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California Shows How to Beat Trump

America’s future arrives here first—bad news for the president and his Republican enablers.

PETER SCHRAG
Red Famine Revisited

Further to Sophie Pinkham’s insightful and balanced review of Anne Applebaum’s Red Famine: Stalin’s War on Ukraine [Jan. 1/8], it is also relevant that Applebaum asserts that there was a tendency in Western scholarship to avoid serious study of the horrific famine in the USSR from 1932–34, and that this massive and tragic loss of life (especially in Ukraine) went undocumented until the publication of Robert Conquest’s book on the subject in 1986. This is not true. In fact, some of the preeminent American demographers and other social scientists in the immediate post–World War II period, including Frank Lorimer, Ansley Coale, and Dana Dalrymple, did extensive research on Soviet population trends in the 1920s and ’30s. Their estimates of excess mortality in that period were attributed largely to famine and the impact of collectivization (the two being related) and are very close to more recent scholarship on the subject that benefits from archival materials not available then.

Dalrymple in particular called out the Soviet government as being complicit in this calamity and, in an article in one of the leading journals on Soviet studies, decried Western attempts to downplay it. This body of work antedates the Conquest book and is not cited by Applebaum, for whatever reason. Given the implications of relating what befell the population of Ukraine in the 1930s to the current geopolitical crisis involving that country and Russia, it would have been best if Applebaum had brought into the discussion the full range of historical scholarship.

RALPH S. CLEM
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Faith in Community

I was pleased to see Liza Featherstone respond to the letter from a politically progressive Christian calling herself “Confused Convert,” who had questions about managing unwanted attention from a fellow parishioner [“Asking for a Friend,” Jan. 1/8]. My one comment is that the reply seems to assume that Confused Convert should see herself as dealing with the situation on her own.

A congregation is a community. This has two implications. First, Confused Convert does not have to feel that she is socially “ostracizing” the man in question. Over time, in any functioning community, individuals have conflicts and resolutions, periods of distancing and approaching, but can still remain within the wider group. My congregation contains at least two divorced couples, with both former partners still attending.

Second, Confused Convert need not act alone. Hannah Arendt, drawing on Georg Simmel, spoke of operating on the web of relations, and a congregation provides this kind of empowerment. Confused Convert could call upon others to help the “socially clueless” fellow get the hint that this acquaintanceship is not going to get very personal. For instance, she could recruit someone to go with them whenever they have coffee. Better yet, others can sit with her in church, depriving him of his seat next to her. In contemporary churches, it is pretty common to take a “notice but do not pry” attitude about the conduct and relationships of others. This is very positive for the acceptance of nontraditional relationships, but it also means that, if you sit together all the time, people will increasingly assume a connection. This fellow is subtly trying to take up the social space around Confused Convert. If she establishes that he cannot monopolize her, he could hardly dare to insist.

SCOTT COREY
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Marching to the Polls

Donald Trump created such mayhem during the days surrounding the anniversary of his “American carnage” inauguration that he had to cancel plans to hightail it out of Washington and celebrate in the friendlier confines of his Mar-a-Lago resort. His vile, racist disparagement of Haiti, El Salvador, and the nations of Africa as “shithole countries” elicited an international outcry, leading to calls by the Congressional Black Caucus and the majority of House Democrats for a formal censure. Despite all the president’s boasting about the “art of the deal,” that outburst was just one of several incoherent interventions that derailed negotiations over an immigration agreement that could have secured the passage of a spending bill. Cue government shutdown. Trump, of course, tried to blame Democrats for the impasse—even though Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. Unfortunately, Democrats lacked the numbers, the unity, and, frankly, the political courage to take advantage of this Trump-induced chaos. By Monday, most of them voted to end the shutdown, without securing protections for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program—to the deep frustration of grassroots activists. A broken status quo had prevailed, and the same media outlets that provided Trump with wall-to-wall coverage during the 2016 campaign went back to waiting for the “can’t-miss drama” of the president’s next tweet.

But for all the tumult over the shutdown, a more significant story was taking place far from the Beltway—in communities where the resistance has been gaining strength and focus before a midterm election that could hold the president and his allies to account. Case in point: Wisconsin. While Trump lost the popular vote by 2.9 million nationwide, narrow wins in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Michigan gave him the Electoral College. Trump’s Wisconsin win was powered by votes from the western and northern regions of the state—places like the 10th State Senate District, which has historically elected Republicans and where Trump ran 17 points ahead of Hillary Clinton. But in a special election on January 16, medical examiner and small-town school-board member Patty Schachtner swept to victory in a result that saw a 37 percent swing to the Democrats. In 2016, the outgoing Republican had won the gerrymandered district by 26 points; Schachtner prevailed by 11. “President Donald Trump—along with Speaker Paul Ryan and Gov. Scott Walker who support and prop him up—are toxically unpopular and divisive,” the state Democratic Party declared in a press release.

This reaction to Trumpism isn’t limited to Wisconsin. Noting that Schachtner was the 34th Democrat to flip a Republican state legislative seat since Trump took office, statehouse-watcher Carolyn Fiddler observed: “Democrats are still winning Republican seats! Even when Republicans run in ‘safe’ and extremely gerrymandered districts and spend boatloads more money than the Democrat!”

More often than not, these Democratic winners have been women (22 of 34). This made the Wisconsin win a perfect setup for the massive Women’s Marches across the country, which filled the streets with millions of Americans—600,000 in Los Angeles, 300,000 in Chicago, 200,000 in New York, 50,000 in Denver—who channeled the anger and frustration of 2017 into a mighty cry for America’s future arrives here first—bad news for the president and his enablers.

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers January 25 at TheNation.com.

Cover illustration by Victor Juhasz.
Occupation’s Child

Abed Tamimi should not be a hero—she should be free.

Abed Tamimi was 11 when I met her, a little blond slip of a thing, her hair almost bigger than she was. I remember her grimacing as her mother combed out the knots each morning in their living room. The second time I went to a demonstration in Nabi Saleh, the West Bank village where she lives, Ahed and her cousin Marah ended up leading the march. Not because they wanted to, but because Israel Border Police were shouting and throwing stun grenades, and she and Marah ran ahead of the crowd. That’s how it’s been ever since. The Israeli military keeps pushing—into the village, into the yard, into the house, into the skulls and tissue and bones of her family and friends—and Ahed ends up out in front, where everyone can see her. She was there again last month after a video of her slapping an Israeli soldier went viral. I can assure you, it’s not where she wants to be. She would rather be a kid than a hero.

Ahed’s image flew around the world for the first time in 2012, not long after I met her. In that photo, she was raising her bare skinny arm to shake her fist in the face of an Israeli soldier twice her size. His comrades had just arrested her brother. Overnight, she became something no child should ever be: a symbol.

The demonstrations in Nabi Saleh were then in their third year. Israeli settlers had seized a spring in the valley beneath the village, and Nabi Saleh had taken up the path of unarmed resistance, marching to protest the occupation every Friday, week after week. Ahed’s cousin Mustafa Tamimi had already been killed. Her mother’s brother, Rushdie Tamimi, would be killed in another few months. There was nothing unusual about any of it except that the tiny village didn’t stop. Its inhabitants kept racking up losses, and they kept marching every Friday to the spring. They almost never got close: Soldiers stopped them with tear gas and sundry other projectiles. The army came during the week, too, usually before dawn, making arrests, searching houses, spreading fear, delivering a message that got clearer each time: Your lives, your homes, your land, even your own and your children’s bodies—none of it belongs to you.

Last month, they came for Ahed. I had thought she might be spared this, that she might be allowed to finish school and become the bold and brilliant woman she will surely one day be. But I had always assumed that her brothers and male cousins would at some point go to jail—many of them already have—and that some of them would be injured, or worse. Every time I visit Nabi Saleh, I try not to wonder who it will be, and how bad. The day Ahed chased the soldiers from her yard, it was her cousin Mohammad: A soldier shot him in the face. The bullet—rubber-coated but a bullet nonetheless—lodged in his skull. A week later, he was still in a medically induced coma.

If you’ve seen the video that led to her arrest, you might have wondered why Ahed was so angry. That was why—that and a thousand other reasons. Her uncle and her cousin killed. Her mother shot in the leg. Her parents and her brother taken from her for months at a time. And never a night’s rest without the possibility that she might wake, as she did early on the morning of December 19, to soldiers at the door, in her house, in her room, there to take someone away.

Ahed Tamimi was not jailed for breaking the law—Israel, in its governance of the land it occupies, shows little regard for legality. She was arrested for showing Israelis who they are: how 50 years of occupation have hollowed them out as a nation, how it makes them weaker and more frightened every day. They used words like “castrated,” “impotent,” “humiliated” to describe how they felt when they looked at that armed and armored soldier and at the kid in the pink T-shirt who put him to shame. For all their strength and arrogance, Ahed had put them all to shame.

The Gulf between the two opposing fantasies that define Israel’s self-image has only grown with the years: a country that still imagines itself to be David against the Arab Goliath—noble, outnumbered, and brave—while taking pride in the unrivaled lethality and sophistication of its military. Ahed made both of those convictions crumble. Watching that video, Israelis knew that their guns are worthless, their strength a sham. For revealing that secret, for showing the world how fearful they know themselves to be, Ahed had to be punished. And so the defense minister stooped from his throne to personally promise that not just Ahed and her parents but “everyone around them” would get “what they deserve.” The minister of education was more specific: Ahed should be locked up for life. Ben Caspit, a well-known centrist journalist, hinted at a more sinister remedy: “In the case of the girls, we should exact a price at some other opportunity, in the dark, without witnesses and cameras.”

Ahed has now been in jail for more than a month. So has her mother, Nariman, who was arrested when she went to the police station and asked to see her daughter. The court has refused to release them on bond. Due to “the gravity of the offences of which she is accused”—military prosecutors came up with a dozen charges—Ahed will spend her 17th birthday in a cell. Do not expect anything like justice to intrude on the proceedings: More than 99 percent of Palestinians tried in Israel’s military courts are convicted.

If Ahed and the thousands of others like her ever taste justice, it will be because they fought for it, and because we stood beside them. Fight to set her free, so that Ahed won’t have to be a hero for much longer—so that she can grow up to be an ordinary woman, in an ordinary land.

Ben Ehrenreich's most recent book, The Way to the Spring, is based on his reporting from the West Bank.

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Dear Sad,

The state of the world is terrifying, but there’s also reason for hope. People have always had children in a spirit of possibility, and in much scarier circumstances than ours, including plague, famine, war, genocide, and grinding poverty.

And actually, Sad, not everything in our world is getting worse. One of the problems with leftist discourse is that we think no one will listen to us unless we emphasize how horrible things are. We then convince ourselves of this and get very depressed. But consider what’s improving: If your child is gay or transgender, they will enjoy a far more welcoming society now than they would have even 15 years ago. The percentage of people worldwide living in extreme poverty has dropped dramatically in recent decades. And we’re on our way to eradicating many horrendous diseases. For example, the Guinea worm, which afflicted 3.5 million people globally in 1986, has virtually disappeared. Cases of polio have dropped by 99 percent.

