-free crotch while Dad sucks on a giant bong and Junior, his face conveying disinterested curiosity, smashes his baby penis to bloody bits with a hammer.

But the bulk of the show—paintings dating from 2004 through 2014 and a couple of new sculptures—represents a distinct shift. Not that Eisenman has abandoned her historicism; far from it. If anything, her range of references is wider and deeper than before. But now she’s almost always working out her raucously polyvalent approach to contemporary figuration by way of the various modernists who revised the pictorial tradition—Ensor and Munch, Picasso and Matisse, Guston and Baselitz—rather than trying to make an end run around them through a peripheral tributary. The same was true of a much larger traveling show organized by the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, and which I saw at the ICA in Philadelphia in 2014. Its emphasis was on the last decade; although Eisenman’s work of the ’90s was represented by many of the drawings and watercolors there, only one canvas was dated earlier than 2005.

There are many ways to understand the change that occurred in Eisenman’s work in the early 2000s. In an interview with Eisenman for the New Museum show, Gioni elides two of them: “your work has attained not only a unique sense of gravitas, but it now speaks with a kind of authority,” he tells the artist. “To simplify things dramatically, for me, your work has also become the voice of a queer community.” To the second of these statements,
Eisenman responds vociferously: “No, God, no. I’m not the voice of any group of people! That’s a horrifying thought. I’d never want to define a community or begin to know what the borders of that community even look like. I couldn’t draw a line around a group of people and claim to have a voice for anyone other than myself.” Eisenman isn’t disclaiming a group identity from the standpoint of an individualist; she doesn’t see herself as separate from a community but rather wants to avoid defining its boundaries, and refuses to embrace the notion that she can speak for others in it or rule anyone else in or out definitively.

The will to dissolve or relax boundaries is part of what makes Eisenman’s work feel so of the moment right now. It’s the same acceptance of ambiguity that allows the artist, when asked why her single-figure paintings have been mostly of men, to remark: “Representing bodies is complex. What looks masculine in a painting could be a self-determined gender mutineer, or trans, or something completely off the spectrum. It seems that I present as masculine in the world, and I think I use my body as a baseline jumping-off point for representation, which I think goes a long way toward explaining the preponderance of masculine-looking bodies in this show.” What’s true of the painted figure also goes for the act of painting itself. When pressed with the observation that the painters who caught her eye in the 1980s—the likes of Julian Schnabel and the German Neo-Expressionists—were “very macho and conservative,” Eisenman explains: “To me, it’s radical, and it felt radical when I saw it for the first time…. My feeling about painting and gender is that whatever any dude feels entitled to, I feel like: ‘Fuck, I’m entitled to that too.’”

The title of the New Museum show, though, points to the ambivalence of Eisenman’s relation to the age-old traditions. At least some of her paintings are genuine allegories, with appropriately moralizing titles like The Work of Labor and Care (2004); Progress: Real and Imagined (2006); a diptych oddly represented in this show by just one of its panels; and The Triumph of Poverty (2009). At the same time, they are also send-ups of allegory, maybe even expressions of disgust with it. The didactic function of painting can only be sustained, Eisenman implies, if it is pursued with self-critical humor, if it tacitly acknowledges that it does not speak from a position of vested authority—allegorizing on behalf of church or state or any social consensus on values—but instead on the basis of its own cogency. Also essential is a degree of acuity that necessarily demands wit, irony, incongruity, and the overturning of hierarchies such as those between crude physicality and subtle intelligence. Eisenman’s complex, contradictory multifigure “machines,” as well as smaller, more understated ventures into tongue-in-cheek allegory like Commerce Feeds Creativity—it’s a sadomasochistic kind of feeding—and From Success to Obscurity (both 2004), are wry but rueful challenges to uplift. Our efforts are liable to go so wrong. This art doesn’t offer utopia or even a promissory note on happiness, but simply the hope that we can persist in the face of defeat.

In a surprising way, Eisenman recognizes that today, allegory can only ever be “al-ugh-ory,” and that the artist can only be—as another of her paintings, Were-artist (2007), would have it—impure, contaminated by irrational animal impulses. Behind this attitude lies her shift, in the early 2000s, to a manner of painting that more deeply acknowledges modernism. She rediscovered a strain of modernism that doesn’t aspire to purity or certainty—the art of Mondrian or Reinhardt, let’s say—but rather is willing to remain, as de Kooning once put it, “wrapped in the melodrama of vulgarity.” If there’s anything these two modernisms share, it’s a flattening of pictorial space. But these are two distinct interpretations: on the one hand, a drive toward simplicity and unity; on the other, a willingness to keep multiplicity and conflict close to the surface, to let it press in on the viewer, rather than putting it at a safe distance in deep space. Eisenman is a fantastic painter of everyday life who depicts what only she can imagine as though it were a self-evident reality. Less important than making space for a multitude of figures is finding a multitude of ways for paint to appear and render sensations. In her teeming canvases, the whole world seems to crowd in on us.

But not always. In some of Eisenman’s more recent work, there is a kind of respite on offer. It’s evident in her paintings of couples. In the gorgeous Night Studio (2009), two women loll abed, their legs intertwined. One of them, wearing a white cap, has white slits for eyes—she looks completely out of it. But her companion, sporting a black derby, gazes at her appreciatively. Their bedding, a patchwork of grids, floats amid a night glittering with stars. Surrounding their bed are bottles of beer and water, a pack of Camels, and piles of books with titles like Emil Nolde Portraits, Henri Matisse: A Retrospective, and Hans Bellmer. Such respite, however sweet, may only be momentary; but at least it can recur. Or can it? The show at Kern included a sort of pendant to this painting. The two women in Morning Studio (2016) exhibit coupledom in something more like the clear light of day: One woman seems completely engrossed in her lover, but the other looks out toward the viewer, restless, her mind clearly on something somewhere else. The starry sky has been reduced to a computer desktop image projected on a screen.