— Sad

Dear Liza,

I’ve always really liked children. Their humor, honesty, curiosity, and wide-ranging emotions move me immensely. But as I find myself well into my reproductive years, I wonder if it’s fair to bring children into such an indescribably sad world. Sure, there is friendship, springtime, good wine, a beautiful book, and a swim in the sea if we’re lucky. But even if I were able to guarantee this hypothetical child a middle-class life (which feels increasingly difficult given tuition costs, rent, etc.), witnessing the world right now is incredibly painful: Syria, starving polar bears, antibiotic-resistant superbugs. Even when we are safe ourselves, remaining cognizant of what’s going on around us feels excruciating. How does one in good conscience bring a being into this world in such dire times, which will probably (socialist revolution pending!) only get worse?

— Sad

Questions? Ask Liza at thenation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend.
**Democracy**

**Beware the Gerrymander**

On January 18, the Supreme Court blocked a lower court’s ruling that would have required North Carolina lawmakers to redraw the state’s congressional maps. The court’s decision found that the districts adopted by the GOP-controlled State Legislature in 2016 were designed to give Republicans an unconstitutional partisan advantage.

In the 2016 elections, Republican congressional candidates won 10 of the state’s 13 available seats, despite winning just over half of the statewide vote. One key finding cited by the panel of federal judges showed that out of 24,516 randomly generated congressional maps, over 99 percent would have resulted in Democrats winning more than the three House seats they currently hold.

Republicans did not hide their efforts to tilt the maps in their favor. As State Representative David Lewis, who spearheaded the redistricting effort, asserted two years ago: “I think electing Republicans is better than electing Democrats. So I drew this map to help foster what I think is better for the country.”

The Supreme Court stay is just the latest twist in a string of gerrymandering cases that will affect the upcoming midterm elections. On January 22, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that congressional districts in the Keystone State had been gerrymandered to benefit Republicans, violating the state’s Constitution.

While North Carolina’s election will likely take place using the old maps, Pennsylvania legislators will have to swiftly redraw theirs.

—Andrew Tan-Delli Cicchi

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**Katha Pollitt**

**Overkill?**

We’re in a time of changing norms and values—at least, I hope we are.

Have we reached peak #MeToo? I can’t stand to read one more word about Aziz Ansari sticking his fingers down “Grace’s” throat and whether she made her distaste so loud you could hear it across the street. So I will simply note a few things and move on. One, never trust a male feminist. Two, in the intergenerational clash that has simmered since #MeToo began, I am trying to be on the young women’s side, since one day the rest of us will be dead, but some aren’t making it easy. Stassa Edwards at Jezebel calls Katie Roiphe a second-wave feminist. Earth to Stassa: Roiphe is 49 and thus was minus-5 years old when Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique; also, she has made a career of mocking and attacking the women’s movement, which is not a very feminist thing to do. In fact, most of the pundits who have attacked #MeToo are not second-wave, or feminist at all (exception: Margaret Atwood). They are just women writers of a certain age. Is “second-wave” now a synonym for “ugly old harridan with a job”? After Ashleigh Banfield of HLN said that Grace was setting back #MeToo by applying the term sexual assault to what was just a “bad date,” Babe writer Katie Way, the author of the original Ansari piece, called Banfield a “burgundy-lipstick bad-highlights second-wave feminist has-been.” (Banfield is 50.) Well, even when I was in my 20s, I thought the ‘60s-era slogan “Don’t trust anyone over 30” was stupid, and this is stupid too. Those second-wavers, now mostly in their 70s and 80s, were brilliant women who invented the very concepts—sexual harassment, acquaintance rape, the right to say no, apologies when back problems made it impossible for him to stand. I didn’t want to believe what apparently “everybody knew.” So I get it when people want to believe that public figures they’ve loved for years—like public-radio hosts Leonard Lopate, Jonathan Schwartz, and Garrison Keillor—are good guys being railroaded by neurotic hanshees who fall to pieces when a man compliments them on their outfit or, in the case of Al Franken, gives them a friendly pat on the behind. I admired those men, and I worry about that too.

It is at this point that the phrase “due process” usually enters the discussion. “Where was the due process?” admirers complain. Others warn against a “rush to judgment” and a “guilt assigned without proof.” I have news: They got more due process than the vast majority of people who lose their jobs. In the cases of Lopate and Schwartz, both of whom were admittedly hustled out of the office in a needlessly dramatic way, there were warnings and lawyers and investigations, all detailed in an article on the WNYC website. Keillor’s case was murkier: For nearly two months, the only version of the story we’d heard was Keillor’s, in which he claimed that the offending incident involved patting a woman’s back—“I meant to pat her back after she told me about her unhappiness and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches,” he said. Meanwhile, Minnesota Public Radio was acknowledging only allegations of “inappropriate behavior” and a “formal complaint.” But as this column went
If you have tried diet, exercise, everything to lose weight, but nothing has worked.

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to press, MPR president Jon McTaggart acknowledged in a letter to listeners that there had been two formal complaints, one made by a woman who alleged unwanted sexual touching and sexual messages directed at her, and another by someone who claimed to know about the behavior. What had seemed like overkill now sounds more justified. Perhaps it was overkill that MPR has removed the archives of A Prairie Home Companion from its website, like Stalin having his enemies erased from group photos. But was Keillor “convicted without a trial,” as one fan wrote to the station? The workplace is not a courtroom. Unless you’re a tenured professor, belong to a strong union, or live in Montana, which has outlawed at-will employment, you work at your employer’s pleasure. You can be fired, or your contract not renewed, for pretty much any reason at all. Women are let go for ambiguous reasons, too. Moira Donegan, creator of the “Shitty Media Men” list, no longer works at the New Republic, for reasons that neither that outlet nor Donegan has made clear. MSNBC parted ways with two of its most visible women-of-color hosts, Melissa Harris-Perry and Tamron Hall, and more recently ended my Nation colleague Joan Walsh’s contract.

It would be better if there were more transparency, which is why some sexual-harassment attorneys argue that we need to greatly restrict or even ban the use of nondisclosure agreements. These not only permit perpetrators to repeat their misdeeds in new jobs, like pedophile priests sent to a new parish, but they enjoin a secrecy that allows people to believe nothing important happened.

Sometimes that may be true. We’re in a time of changing norms and values—at least, I hope we are. Yesterday, men had “a freedom to bother,” as Catherine Deneuve put it. A boss could pester and embarrass the young women in the office, and that was just Bob being Bob. Today, that right is being challenged. That’s a good thing, even if some employers overreact. As the sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom wrote on Twitter: “You will not concoct a norm that increases the freedom of women to work and live with less risk of sexual assault that does not tarnish some ‘good’ men.” That won’t make their admirers feel any better, but it’s nonetheless true. What can I tell you? Social change is hard.

(continued from page 5) The polar bear is heartbreaking. But recently, conservation efforts have saved other previously endangered species. Last year, two species of kiwi were removed from New Zealand’s endangered list. Granted, they aren’t as cute as polar bears, but how about the giant panda? That indisputably adorable animal, while still vulnerable, is no longer endangered, thanks to China’s program of reforestation, crackdowns on poaching, and other efforts on its behalf.

No one on the left ever wants to hear this, but do you know who’s far more serious about making babies than we are? Right-wing religious fundamentalists. If we care about the future of the planet, relinquishing reproduction to ignorant reactionaries hardly seems wise.

If you have children, Sad, you’ll still fret about these larger questions, but you’ll worry more about your kids falling down the stairs, getting hit by a car, or (once they get a bit older) driving home drunk. Child-rearing is a relentless series of wrenching, concrete challenges that sometimes shrinks our universe down to the exact dimensions of its everyday terrors, tasks, and joys.

Still, children have a salutary effect on our own politics. When we bring them into the world, they in turn bring us into it in a new way, giving us a greater stake in the future and even more reason to fight.

SNAPSHOT/
HAMOUDA BEN JERAD

Sahara
Snow Day

People slide down white-capped sand dunes in the Sahara, near the Algerian town of Ain Séfra, after a snowstorm on January 7.

Kamel Sekkouri, who grew up nearby, told The New York Times that he’d seen snow there only five times in the past four decades. He described the sight as “incredible, unbelievable, magical, sensational,” adding, “When you walk in the snowy dunes, you feel like you are in Mars or Uranus.”

Not coincidentally, the snowfall in the Sahara happened at the same time as extreme weather elsewhere: The US East Coast was brutally cold, while Sydney, Australia, sweltered in nearly 117-degree heat, the hottest temperatures there in almost 80 years.
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Prisons Central Booking

Prisons in Florida and North Carolina have banned Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow, a study of mass incarceration and racial discrimination in the criminal-justice system. New Jersey revoked a similar prohibition in January after the ACLU called it unconstitutional (as well as “grossly ironic, misguided, and harmful”).

Earlier, New York Times reporter Jonah Bromwich wrote that the book was rejected by Florida officials because it features “racial overtures.” Though it’s unclear what “racial overtures” means here, it is obvious why officials might feel implicated by the book. A study of mass incarceration is official overtures. The book features “racial overtures,” Bromwich wrote, “in the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination...So we don’t, rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color ‘criminals’ and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind.”

Florida and North Carolina aren’t the only states whose prisons bar certain books. New York implemented but then suspended a new policy that would have required inmates to purchase only from a catalog of approved titles. Texas prisons have a list of 10,000 banned books, including The Color Purple and the Where’s Waldo? Santa Spectacular—though curiously absent from the list is that genre-defining work of racial overtures, Mein Kampf.

Joseph Hogan

Trump’s Appalling Clarity

The president’s racism is in keeping with the long history of US foreign policy.

When Greek Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou visited Washington in 1964, he made no secret to President Lyndon Johnson of his displeasure with the US-backed proposal to partition Cyprus. The Greek ambassador later told Johnson that “no Greek government could accept such a plan.” The American president replied: “Fuck your parliament and your constitution. America is an elephant, Cyprus is a flea. Greece is a flea. If your prime minister gives me talk about democracy, parliament, and constitution, he, his parliament, and his constitution may not last very long.”

America has a consistent history of treating smaller, weaker, poorer nations with contempt. The litany of sponsored coups, assassinations (attempted and achieved), and guerrilla-backed incursions, not to mention threats, is too long to go into here.

But it’s in keeping with US policy conventions that seven months after the State Department described Congolese liberation leader Patrice Lumumba as an “irrational, almost psychopathic personality...whom it was impossible to deal with,” he was assassinated. Or that during a right-wing coup to oust Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2002, the US government at first reserved judgment in public, then—after the putsch attempt failed—blamed not the plotters but Chávez. I hope that [he] takes the message that his people sent him that his own policies are not working for the Venezuelan people, said then-National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. “He needs to respect constitutional processes.”

So when President Donald Trump asked, in reference to immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and the nations of Africa, “Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?,” his sentiments should be understood as firmly in the tradition of official US immigration and foreign policy, not as an aberration. As such, liberal indignation has to engage with two important and challenging issues when it comes to Trump’s bigotry, be it leaked, tweeted, or officially proclaimed. First, it is not unique to him but has been a structural feature of the polity for some time, even when individual leaders may not have embraced it. Second, this would not be possible without broad consent from a considerable section of American society. Liberals and progressives need to come to terms with the fact that not only was it possible for such an openly racist candidate to get elected, but that this could never have happened if the country weren’t more racist than they had previously believed.