Come to think of it, maybe Eisenman’s flatness is as much of the computer screen as of the picture plane; another of her couple portraits is Long Distance (2015), a kind of visual diagram of a seductive Skype session. But it can get threatening. Writing this not long after the massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, I can’t stop thinking about two of the other recent paintings at Kern, Shooter 1 and Shooter 2 (both from 2016): They are the closest Eisenman has ever come to geometrical abstraction, or rather to the kind of high-impact graphic design that emerged in its wake. In these close-ups of a pistol pointed at the viewer, the muzzle becomes a stand-in for one of the shooter’s eyes. It’s the nightmare of a world where seeing and shooting have become almost synonymous. The paintings are as aggressive and confrontational as the nightmare world—our own—that they evoke. To be able not just to show that, but to make us feel it as well, does take a kind of genius, but one that Eisenman has needed some time to attain.
Lies After the War

We went to Bull Run, or was it Manassas, one of those, past Battlefield Ford, past Glory Days bar in the strip mall, or was it before the mall was built, or was it after the mall was abandoned. I was grizzled with age, I was twenty one, at the small beige visitor center. I remember it without sound. They had a machine there that sucked up sound. It was mostly made of hollows, blanks, lack, and also plastic. It came with a smaller version of itself, whose job was to suck the sound of the larger sound-sucker. It did its work. It was about the size of a foot. Either run that, or the place would be filled with ordinary sounds, squirrels twitching their tails, chattering, one to another in their ceaseless brag about acorn-hordes. They couldn’t risk the sound of dirt, suffocated under the sewn sod, or the possibility of rustling leaves. This is not the grass where it happened, not the starved pines. These clouds have shifted. Never do they look like hacked arms, heaped corpses. We lay in the sound-empty field under the cloud constellation of Virginia. Look up: that one’s a crutch, that one’s a stump, that one’s a burning town, and the yellow tendrils of gangrene. The air turned to ether. The ether was painless, it was all painless, I swear.

MILLER OBERMAN
ACROSS
1 Block Pat’s construction with asphalt (8)
6 Some fakirs cherish alcoholic drink (6)
9 An embankment for a legendary gardener? (4)
10 Stochastic model’s basic principle, trendy in retrospect, occupies hierarchical position (6,4)
11 Ostensible progenitors—one looking back, the other looking forward (8)
13 Language of Sephardic Jews and some Southeast Asians involving noise (6)
15 One way of paying to prepare wool after direct variation (6,4)
17 Chair of committees, ultimately, to consume… (4)
18 …only fish (4)
19 Pig call, ample in sound, is unlike anything else (3,7)
20 Went crazy in Othello’s title part… (4,2)
21 …like, for example, Othello garbling “…thine own…” (8)
23 Floor put up in movie sketches (10)
25 French for “rain” (4)
27 Knight is happy? Yes, but heartless (6)
28 Rap about revolving place for bishop’s hosiery (8)

DOWN
2 See 26
3 One of 10 North Dakota males is on time (11)
4 Wrongful act: beginning to enjoy cake (5)
5 Autumn tonic drunk in recreational area—it was omitted in the wordplay of four Down clues (11,4)
6 Ken’s heading for Kwanzaa present on the shelf (9)
7 See 24
8 One dominating some celebrities could be one who wants power over another people (11)
12 Talon breaks around a tooth (11)
14 Sheep do badly with major disappointments (6,5)
16 What you might find in a lab: shirts covering upturned rumps (4,5)
17 Chair of committees, ultimately, to consume… (4)
20 …like, for example, Othello garbling “…thine own…” (8)
22 Gentle push from group leader in 26 & 2 (5)
24 & 7 Make a new picture with scarlet and green (6)
26 & 2 Naked young Tarheel? (6)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3402

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for 18 double issues, published the second and last weeks of January, the last week of March through the last week of September, and the second and fourth weeks of December; each double issue counts as two issues delivered to subscribers) by The Nation Company, LLC © 2016 in the USA by The Nation Company, LLC, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003; (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address, and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 433308, Palm Coast, FL 32143-0308; or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40014177. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25342, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement No. 40612608. When ordering a subscription, please allow four to six weeks for receipt of first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $89 for one year. Back issues, $6 prepaid ($8 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Alliance for Audited Media. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 433308, Palm Coast, FL 32143-0308. Printed in the USA on recycled paper.
A MUST-READ FOR THE 2016 ELECTION SEASON
Companies that are owners and producers of oil, natural gas or coal reserves are excluded from our mutual funds.

“As investors, we are not simply passive actors. Each investment decision is a decision to allocate capital. We should be mindful of the wider implications of these decisions. This is particularly true for climate change, which places all life at risk. We are now living on a planet whose atmosphere has changed into one that no human being has ever experienced before.” — Amy Domini

Consider an investment in Domini’s mutual funds today.

At Domini, we believe it’s possible to make money and make a difference at the same time.

Before investing, consider the Funds’ investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses. Contact us for a prospectus containing this information. Read it carefully. The Domini Funds are not insured and are subject to market risks such as sector concentration and style risk. You may lose money.

DSIL Investment Services LLC, Distributor. 7/16