America isn’t alone in this dilemma. A diary, by the former head of the UK diplomatic service published in January, revealed that former British premier Margaret Thatcher believed South Africa should be a whites-only state. It also quotes former UK foreign secretary Douglas Hurd observing that under Thatcher, “Cabinet now consists of three items: Parliamentary Affairs, Home Affairs, and xenophobia.” In 1959, the French president, Charles de Gaulle, said of Muslims: “Let’s not kid ourselves!...Have you seen them with their turbans and their djellabas? You can see that they are not French!” De Gaulle also complained that if France achieved integration, “my village would no longer be called Colombey-les-Deux-Églises [Colombey of the Two Churches], but Colombey-les-Deux-Mosquées.”

This is how powerful nations have long looked at the rest of the world: down their noses, from a great height, with considerable and, when necessary, violent contempt. America, like most of the West, has not only referred to but treated much of Africa, the Caribbean, and the other nonwhite portions of the planet as shitholes.

Gary Younge

America has not only referred to but treated much of Africa, the Caribbean, and the other nonwhite portions of the planet as shitholes.
hide behind law and order, welfare reform, the War on Drugs, or school vouchers without ever mentioning race. Abroad, as we saw with the last invasion of Iraq, they claimed that the subjugation and humiliation of poorer, darker nations was motivated by the pursuit of a greater good: making the world safe for democracy and spreading Enlightenment values. As President Richard Nixon’s chief of staff H.R. Haldeman wrote in his journal, Nixon “emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to.”

The fact that Trump has done away with appearances matters. His brazen outbursts embolden that section of white America that has not yet come to terms with either the relatively new reality of a non-racial democracy (it has barely been 50 years) or the relatively immediate prospect of no longer being a racial majority (it will happen in the next 30) to deny the past, contort the present, and resist the future. This is a shift in etiquette with serious consequences. This is where Charlottesville came from. It explains the sharp increase in the number of hate crimes since 2016, particularly around race and Islamophobia. When the president tells police it’s OK to rough up suspects in a country where black people are already being shot in the streets, bad things will happen.

But a shift in tone should not be mistaken for a shift in policy or practice, lest one start to give Trump far more credit than he is due. He didn’t introduce racism, xenophobia, and imperial disdain into the state any more than Barack Obama, by his presence alone, could get rid of them. What is new about this moment is its appalling clarity. The patina of plausible deniability that shrouded a culture of systemic exclusion has been stripped away with great fanfare. Nobody is pretending anymore.

A shift in tone should not be mistaken for a shift in policy or practice, lest one start to give Trump far more credit than he is due.

The work of Sue Coe, an activist illustrator and Nation contributor, and Käthe Kollwitz, a German social realist who died in 1945 and whose art the Nazis deemed “degenerate,” is on display at the Galerie St. Etienne in New York City through February 10 in a show titled “All Good Art Is Political.”

TRUMP ACES ANIMAL-I.D. QUESTION ON COGNITIVE TEST

A childish narcissist and dumb? The White House says: Preposterous! The test proves that he’d never call A camel a rhinoceros.
California Shows How to Beat Trump

America’s future arrives here first—bad news for the president and his Republican enablers.

by PETER SCHRAG
It's now just a year since the inauguration. In that year no party, no lobby, no organization has been as formidable an adversary to the Washington of Donald Trump, Paul Ryan, and Mitch McConnell as California has. None has both the will and the heft that California brings to this fight. None has been as determined.

“There should be no doubt that President Trump has officially declared war on California,” State Senator Kevin de León told The Guardian on January 4, referring to the Trump administration’s plans to prosecute medical- and recreational-marijuana outlets, to allow oil drilling off the California coast, and to intensify efforts to deport immigrants.

When California fights back, it matters. With over 39 million people, it is the nation’s most populous state and the world’s sixth-largest economy, and it has thrived in large part thanks to the immigration that produced its ethnically diverse population. No other state in the Union comes as close to being a model of an alternative to the fearful that produced its ethnically diverse population. No other state in the

California’s resistance encompasses two interwoven strands. One is the determined fight, wherever possible, against the cruelty and inanity of an administration and a Republican congressional majority hell-bent on rolling back the programs and policies of enlightened self-interest enacted over the better part of a century under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The other is a defense of California’s progressive, if still imperfect, success as an exemplar for the nation and the world. The first would not be possible without the second.

California has always been hospitable to innovation and in-your-face independence. It legalized abortion seven years before Roe v. Wade (with a bill Ronald Reagan signed) and passed the nation’s first medical-marijuana law. California is the cradle of American environmentalism, born in large part from the selfish motive of preserving the health and beauty of the place—nationalism of a very high order—and, for more than a half-century, a major influence in national policy.

The most active public official in California’s opposition to the Trump-Republican agenda has been Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who’s given resistance to Washington a priority as high as normal state business, perhaps higher. Governor Jerry Brown’s selection of Becerra as attorney general (after the previous AG, Kamala Harris, was elected to the US Senate in 2016) is itself an indicator of the state’s intention to resist. The son of working-class Mexican immigrants, Becerra grew up in a one-room house in Sacramento, went on to Stanford University and Stanford Law School, and, most recently, served for 24 years in the US House of Representatives, where he once chaired the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

In his first nine months as attorney general, Becerra:

§ Stood up for sanctuary cities, filing a suit challenging a new Justice Department requirement that in order to qualify for certain federal crime-prevention funds, cities and counties (including sanctuary cities, of which California has dozens) must give jailhouse access to federal immigration agents and provide 48 hours’ notice before releasing any undocumented immigrants sought by the feds. Those conditions, in the words of the attorney general’s office, represent an “unconstitutional attempt to force California law enforcement officials to engage in federal immigration enforcement.”

§ Warned Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke that he will “take any and all action necessary to protect” California’s six environmentally important national monuments—of 129 nationwide—whose status was the subject of an unprecedented Trump-ordered “review.” The review sought to determine whether the monuments would be retained, reduced in size, or eliminated from the registry altogether. As Becerra noted, presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to Barack Obama had established the national monuments to prevent the “exploitation of these lands for short-term profit or expediency,” which “would permanently scar these national treasures.” None has ever been eliminated, Becerra reminded Zinke, nor does federal law empower any president to do so. Nearly three months later, Zinke withdrew the California monuments from his hit list. But in December, he chopped huge chunks out of two in Utah.

§ Sued to stop Trump’s attempt to build a wall at the Mexican border, arguing that it violated federal environmental laws and the Constitution’s separation of powers by giving the president authority “to waive state and local laws.”

§ Sued to stop Trump’s rollback of the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that employers cover contraceptives as part of their employees’ health insurance. The rollback, the suit charged, effectively created an unconstitutional discrimination against women.

§ Sued, and got a lower-court order, to keep the Environmental Protection Agency from delaying the implementation of new rules to reduce leaks of methane, a gas that ranks among the most powerful accelerators of climate change, from 100,000-plus oil and gas wells on the nation’s federal lands.

§ Announced that he will resist any attempts by the feds, as US Attorney General Jeff Sessions would dearly like to do, to crack down on California residents using or growing cannabis under the state’s new marijuana-legalization laws.

Yet Becerra is hardly alone. Other public officials in the state have launched the following salvos against the Trump-GOP agenda:

§ The passage of SB 54, the California Values Act, which prohibits state and local law-enforcement officers from detaining, arresting, or interrogating undocumented residents for “immigration enforcement purposes.” Because of the compromises that were made to secure passage, it’s more a gesture of good intent than the “sanctuary law” of the newspaper headlines. But in a state that already has scores of sanctuary cities and counties, it reinforces the message. Sessions called the act “unconstitutional.” Brown, in reply, called it “a reaction to the kind of xenophobia that we see too much of coming out of Washington.” The bill, Brown said, “strikes a balance that will protect public safety, while bringing a measure of comfort to those families who are now living in fear every day.”

§ The decision last spring by the state Air Resources Board (ARB), long the nation’s leader in curbing greenhouse-gas pollution, to reaffirm its tightening emissions stan-
The reaction to Trump’s DACA decision was swift. Fifteen states sued immediately, citing, among other things, the “bad hombres” attacks Trump launched against Mexican immigrants during his campaign. A few days later, the University of California filed its own suit. Because of Trump’s attack on DACA, the suit says, “the Dreamers face expulsion from the only country that they call home, based on nothing more than unreasoned executive whim.” Moreover, the suit continues, “[t]he University faces the loss of vital members of its community, students and employees. It is hard to imagine a decision less reasoned, more damaging, or undertaken with less care.”

Now add to the list the we-dare-you letter that lawyers for the leaders of the State Legislature—all Democrats—sent last April to Sessions and John Kelly, now White House chief of staff, who at that time was secretary of homeland security. The letter followed one from Sessions and Kelly snidely rejecting California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye’s demand that federal immigration agents stop “stalking courthouses and arresting undocumented immigrants.” Such measures, she said, “not only compromise our core value of fairness but they undermine the judiciary’s ability to provide equal access to justice.”

The Sessions and Kelly letter charged that California and “many of its largest counties and cities have enacted statutes and ordinances [to] hinder [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] from enforcing immigration law by prohibiting communication with ICE, and denying requests by ICE officers and agents to enter prisons and jails to make arrests.”

In response, the legislators asked, through their lawyers, what specific laws Sessions and Kelly were referring to. “The Administration,” they wrote, quoting a 1991 Supreme Court opinion, “appears to forget that our system is one of dual sovereignty between the States and the Federal Government.”

The unpopularity of Trump—both the man and his policies—coupled with the increasing number of Latino voters, has dimmed the reelection prospects of a number of California Republicans. Just after New Year’s, two announced that they won’t run again in November. One is Darrell Issa, whose top priority during the Obama years was accusing the president of nefarious wrongdoing without much evidence, and who won reelection in 2016 by less than 1 percent (in a district that Hillary Clinton carried); the other is Ed Royce. Democrats are also targeting five other California Republicans who have been made vulnerable by their support for Trump policies: Jeff Denham, David Valadao, Steve Knight, Dana Rohrabacher, and Mimi Walters. Together, those seven Republicans represent nearly a third of the 24 seats the Democrats need to regain control of the House in the upcoming midterm elections.
agement of banks to the ban on the sale of plastic water bottles in national parks. It can’t prevent Pruitt’s nonenforcement of those environmental laws that he can’t legally change, or veto tax bills that punish blue states and reward red ones. It can’t stop Trump’s nuclear saber rattling or the decimation of the State Department and his arrogant contempt for diplomacy.

And yet no place is a more hopeful model for the future than California. Despite recent tax increases and tough environmental laws, its economy has been outperforming the rest of the nation. Between 2012 and 2016, California accounted for over 17 percent of US job growth. In 2016 California’s GDP grew at nearly twice the rate of the national economy. California is the nation’s leader, and often the world’s, in progressive energy policy and in reducing the per capita consumption of water, fossil fuels, and other natural resources; in creating the technologies of the future; and in celebrating the rich cultural mix that ethnic diversity produces.

That’s part of California’s story. The other part is its own recent history. In 1994, voters passed Proposition 187, an initiative that would have denied undocumented immigrants all public services, including schooling. Just as Trump does today, California back then sought to drive out immigrants, but later came to understand there was no future in that. After all, immigrants provided much of the labor force for the state’s agriculture and service sectors. Now California protects immigrants, and its majority-minority population—white, black, Latino, Asian, and so forth—looks very much like America’s will in another 25 years.

“There’s more confidence here; there’s less fear,” Brown told a CBS interviewer in December. “People are looking to the future. They’re not scared, they’re not going inward, they’re not scapegoating, they’re not blaming Mexican immigrants. They’re not blaming the stranger…. It’s dynamic. It’s a culture on the move—not pulling up the drawbridge out of fear and economic insecurity.”

The lessons from California—and the political risks to Trump and the Republicans who have enabled him—are especially applicable in states like North Carolina, which Trump narrowly carried in 2016. With the fastest-growing Latino population in the country in the 20 years after the 1990 census (rising from just under 77,000 in 1990 to 890,000 in 2010), North Carolina is becoming a near replica of the California of a generation ago, both in its high-tech base and in its demographics and politics. There was an anti-immigrant backlash, in North Carolina and nationwide, in 2016, as there had been in California in 1994. But many of those young immigrants will become voters in the years ahead.

These demographic trends bode ill nationwide for a Republican Party that Trump’s divisive actions and rhetoric—and GOP leaders’ acquiescence to them—have marked as blatantly racist. As the number of Latinos and Asians reaching voting age has risen, Republicans’ vote margins have been shrinking, even in red states such as Texas and Arizona. With a Trump-like candidate like Roy Moore on the ballot, even Alabama, among the reddest of the red states, can flip. Looking ahead to the 2020 presidential election, a nonpartisan team of demographers has projected a Democratic victory under four of six political scenarios—and under all six scenarios in 2032.

The American future, it’s been said, arrives first in California. The state’s resistance to Trump and the GOP, and the demographic, political, and economic realities that give California’s example such force, offer hope to the resistance across the nation. California may be a blue state, but its values and achievements are more in line with those of most Americans than Donald Trump’s are, as illustrated by the fact that Jerry Brown’s approval numbers dwarf Trump’s 55 to 38 percent. Democrats elsewhere should take note.
NOWHERE TO GO

As a backlash grows in Lebanon against Syrian refugees, more than a million men, women, and children may be forced to choose between the misery of life in exile and returning to a war zone.

ERIC REIDY
BEFORE ZAHOUR AL-WAIS LEFT HER HOME IN southern Syria six years ago, she put all of her most treasured possessions into a plastic bag and buried it under a tree in her family’s garden. The bag contained a diary full of notes about her daily activities and happiest memories; certificates of achievement given to her by teachers in school; and small gifts, like seashells, that she had traded back and forth with her friends. Once the bag was safely in the ground, Zahour and her parents and eight siblings crowded into a bus packed with as many of their possessions as they could fit and then headed toward the border with Lebanon.

Zahour was 15 at the time, and the war in Syria was still in its first year. The peaceful protests that began in March 2011 had been met with brutal repression by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and as the uprising spread and more and more people fell to the bullets of regime soldiers and snipers, the opposition started to arm. The spiraling conflict had not yet reached the town of Adra in the countryside of Damascus where Zahour and her family lived, but it was getting close. The sound of airplanes and fighting in the distance was ominous and frightening, and Zahour and her younger siblings asked their father if they could leave.

“Everyone around us was starting to flee. So we decided not to stay there and die, but to come here and live,” Zahour, now 21, says while leaning against a pillow in the tent she calls home in a makeshift refugee camp in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley.

By leaving Syria, Zahour and her family became part of a massive exodus. More than 5 million people—nearly a quarter of Syria’s prewar population—have fled the country since 2011, with the vast majority seeking refuge in neighboring or nearby countries. In many cases, people chose to flee to Lebanon simply because it was the closest safe haven. Now the country, which in 2010 had a population of 4.3 million people, is host to an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees—the largest per capita refugee population in the world. Most come from areas sympathetic to the opposition and were displaced by fighting and heavy bombing by the Syrian regime.

Initially, Lebanon did little to restrict the number of Syrians entering the country. Although the government didn’t make life easy for the refugees, it didn’t try to push them out. But as the crisis dragged on, the mood in the country shifted decisively against the refugees, and the already thin welcome mat began to fray. In January 2015, the Lebanese government introduced visa restrictions that prevented most Syrians fleeing the war from entering the country legally, and in May of that year it ordered the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to stop registering new cases, meaning
that the UNHCR can no longer grant new arrivals status as refugees. Most ominous of all, Lebanese politicians have increasingly, and almost unanimously, begun saying that it’s time for Syrian refugees to go home.

Those politicians include some of the most powerful leaders in Lebanon, among them the country’s president, Michel Aoun. Aoun made headlines last September when, in an address to the United Nations General Assembly, he spoke of Syrian refugees as posing an economic and security threat to Lebanon and insisted that conditions are safe enough in Syria for most people to return. “There is no doubt that it would be better for the United Nations to assist [the refugees] in returning to their homeland rather than helping them remain in camps lacking the minimum standard of a decent living,” Aoun said.

The intensifying hostility toward the Syrian refugees has deep and gnarled roots. Lebanese and Syrian politics are intimately entangled—Syrian troops occupied Lebanon from 1976 until 2005—and Lebanon’s political factions are divided between those who support and those who oppose the Assad regime. With the influx of large numbers of mostly Sunni Syrian refugees, many fear that the delicate sectarian balance at the base of the Lebanese political system will be upset. The refugees have also strained the country’s already weak political services, and both the media and the public often blame them for a stagnating economy. On top of all this, Lebanon’s experience with an earlier group of refugees—Palestinians forced from their homes after the creation of Israel in 1948—is fueling fear that the longer the Syrians remain in the country, the more likely it is that their presence will be a catalyst for instability and conflict.

What this means for these refugees is that life in Lebanon, which has never been easy, has gotten notably harder. And it may get harder still if the calls for them to leave—which have already inspired several politicians to draft proposals for their repatriation—grow louder. As it is, videos began circulating on social media last summer of people assaulting Syrians, and the UNHCR has documented an uptick in the number of cases of verbal and physical attacks.

But what are the refugees to do? Few other countries are willing to welcome them. Syria’s other relatively stable neighbors, Jordan and Turkey, are already saturated with refugees and have introduced restrictive border controls (Jordan has even reportedly begun deporting refugees). And both the United States and the nations of Europe are intent on blocking people from seeking asylum within their borders.

For Syrian refugees, this has meant a series of ever-shifting living arrangements. They’ve been forced to move seven times, either by landlords who didn’t want them on their property anymore or because their flimsy shelter was no match for the storms that thrash through the Bekaa Valley in the winter. Most recently, a fire destroyed a section of the camp where they were living, forcing the family of 11 to stay in a rented garage for three months while they saved enough money to build a new tent out of a wood frame covered in plastic tarps.

There are other troubles as well. “The people here treat us badly,” Zahour says. “There’s no work. We can’t live a normal life.” Indeed, Syrians are largely barred from employment, aside from manual labor. Most of the time, they work in the informal economy for low pay—and, without contracts, it is easy for employers to get away with exploitation and abuse. Zahour herself used to work in a juice factory, but eventually quit because her 14-hour shifts were exhausting and she had gotten hurt several times when the bottles broke and cut her hands.

Yet despite all this—despite the instability, discrimination, and economic hardship—Zahour and her family would rather remain in Lebanon than face the dangers of returning to Syria. “We thought when the crisis ended we’d go back, but it hasn’t ended,” Zahour says. “The country is destroyed. People think there’s going to be a quick solution—the country will be fixed, everyone is going to return, and life is going to go back to how it was. It will take 20 years, at least, for people to go back.”

Those who want the refugees out of Lebanon say that Syria is now safe enough for people to return to. While making this argument at the United Nations, President Aoun, a supporter of the Assad regime, said that the war has come to an end in the parts of Syria where most refugees are from. “As for the claim that these people will not be safe if they return to their country,” he added, “we are all aware that this is a pretext, and it is unacceptable.”

But for Um Moustafa, 35, Aoun’s speech doesn’t make much sense. She’s been in Lebanon since 2012 and lives in an informal refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley with her husband and young son. Their camp is 15 minutes from the Syrian border, and last year she sneaked across to visit her elderly mother, who had fallen sick, in the city of Homs. “I
The Nation.

February 12/19, 2018

witnessed the destruction that happened in Syria....

How is it possible that they are convincing people it is safe? When did they fix all this?” she asks. “The only way I will decide to go back is if I see everyone...going back, and the hospitals and the schools are all working, and when there is no shelling and there is safety.”

The assertion by Aoun and others that large parts of Syria are safe is based on the turn the war has taken in the past two years. Since Russia intervened militarily on the side of the Assad regime in 2015, the Syrian government, with crucial assistance from Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbol-
lah, has gained a decisive upper hand in the fighting and consolidated control over Syria’s major population centers. There is now a sense that the war is drawing to some sort of conclusion, and even countries that oppose the regime are acknowledging that Assad will likely stay.

Still, the situation on the ground is immensely complex. In addition to the territory controlled by the regime, there are four de-escalation zones in opposition-held areas where the Assad government negotiated tentative cease-fires with various rebel groups. There are also other territories under the control of still more factions, including Kurdish forces, the Turkish government and its allied rebel militias, and the Islamic State, however diminished.

Conditions in all of these areas are varied and constantly shifting, ranging from relatively stable to being active war zones, according to Aron Lund, a fellow at the Century Foundation. And even in parts of the country controlled by the government where fighting has largely stopped, the situation is not necessarily suitable for people to return. “You have areas that are whole and up-and-running and functioning,” Lund says, “and other areas that just are not.”

Fighting and bombing by the regime have turned some of Syria’s once densely populated urban areas into uninhabitable wastelands, and there isn’t much reconstruction going on. “If you’re a Syrian refugee in Lebanon and you came from one of these places that are just, you know, rubble, then you have nothing to go back to,”

Eric Reidy is an investigative journalist based in Beirut. In 2016, he was a finalist for a National Magazine Award.

Lund says. Moreover, once the civil war does end, the Syrian economy could take at least 30 years to recover, according to a 2014 United Nations Relief and Works Agency report.

The list of refugee concerns is extensive. “What kind of guarantees do they have that they will be able to go back to their properties?” asks Carnegie Middle East Center director Maha Yahya. “That they will have access to education, that their children won’t be kidnapped on the road while they’re walking, that there won’t be retribution, that there won’t be mandatory [military] conscription?”

These concerns are not abstract for Nazem, a 16-year-old from the Damascus countryside who, like several others interviewed for this article, asked that only his first name be used out of fear of retribution by the authorities in Lebanon or Syria, should he eventually return. “It’s not safe,” he says of Syria. “The minute you decide to go, you’ll be taken to the army and you might die the next day.”

Like many others, Nazem’s family is staying in Lebanon so that he and his brothers won’t have to face conscription. He is also afraid that the Syrian government will retaliate against people who supported the opposition, or who are simply suspected of supporting it. “If they decide to take you, you’re dead,” Nazem says, adding: “My cousin has been detained for seven years.”

Bassam Khawaja, a researcher with Human Rights Watch, is unequivocal about the dangers: “The idea that there are safe zones in Syria that people could return to and not fear for their lives or fear persecution is just utterly ridiculous.”

For many Syrian refugees in Lebanon, this seems like common sense.

L

ast autumn, I spent three days traveling around the Bekaa Valley and Beirut speaking to Syrian refugees. Over the course of more than a dozen conversations, the responses had a startling uniformity: People were not happy where they were; they faced discrimination and economic hardship.
and often lived in dire conditions, but going back to Syria in the current situation was not an option. For some people, as long as Assad remains in power, it may never be.

Salih Halif, 35, is from the countryside of Aleppo, his face weathered from long hours working in fields under the sun. He lives with his extended family in a small collection of makeshift tents just 10 minutes from the Anti-Lebanon mountains that form the border with Syria. “The people in Lebanon think we have to go back,” he says. “They don’t know the situation. If I go, I’ll be taken for military service.”

Salih would like to go back “in the future,” he adds. “I have a house and my land. My country is there,” he says, pointing in the direction of the border. But now is not the time.

In Beirut, I met Amina, 55, who comes from a village outside Homs. She lives in Shatila, the teeming refugee camp where, in 1982, a Christian Lebanese militia allied with Israel massacred scores of Palestinians. The camp is now home to both Palestinians and Syrians who have moved in because rent is cheaper there than elsewhere in the city.

“Oh of course every Syrian wishes to go back to our country,” Amina says. But she worries that her one able-bodied son will be forced into military service and that the family won’t be able to survive financially in Syria’s broken economy. “Someone has to work to make a living,” she tells me. Here, at least, her son is able to earn enough working as a day laborer for the family to get by, if just barely.

In another apartment in Shatila, Najwa, a 40-year-old Syrian-Palestinian woman, sits with her elderly mother. The older woman, a double refugee who first fled her home in Palestine in 1948, pulls a bullet casing from her purse that she found on the ground earlier in the day, after two men got into a fight outside their home. Armed clashes between militias and individuals are common in the camp, which exists as a kind of lawless zone that Lebanese security forces generally abstain from entering. But despite these dangerous circumstances, Najwa says, as long as Assad remains in power in Syria, she and her mother are not planning to return: “There’s no such thing as a guarantee with this regime.”

Yet the idea that Syrian refugees will remain in Lebanon for an extended period of time is exactly what’s fueling fears among Lebanese and leading to increased pressure on people to return. For many in Lebanon, the country’s history with Palestinian refugees is a cautionary tale that they are trying, often haphazardly, not to repeat.

**Wall of the dead: A memorial to victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacres.**

**To this day, Palestinians in Lebanon endure nearly complete economic and political marginalization.**

In 1948, following the mass expulsion of Palestinians from the newly declared state of Israel, around 100,000 refugees poured across Lebanon’s southern border. Once it became clear that Israel would not allow them to return to their homes, the new arrivals posed a serious challenge to the young country where they found themselves displaced.

Lebanon had only declared independence from France five years earlier, and its political system was based on a delicate balance of power between the country’s three main religious groups: Maronite Christians and Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The various factions were already deeply divided over the identity of the fledgling state, the nature of power sharing, and Lebanon’s position in the Middle East. The presence of the Palestinians, the majority of whom were Sunni, exacerbated these existing tensions. Some Lebanese parties supported the Palestinian cause, while others called on them to leave. The government opted for a policy of nonintegration for the vast majority of Palestinian refugees to preserve the sectarian balance—a policy that continues to this day.

The situation was further complicated in 1970 when the Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by Yasir Arafat, set up its headquarters in Beirut and began using parts of southern Lebanon to launch attacks against Israel. As the PLO grew in power, with support from leftists and pan-Arabist and Sunni political groups, the predominantly Christian parties in Lebanon accused the Palestinians of creating a state within a state and accelerated the arming of their own militias. It didn’t take long for skirmishes to break out, and in 1975, after a Christian militia massacred a bus full of Palestinians in Beirut following an assassination attempt on a prominent Christian leader, the Lebanese Civil War began.

“I can’t say [the Palestinian issue] was the only factor, of course, but it was one of the factors that contributed to the civil war,” says Nasser Yassin, director of research at the American University of Beirut’s Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs.

The fighting lasted 15 years, laid much of the country to waste—including its capital, Beirut—and resulted in an estimated 120,000 deaths before finally coming to an end in 1990. Palestinian militias were deeply involved, especially before Israeli forces occupied Beirut in 1982 and forced the PLO from Lebanon. Almost three decades have passed since the war’s end, but Palestinians in Lebanon continue to endure nearly complete political and economic marginalization, says Gaby Jamal, a Palestinian political analyst and former fighter in the civil war. “They are really trying to push Palestinians to leave.”

When Syrians started to stream across the border in 2011, their arrival was inevitably seen by Lebanese through the lens of this tortured past. To avoid a possible repeat of history, the Lebanese government prohibited international organizations from establishing formal refugee camps for Syrians, because such camps had formed the backbone of Palestinian political and military organization. The government also refers to Syrians as “displaced persons” instead of as “refugees”—an attempt to draw a distinction
with the Palestinians and also possibly to circumvent the obligations concerning refugees in international law. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Thanks to the Lebanese government's restrictions on visas, today 80 percent of Syrian refugees live without legal residency, which restricts their movement and causes many to live in fear of authorities. Meanwhile, human-rights groups have documented cases of the suspected torture of Syrians detained by the army; this past July, four Syrian men died in custody under suspicious circumstances. Even local governments have begun cracking down: At least 45 municipalities have established curfews for Syrians that are enforced by local police or vigilante groups.

To be sure, there is another side to this story. Despite much ugliness and hostility, many communities in Lebanon have been supportive hosts to Syrian refugees. And while overall growth is down, the bottom hasn't fallen out of the Lebanese economy. Moreover, some of the country's poorest communities are benefiting from the international aid and development money flowing in to address the crisis.

"Lebanon has been both gracious and ungracious," says Yahya, of the Carnegie Middle East Center. "Both the government and the Lebanese have done quite a lot for the refugees—a lot of positive things." But, she adds, "that doesn't mean there hasn't been a lot of negative things happening."

At the end of June, five suicide bombers blew themselves up during an army raid on refugee camps in Arsal, a region along the Syrian border that was a haven for hard-line groups fighting in Syria—including the Islamic State—until Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army drove them from the area in separate military campaigns last summer. The attack on the army ignited the simmering fears about the presence of Syrians in the country. At the United Nations, President Aoun said: "Terrorists have taken shelter in refugee gathering areas and camps, transforming them into a fertile terrain aiming to carry out terrorist activities."

Makram Rabah, a Lebanese political analyst and historian, takes exception to this language. "Trying to pass on that every refugee is a suicide bomber is ridiculous," he says. "These cells, at least the ones that are serious, are being caught...they're being apprehended."

Even so, Aoun isn't the only person expressing these concerns, and there's no denying the underlying anxieties fueled by the calls for return. "There are existential fears...in this country about the prospective change to demographics," Yahya says.

Even advocates for the refugees aren't calling for their long-term integration into Lebanese society. "No one actually...has this in mind," says Yassin, of the American University of Beirut. "I think this would really be a trigger for civil war.... We're just saying, 'Support them until they go back.'"

Since the start of last November, the Lebanese media and public have been consumed by the shock resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri after he was summoned to Saudi Arabia. The political drama, including Hariri's return to Lebanon and subsequent retraction of his resignation, has provided a momentary distraction from the issue of Syrian refugees. But if elections proceed as planned in the spring, chances are that politicians will begin pressing the issue again, "using rhetoric, strategies, tactics to mobilize" their base, Yassin says.

In the meantime, this prolonged state of limbo has taken a devastating toll. Seventy-six percent of the Syrians in Lebanon live in poverty, a 5 percent increase since last year, and around 90 percent are in debt. Thirty percent of primary-school-age children aren't receiving an education, and that number jumps to more than 80 percent for high-school-age children. The alarming statistics continue for virtually every measure of well-being, from health to housing to employment.

This prolonged state of destitution may ultimately prove as dangerous for Lebanon—to say nothing of the refugees—as any of the threats the government fears. One concern is that having hundreds of thousands of people without citizenship, jobs, or social inclusion will lead to militancy and political ferment. Another is that, faced with hardship and discrimination in Lebanon, refugees may begin choosing to return to Syria while it is still unsafe. "I think you'll see more and more people making difficult decisions to go back to Syria, rather than live in Lebanon in these types of circumstances," says Human Rights Watch's Khawaja.

So far, the number of people who have gone back to Syria from Lebanon is small—just 8,000 in the first five months of 2017, according to data collected by the UNHCR. But "time is against us," Yassin says. "The longer Syrians stay, the more you will get people questioning their stay," and the more the tensions will build.

For now, however, there really is no other option for refugees like Zahour al-Wais, whose diary may still be waiting in the garden behind her family's house in Adra. Zahour spends her days cleaning and cooking in the family's tent and visiting with her friends in the camp. To pass the time, they smoke tobacco out of a water pipe and talk about where they might be able to find work. The larger forces of war and politics and history bearing down on their lives seem entirely out of their control, as do their futures.

"I just want one day to finish and then the next day to come and finish, too," Zahour says. "To be honest, I don't think about my future."
RUSSIA'S
“IMITATION DEMOCRACY”

Vladimir Putin rules an authoritarian system first established by Boris Yeltsin.

by TONY WOOD
After a year in which the news cycle brought a constant series of shocks and outrages, perhaps the least surprising development of 2017 was the announcement, on December 14, that Vladimir Putin would be running for the Russian presidency once again in March 2018. Since he returned to the Kremlin in 2012, there has been little doubt that Putin would seek another six-year term in office. There can be little doubt, too, that he will win. So far, the other contenders include some of the usual suspects—the social-liberal economist Grigory Yavlinsky, the nationalist provocateur Vladimir Zhirinovsky—as well as a few novelties: TV personality Ksenia Sobchak is standing for the liberal Civic Initiative party; Boris Titov, the Putin government’s commissioner for entrepreneurs’ rights, is running for the neoliberal Party of Growth; and the Communist Party has this time decided to put up Pavel Grudinin, an agronomist and manager of a successful produce farm near Moscow, instead of its perennial losing candidate, Gennady Zyuganov.

All lag far behind Putin in terms of popular support, while the anti-corruption campaigner Aleksei Navalny—the Putin opponent who has received the most media exposure outside Russia—was officially excluded from the race on December 25 by the country’s electoral commission. Navalny has called for a boycott of the March vote, and for street protests in the meantime—perhaps hoping for a rerun of the demonstrations that accompanied Putin’s return to power in 2012. But even if they materialize on the same scale as before, they are unlikely to have much impact on the course of the election itself.

Barring an outlandish turn of events, then, Putin will stroll to victory, extending his hold on the Kremlin to 2024. What does this prolongation of his power mean, both for Russia itself and for its relations with the West, which have reached new lows amid accusations of election hacking in the United States and collusion with the Trump presidential campaign? Putin has already been at the helm for 18 years, matching Brezhnev’s tenure as Soviet leader. If he makes it to the end of a fourth term, Putin will have ruled his country for almost a quarter-century. This lengthy dominance in itself partly explains the overwhelming tendency to identify Putin with post-Soviet Russia as a whole: The fortunes of the country have become fused, especially in Western media coverage, with his character and personality.

But what is the nature of the political system over which Putin has presided for so long, and how much does it actually owe to his personal whims and preferences? Much Western commentary on Russia is wedded to the media exposure outside Russia—was officially excluded from the race on December 25 by the country’s electoral commission. Navalny has called for a boycott of the March vote, and for street protests in the meantime—perhaps hoping for a rerun of the demonstrations that accompanied Putin’s return to power in 2012. But even if they materialize on the same scale as before, they are unlikely to have much impact on the course of the election itself.

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But what is the nature of the political system over which Putin has presided for so long, and how much does it actually owe to his personal whims and preferences? Much Western commentary on Russia is wedded to the idea that there is a fundamental difference between the way the country was run in the 1990s and how it was run in the 2000s—the idea being that a period of chaotic freedoms was followed by a closing of horizons, the dynamism of free markets stifled by the return of the state’s heavy hand. According to this line of thinking, Putin has overseen a strange combination of regressions, sliding back to the authoritarian habits of the Soviet era while at the same time reviving the autocratic practices of czarist times. (Hence, for example, Putin is either The New Tsar, the title of Steven Lee Myers’s 2015 book, or a sinister KGB agent, as he is characterized in Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin, the 2013 study by National Security Council adviser Fiona Hill and her co-author, Clifford Gaddy.) But what is today referred to in Russia as the “Putin system” is neither neo-Soviet nor retro-imperial; rather, it is something more distinctively post-Soviet that took shape in the early 1990s, and was then consolidated and continued by Putin himself after 2000.

The foundations for this system were laid by Boris Yeltsin. From the start, there was an ugly flaw built into Russia’s post-Soviet political architecture: Though the country was now formally a democracy, whenever the will of the electorate ran up against the imperatives of free-market reform, democracy always came second. Much of the key legislation that dismantled the Soviet command economy was enacted by presidential decree rather than submitted to scrutiny by the country’s elected representatives. Even so, Yeltsin faced early opposition to his program of “shock therapy.” In October 1993, he dealt with it by sending tanks to shell the recalcitrant parliament into submission, and then pushing through a new constitution—approved that December after a rigged referendum. The result was a new, ultra-presidential system that gave the executive branch vastly greater powers than the country’s legislative institutions. In 1996, a hugely unpopular Yeltsin was reelected amid widespread vote rigging, and with covert assistance from the Clinton White House—“meddling” or “hacking,” if you will. After this tainted triumph, Yeltsin adviser Anatoly Chubais crowed that “Russian democracy is irrevocable, private ownership in Russia is irrevocable, market reforms in the Russian state are irrevocable”—the list making clear what he thought the key ingredients of “democracy” were.

Thus, long before Putin came to power at century’s end, there was a critical gap between the Russian people’s democratic aspirations and the Kremlin’s priorities. The system that developed in the early 1990s was what Russian political scientist Dmitri Furman called an “imitation democracy”: It had all the outward appearances of a democracy—regular elections, a parliament with rival political parties, a seemingly free press—but little of the substance. Putin inherited this system and prolonged its life span. The market reforms of the 1990s have not been reversed, and though select oligarchs and companies have certainly been targeted for expropriation—most famously Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his oil company, Yukos—the principle of private profit has hardly been undermined: Russia now boasts 96 billionaires, according to the 2017 Forbes list. This is, notably, 96 more than it had when Putin came to power.

This larger system, in place throughout Putin’s almost two decades in power, will certainly survive well beyond the 2018 presidential contest. But there is a strange temporal quirk built into this year’s electoral calendar. Since the outcome of the March vote is scarcely in doubt, the main question being debated among media commentators and political analysts in Russia is what will happen in six years’ time, when Putin will once again...
have reached the constitutional two-term limit. Paradoxically, the very likelihood that Putin will be in the Kremlin for at least another half-decade is already encouraging people to think about who or what comes after him. Can the system over which he presides adapt to his departure from office in 2024?

A lot of ink is being spilled now in Russia about whether Putin will in fact leave power when his term is up. Among the scenarios recently floated by Russian pundits are constitutional reforms that would shuffle some of the powers of the presidency to the parliament. This could also involve a boost in the authority of the prime minister’s office relative to the Kremlin, creating another power center to counterbalance it. Might Putin sidestep once more into that role, as he did from 2008 to 2012—and this time stay there? While certainly possible, such an outcome seems unlikely—especially if the recent past is any guide. A decade ago, when Putin’s second presidential term was nearing its end, there was similar speculation that he would either amend the Constitution to do away with term limits altogether, or engineer a shift to a kind of parliamentary system. In the end, he did neither, handpicking Dmitry Medvedev as his successor and then returning to the Kremlin in 2012, with the length of presidential terms now conveniently extended to six years instead of four.

What Putin does in 2024 depends to some extent on how safe he feels his retirement will be. Here, the record for Russia’s Soviet and post-Soviet leaders suggests he shouldn’t face many difficulties. To be sure, Khrushchev lived out a miserable few years after being ejected from power in 1964. (The question didn’t come up for Brezhnev and his immediate successors, who died in office—Brezhnev in 1982, Andropov in 1984, Chernenko in 1985; there was a running joke in the mid-1980s about Kremlin funerals becoming so frequent that it was worth getting a season ticket.) Although Gorbachev’s political influence has all but vanished since the collapse of the USSR, he has been left to his own devices by the authorities. Yeltsin, too, was able to enjoy his retirement in peace, largely thanks to Putin himself. Back in 1999, Putin’s first move as acting president, after Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned on New Year’s Eve, was to grant his predecessor immunity from prosecution. Can he find someone who will do him the same favor—and, more importantly, who will be able to make it stick?

This personal predicament of Putin’s is tied up with the larger question of how much the system is dependent on him personally. Much of the Russian elite’s nervousness about what will happen in 2024 is premised on the idea that the country’s governing structures might all collapse without this particular individual at their center. In one version of this argument, it’s because of Putin’s uncanny charismatic authority, which gives him a dictatorial power that brooks no challenge. In another version, it is Putin’s ability to balance different interests against each other that has kept him in power—a kind of anti-charisma that has made him an empty center around which various Kremlin factions revolve.

But both lines of reasoning overlook the extent to which Putin has maintained a pre-existing system rather than created a new one. There are, in fact, any number of potential successors who would probably run the “imitation democracy” in much the same way, from Medvedev (again) to close Putin ally Vyacheslav Volodin to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Indeed, the central issue at stake over the next few years is not whether “imitation democracy” can function with a different figure at its summit—it clearly can, as Putin showed when he took over from Yeltsin. The question, rather, is whether it will be able to function at all. The crucial factor is that the “Putin system”—with or without Putin himself—now has to operate in a much more difficult environment than before.

In the early 2000s, Russia experienced a burst of economic growth thanks to high oil prices, enabling it to recover from the deep depression of the 1990s. The petro boom allowed Putin to pay off the country’s debts and to pay wages and pensions on time. There was clearly an obvious material basis for his sustained popularity. Yet for some years now, the economic picture has been far less favorable. Russia was hit hard by the 2008 global crisis, experiencing the sharpest contraction among the G-8 countries, and had barely begun to recover when it was battered again by tumbling oil prices and Western sanctions in 2014. Oil prices have partially recovered since then, and some sectors of the Russian economy—notably agriculture—have done relatively well amid the sanctions, thanks largely to the dwindling competition from imports. But overall, the economy remains sluggish.

To be sure, rising tensions with the United States over the past few years have to some extent offset Russia’s economic woes. Anti-Russia sentiment abroad has a way of bolstering domestic support for the Kremlin, and in that sense the “election hacking” narrative has done Putin more favors on the home front than its promoters might like. But this trade-off won’t continue indefinitely. It’s frighteningly possible that the animosity toward Russia in US policy-making circles will harden into a consensus in favor of out-and-out regime change—in which case the world would be headed for another disaster to add to the epochal devastation of the Middle East. But it’s also possible that the current levels of geopolitical loathing won’t be sustained, in which case Putin might well outlast them. Here, the very fact of Putin’s stubborn persistence in power may affect Washington’s calculations.

In the meantime, the Kremlin will clearly be looking for ways out of the dilemmas presented by the combination of tightening economic constraints and an adverse international climate. Developing closer trade ties with China may be one part of the solution, reducing Russia’s dependence on oil and gas exports to Europe. But even after a significant recent expansion in trade, China barely overtook the Netherlands as a destination for Russian exports last year, and there is some way to go before Beijing alone can counterbalance slowdowns in trade elsewhere.

For now, Putin’s next term seems not to promise any radical departures. The most widely publicized projects floated for Russia’s economic future involve no substantive changes in the underlying model. The “left-nationalist” Putin adviser Sergei Glazyev called for quantitative easing to spur growth, while Aleksei Kudrin—a former finance minister who became a critic of the Kremlin after 2011, but again seems to have Pu-

![Grigory Yavlinsky](Image 258x250 to 324x330)

![Aleksei Navalny](Image 258x50 to 324x129)

![Ksenia Sobchak](Image 258x250 to 324x330)
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Stan W. US war veteran and retired professor
tin’s ear—issued a plan a few months ago for a liberalization drive in 2018–24 that would involve a new round of privatizations. Regardless of whether either plan is adopted, there doesn’t seem to be any serious, large-scale commitment to improving basic public services, which are already hopelessly inadequate to Russia’s needs. If anything, there will be further moves to expand the steady commodification of education, housing, and health care that has taken place under Yeltsin and Putin alike, extending the reach of private capital even as the state cuts back social spending. Military spending, for its part, is already the object of a tug-of-war between different elite factions. After increasing from 3.2 to 4.4 percent of GDP between 2014 and 2016, it was recently trimmed; but if confrontation with the West continues, there will be pressure to ramp it up again—which may well come at the expense of already shrinking social budgets. Either way, it seems likely that Putin’s fourth term will have regressive consequences for most of Russian society.

The system of “imitation democracy,” then, seems unable to imagine its future except as a continuation of the recent past, as the regime enters what political scientist Yekaterina Schulmann has called “calorie-conservation mode.” This seems at best like a recipe for a long, Brezhnev-style stagnation, and at worst for entropic descent toward collapse. In either case, it inevitably raises the question of how and when the Putin system might end. Is it slated for a confictual disintegration, like other authoritarian regimes before it, or might there be a peaceful transition toward a different model?

It’s still far too soon to venture any guesses on that front. But how events unfold will ultimately depend on two things: the attitude taken by Russia’s elites and the organizational strength and outlook of opposition movements. The system has so far been a nonstop bonanza for members of the elite, so there’s little reason to think they would desert it. Here, there is a crucial difference between today’s Russia and the USSR. As the Soviet system neared collapse, many of its elites were able to defect to the new national states that emerged, making off with property and power as they traded one flag for another; there is no equivalent set of structures they could migrate to now. For their part, Russia’s opposition movements remain electorally weak and are still vastly outmatched by the organizational power, financial resources, and territorial reach of Putin’s United Russia party. On this level, there would seem to be no immediate systemic threat to the current order.

Yet socially, the picture is less clear-cut. While the Kremlin still enjoys substantial popular support, especially among state-sector workers, the past few years have seen a surge of social activism across Russia, involving a variety of groups, that recalls the civic flowering of the perestroika years of the 1980s, ranging from anti-corruption campaigns to environmental protests, from housing struggles to embryonic labor movements. These developments remain small and geographically dispersed, making it difficult to forge lasting alliances and organizational connections. But it is from within this pluralistic, socially and ideologically varied terrain that any consequential alternatives to the Putin system would have to emerge—alternatives that is, that would imagine substantively different ways of organizing Russia’s socially and ideologically varied terrain that any consequential alternatives to the Putin system would have to emerge—alternatives that is, that would imagine substantively different ways of organizing Russia’s socio-cultural and political space.

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2018 is the right time to read Lynne Segal. While many liberals and leftists consider the nebulous notion of “resistance” in broad terms—how do we participate? What methods are most effective?—Segal gives us insight into “another set of worries”: “whether and how feminism remains relevant to any such resistance.” Before I opened the recent reissue of her memoir, Making Trouble: Life and Politics, first published in 2007, I hadn’t seen the current predicament framed so succinctly. Is there anything of value left in the feminist project? Or has it become “co-opted and tamed by, even complicit with, the forces that have brought us here?” (“Here,” as you might expect, means living in the time of Trump, Theresa May, Brexit, and other nominally democratically selected horrors.)

It’s difficult to receive this inquiry as anything other than rhetorical, since, in Segal’s view, one of those forces—the sort of aspirational individualism that our current stage of capitalism tends to promulgate—has proved to be the single most effective tool for neutering feminist language and precepts. We are now living, Segal asserts, in an era in which...
which mainstream feminism is no longer “oppositional but presented as a firm ally of the capitalist market”; what’s important, for many current feminists, is that women have equal access to the starting line of an endurance race that ends in misery for most. It’s this strain of aspirational feminism that insists that Taylor Swift and Megyn Kelly qualify as feminists, Hillary Clinton as a political savior, and Fearless Girl, a sex-and-race-discriminatory investment firm’s cynical art-vertisement, as a rallying cry for gender equality.

To hold fast to this version of feminism in the Trump era is a bit like clinging to a pile of dynamite in the middle of a forest fire. Yet it’s the only feminism that some women have ever known, and it’s no easy feat to convince them that the individual power a woman might amass through self-involvement and self-promotion—and almost inevitably at the expense of other, less advantaged women—is not synonymous with true liberation. Now 73, and having devoted nearly her entire adult life to prioritizing collective triumph over individual, Segal confronts a devastating possibility: “Have we feminists wasted our time on politics?”

Despite a long career as one of England’s leading socialist feminists, Lynne Segal isn’t well-known in the United States. Though she’s focused on the so-called “sexy” aspects of feminism—sex itself, of course, and pornography, and masculinity—none of her eight often thick and sometimes dry books have made much headway among wonkish, academically inclined younger American feminists. In Making Trouble, Segal describes how her fellow Australian, Germaine Greer, has long viewed her as something of a rival, or at least a competitive nuisance; but Segal’s influence is much more limited, and she has yet to write anything akin to Greer’s The Female Eunuch or The Whole Woman.

Innovative theory and bombastic delivery are not Segal’s style, and she knows it. (In a typically endearing and generous moment, she writes of Greer: “I was always her junior in every sense.”) And yet there are many characteristics of Segal’s work that make it worthy of a wider audience: She’s a reflective, careful thinker who has served as a steadfast historian of the movement that she began contributing to in her early adult years. As her published work attests, the whole of her personal history is defined by her relationship to feminist politics. It has shaped her life in every conceivable dimension—familial, professional, social—and earned her measured loyalty in the process.

Segal’s interest in radical politics started in Sydney in the 1960s, where she “felt, in some deep but largely inexpressible way, that most people led lives based on lies, hypocrisy and cruelty.” Her mother was a dauntingly accomplished yet deeply unhappy surgeon (the second woman in all of Australia to qualify for the profession), her father a “strangely sadistic” doctor who, according to a horrifying family anecdote, seems to have sexually exploited at least one of his patients before having her committed. So it’s no wonder that Segal found darkness in the ways of the bourgeois world.

That early unease began to take its shape when a teenage Segal linked up with a “small group of anarchists” based in Australia known as the Push, whose luminaries were mostly men who spent more of their time theorizing than protesting. The Hungarian philosopher George Molnar and the anthropologist Michael Taussig were among this crowd, but the absence of superstars surely had to do with the fact that “engagements with the outside world were sporadic,” and few participants identified themselves as activists.

But the Push did give Segal much to take with her into public life: It was with this cohort that she experienced her first arrest (for putting “DON’T VOTE” stick- ers on public property) and also discovered the joys of the sexual revolution; both were consonant with the crew’s devotion to “individual freedoms of every kind.” At the time, Australia was staunchly censorial about sexuality, and the Push was a crucial outlet for Segal’s sexual self-discovery. “Sex and love, more than anything else, were surely what I was searching for in those early days,” she writes, doubting herself as she does. “But that is looking back, as a reluctantly ageing woman.”

Organized feminism was still nascent in much of the world, and male supremacy unmistakably at play among radicals, but the Push’s anarchist politics created “a space that encouraged women to think and act just ‘like a man,’” and hence for us more freely than anywhere else in those days,” she adds. It was, let’s face it, like many leftist circles: a fantastic space not only for political awakening but for getting laid.

In 1969, Segal completed a PhD in psychology. She also had a son with James Clifford, an artist who became her reluctant and consequently temporary husband. (Segal’s parents were insistent on the union, which she says she knew “was a massive mistake.”) Upon the birth of their only child, Clifford effectively affirmed his homosexuality to Segal and promptly refused any further sexual contact with her.

“I was lost, confused, unsure and bewildered about what to do with my life,” Segal recalls of that year. She ended up moving to England, and it was there, in London, that she joined the growing women’s movement and became committed to feminism. Segal describes herself in those years as “an under-cover academic” whose “job as a lecturer remained secondary to my life as a community organizer and activist.”

Where she’d rank her role as a mother is left unstated here, though Segal believes that her experience of raising a child was a critical component of how she understood and lived out feminism. “It is unyielding dogma today that Women’s Liberation ignored the needs of mothers,” Segal observes, and yet most of the “key instigators” of the movement were mothers, and they could only have been activists through the “supportive domestic arrangements”—communal living, chore sharing, and child-care duty—that the women provided one another.

Such judicious defensiveness exemplifies one of Segal’s gifts: Throughout Making Trouble, she pushes back against the unfair and ahistorical criticisms of second-wave feminism but concedes those complaints that are founded, including but not limited to a sort of porousness in the movement’s rhetoric that left it so vulnerable to those aforementioned deradicalizing pressures. “We did not envisage how easily women would slide into using other women as nannies and cleaners,” she admits, while providing at least a partial explanation for this blind spot. “Ambitious professional women, wherever they were in the Seventies, did not for the most part embrace Women's Liberation…. It was seen then, probably correctly, more as an impediment than an advantage for career success.”

In that 1970s moment, the most committed players took it for granted that women wanted to transcend class divides rather than exploit them. Outsourcing child care or household chores to less advantaged women would have been apostasy, especially if done in the service of professional gain. But what a difference a few decades make when it comes to women and work. Just ask Sheryl Sandberg.
Growing a Sustainable City?
The Question of Urban Agriculture
by Christina D. Rosan and Hamil Pearsall

Growing a Sustainable City? analyzes the development of urban agriculture policies and their role in making post-industrial cities more sustainable. Christina Rosan and Hamil Pearsall tell the story of change and growing pains as a city attempts to reinvent itself and reveal how growing food in the city has become a symbol of urban economic revitalization, sustainability, and gentrification.

The Internet Trap
Five Costs of Living Online
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The Internet Trap provides a new perspective on the dark side of the internet, and gives readers the tools to become smart users of the internet.

A Conviction in Question
The First Trial at the International Criminal Court
by Jim Freedman

This is a gripping account of the first case to appear at the International Criminal Court, the trial of Union of Congolese Patriots leader and warlord, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo whose crimes included murder, rape, and the forcible conscription of child soldiers.

Gentrifier
by John Joe Schlichtman, Jason Patch, and Marc Lamont Hill

‘This book helps us shelve what we thought we knew about gentrification, and gives us instead a brutally honest reckoning with the ills, conveniences and virtues of gentrification.’

Michael Eric Dyson, author of ‘Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America’
Making Trouble is a refutation of today’s mainstream feminism, not only explicitly but—more powerfully—implicitly. In the prologue, preface, and final chapter, Segal sets aside the book’s narrative to speak directly about what she’s learned as a result of all that feminist living: “even as we are encouraged to individualize at every turn, we speak only with and through the words of those with whom we manage to affiliate.” Or to put it more simply, other people matter: They matter so much that they make us who we are. And it’s in the book’s execution that this conviction comes across so beautifully. Segal seems to have read almost everything and to find value in almost everything she reads, much of which she then eagerly shares with her own readers. She thoroughly, meticulously practices collectivity in her writing as much as in her politics by drawing in the words of dozens of other writers and activists.

That’s true of her previous books as well. In Straight Sex, her 1994 book on the politics of pleasure, she methodically summarizes and evaluates a range of conflicting schools of thought on the topic. (It might aid in imagining the scope of the undertaking if you know that every chapter starts with three epigraphs.) In Slow Motion, her 1990 book on the fragile state of masculinity, she navigates her subject matter similarly, pulling not just from theory but from poetry and memoirs, too. In one typical passage, Segal draws from oral histories, a charity’s leaflets, and a reader response to a newspaper to sketch a picture of AIDS and homophobia in the late 1980s.

But this prismatic effect is most compelling in Making Trouble, where it seems to be a direct manifestation of Segal’s obvious love and respect for her comrades, as well as a detailed diagram of how indebted her life is to theirs, as opposed to the reflexive habit of an avid reader who buries herself in research. Any given passage might refer to novelists Erica Jong, Rita Mae Brown, and Anya Meulenbelt, or to the researchers Cynthia Cockburn and Ursula Huws and the global organization Women in Black. This good academic habit of acknowledgment and reference is a sad rarity among younger feminists, particularly those with large Twitter followings and columns in mainstream publications, who in spite of their university pedigrees avoid regularly bringing others’ work to bear on their own—or, at least, admitting to doing so. (Are they simply not reading what other women write? Or are they choosing not to explicitly incorporate it?)

For women who have been raised in the scorched landscape of our contemporary world, where sisterhood is often superficial and disingenuous and inequality is rampant, Segal’s cooperative analysis should be a revelation. “Citations can be feminist bricks,” Sara Ahmed wrote in last year’s Living a Feminist Life. “They are the materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings.” That phrasing is especially fortuitous when considered in light of Segal’s seven years in a London group home with “three single mothers...at its heart.” For many single mothers today, too, you create your dwelling collaboratively or not at all, and the same holds true for any durable feminist action. No one should be left behind; if we do not go together, we don’t go at all.

Inevitably, noble principles become messy when executed in the flawed world of right now. Segal was “both house owner and highest earner” in the group home, where no one paid rent and conflict over chores, children, and romantic partners was fairly routine. Even the most conscientious praxis can’t overcome the inconvenience of human emotion, be it jealousy, resentment, or basic hunger-induced moodiness. Nevertheless, Segal’s “memories of life in that decade are mostly of the friends I made, and the fun we had.”

One of Segal’s guiding convictions, which resonates throughout Making Trouble, is that activist engagement is not just about political success and collective triumph, but about joy—like the sheer pleasure she had when living with her friends in the London home—and in the book’s conclusion she calls for “a resolve, wherever possible, to keep friendship, warmth and sociability alive in political work.” Joy, for her, is inextricable from caring about others and treating them well, in a spirit not of charity but of camaraderie.

This becomes the explicit concern of Radical Happiness, Segal’s latest book. “While there is much official talk about happiness today,” she argues in its opening, “it rarely includes any rhetoric of joy, least of all mention of collective joy.” Happiness is often taken to be a personal experience, not one with political implications. But for Segal, it is integral to our political struggles. Joy is not only desirable; it “may actually be necessary for us even to envisage real social change, that is, may be essential for us to resist mere accommodation to the known harms of the present.” In other words, we need to conceive of and yearn for happiness, not just for ourselves but for each other.

Like her friend Barbara Ehrenreich, who tackled the witless and intrinsically conservative nature of “positive thinking” in her 2010 book Bright-Sided, Segal rejects today’s dominant discourse concerning happiness. The “happiness agenda” of governments and employers is “concerned above all with softening the costs of ever-rising social wretchedness” without disrupting the conditions that produce that wretchedness. As a result, the responsibility for being happy is ladled out to each individual rather than conceived as a cooperative project.

This is not to say that happiness is categorically inaccessible to individuals, but rather that “the triggers for joy are almost always something others might share...even if we experience them alone” and, further, that joy is particularly acute in “situations we feel we have worked to help create.” Segal’s predilection for politically derived pleasure is obvious, so she tries to temper her own enthusiasm by acknowledging that “politics is just one form of collective bonding.” Even so, she cannot help but hasten to add that it is “an enduringly significant and transformative one”—in other words: the best.

Much of Radical Happiness consists of very smart, if familiar, overviews of the history of depression, the fraught nature of romantic love, and how modern culture is hostile to exuberant behavior and those things that make us happy. Segal can be an elegant writer when she gives herself space to expand at length on her insights. But her default mode is that of the synthesizer or documentarian, and parts of Radical Happiness, like Straight Sex and Slow Motion before it, are packed so full of others’ ideas that it’s hard to discern her own. That’s not necessarily a bad thing, though such extended summarizing risks and occasionally yields enervation for the reader.

Yet what’s most striking about Radical Happiness and Segal’s work, taken as a whole, is how completely they seem to have been conceived in the spirit of service. It’s an old-fashioned notion in 2018, especially outside of spiritual or religious circles; today’s activism is usually understood less as taking care of others and more as opposition, righteousness, or emergency response. (In her argument for utopian thinking, Segal quotes the feminist theorist Wendy Brown: “political identities [are] founded upon a sense of personal injury, and the need for protection, rather than generating any more progressive political vision of the future.”) But Segal’s writing is not about herself, even when it ostensibly is. (“This is not a memoir,” she insists at one point in Making Trouble.) Instead, her feminism, despite being profoundly personal, pursues collective liberation; even the fact that “liberation” sounds so corny to contemporary ears is further evidence of what feminism has lost over the years.
Given this view of feminism’s power to truly unite women, as opposed to merely forging superficial alliances of convenience that catapult a few to fame, Segal’s unsung status begins to make better sense. She wants to understand and to educate; she wants to advance her politics but not herself, and she hopes to achieve a sense of individual liberation—the sort of personal freedom envisioned by the Push in her teenage years—through community-minded work that promotes the elevation of others.

Radical Happiness ultimately arrives at a convincing argument about our need to overcome the now-common tendency to view dystopian thinking as a political act in and of itself. “Neo-liberalism has had one remarkable success, despite all its own contradictions and disasters,” Segal writes. “It has convinced so many that its version of predatory, corporate capitalism is inescapable.” To formulate a utopia to take its place, we must concern ourselves not with “final goals or end-points, but rather with desire: the collective longing” for better conditions for us all. If happiness is “not so much an emotion, a psychic state or inner disposition, but rather a way of acting in the world,” then so is the path to real social change. It is defined not by a list of demands, but by a commitment to the common good. A feminism that’s about showing up for each other and not merely ourselves: how radical.

The history of revolutions has gone global. Historians today can hardly avoid a powerful sense of how the worldwide flow of capital, goods, people, and ideas shapes local circumstances. Guided by this understanding, they have now composed a significant body of work showing how similar forces in the past could put states and empires under massive strain, resulting in potentially revolutionary crises. Histories of events like the French and Russian revolutions have always taken their global dimensions into account, but recent work has insisted on the paramount importance of these dimensions. Justin du Rivage’s newly published Revolution Against Empire, for example, casts the American Revolution as the result of a debate within a globe-spanning British Empire as to what form the empire should take. The French historian Pierre Serna has proposed seeing the French Revolution as just one chapter in a long struggle waged throughout the world between elites and the peoples they subjugated, both in overseas colonies and in homegrown “internal colonies.”

LITTLE SPARTAS
What causes some cities to become sites of revolution?

by DAVID A. BELL

The Unruly City
Paris, London, and New York in the Age of Revolution
By Mike Rapport

historian Pierre Serna has proposed seeing the French Revolution as just one chapter in a long struggle waged throughout the world between elites and the peoples they subjugated, both in overseas colonies and in homegrown “internal colonies.”
Mike Rapport’s lucid, engaging, and evocatively written The Unruly City: Paris, London, and New York in the Age of Revolution seems at first sight like another contribution to this global turn. The three cities were all important nodes of global exchange with diverse, cosmopolitan populations, and the book devotes significant space to the connections between them and their respective countries. But The Unruly City isn’t really a global history, at least in the new sense, for it pays relatively little attention to the cities’ positions in global networks of exchange. Instead, Rapport’s book demonstrates how attention to the specific geography and social forces of a city can illuminate a critical question about which the new global history has little to say: Why do people in some places—but not others—become radicalized, driving revolutions into previously uncharted territory?

Analyses of ocean-spanning empires and trade networks can do much to explain the political, economic, and social stresses tied to globalization that can lead to revolutions breaking out in the first place. However, to understand events like the American and French revolutions, one must look not simply at their origins in the wider world, but also at how particular environments—above all, urban ones—could become crucibles of intense and rapid political change. Both revolutions quickly took on a life of their own and brought about events that few, if any, people had predicted or could even have imagined at the start. The American Revolution rejected monarchy, shook the social structures of the new state, and tied its legitimacy to the sweeping principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. The French Revolution went even further in its challenge to the reigning social order: In addition to overthrowing a monarchy, it brought about the execution of a king, the flourishing of utopian visions of human improvement, and an attempt to abolish Christianity on French soil. Great Britain also seemed for a time to be fostering the development of a volatile, potentially revolutionary politics, but there the government and social elites ultimately managed to prevent an explosion.

One reason that global history has difficulty with radicalization has to do with the scale on which it operates. Global history is, by definition, large-scale: Even works that use a single individual to elucidate global processes, like Linda Colley’s The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh, still cover huge swaths of the world. Radicalization, by contrast, tends to take place in relatively small, contained spaces, where like-minded people can exchange news and ideas, reinforce their shared passions, and magnify their outrage at their opponents. Today, we can experience this phenomenon virtually, through social media; those living in the mid-19th century could experience it within the spaces of intensive political socialization provided by revolutionary political parties. But before the existence of such parties, radicalization generally required either an accelerated circulation of printed material, large-scale face-to-face contact, or, preferably, both. And by far the easiest place to find these things was in cities, which offered more than just population density: They had cafés, taverns, clubs, and libraries where patrons could discuss political issues and read newspapers and pamphlets. They had squares and parks where crowds could gather in large numbers, and they had long traditions of popular unrest and mobilization. They also had—especially in capital cities—government buildings and monuments that provided ready targets for these crowds, and whose capture had both practical and deeply symbolic meaning. Cities, in other words, contained a mix of social and cultural elements that could turn volatile, even explosive, with terrifying speed and push dramatically outward the limits of what was politically imaginable.

Revolutionary Paris offers a classic example of why this was the case, and Rapport, a French-history scholar by training, deals with it well. In 1789, at the start of the French Revolution, Paris had a population of about 650,000, crammed into an area less than a third the size of the modern city, which meant that, despite the lack of high-rise apartment blocks, it had only a slightly lower population density than it has today. Paris was crowded, disorderly, loud, and, given the lack of anything close to an adequate sewer system, unbelievably odoriferous. “Why they tell me I am no judge, for that I have not seen it yet,” Rapport quotes Abigail Adams as writing to her niece in 1784. “One thing, I know, and that is that I have smelt it…. It is the very dirtiest place I ever saw.”

At several points in Paris’s tumultuous history, popular insurrections had forced the king to flee the city. And while Paris was not the capital of France at the start of 1789 (Louis XIV and his ministers had decamped to Versailles a century earlier), it still was home to much of the government bureaucracy and also rich in the symbols of royal rule. When crowds stormed the fortress and prison known as the Bastille on July 14, they did not overthrow Louis XVI or seize control of his government. But given the Bastille’s fearsome reputation as a symbol of royal despotism (even if, by 1789, there were just seven prisoners left in it, including two lunatics), its fall inspired revolutionary uprisings across the country, and Louis quickly acquiesced to major revolutionary reforms.

During the revolution, scores of newspapers were printed in Paris, many of them on a daily basis, flooding the city. The major sites of political activity all lay within little more than two miles of one another. When church bells sounded an alarm, large crowds could assemble within minutes. The great chronicler of 18th-century Parisian life, Louis-Sébastien Mercier (whom Rapport doesn’t quote nearly enough), compared the revolutionary metropolis to “a city under siege; almost every day there were the drumbeats…the shouts of the militants, gunshots, the fears of some, the ferocious joy of others, and predictions of the most terrible catastrophes.” It was an exhausting experience: “How have we aged over the past eight years,” Mercier wrote in 1797. “Time and again, it was armed insurrection by Parisian militants that drove the French Revolution to the left.

Soon after the fall of the Bastille, Rapport notes, one small electoral district on the Left Bank became an especially febrile hub of radicalism. This was the Cordeliers district, named for a local convent and located around what is now the square of the Odéon on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Three of the revolution’s most famous firebrands lived there: the great orator Georges Danton and the journalist-politicians Camille Desmoulins and Jean-Paul Marat. Meetings of the district assembly were loud and raucous: Members denounced supposed counterrevolutionary conspiracies and impelled one another to ever more extreme stances. Desmoulins called the Cordeliers district a “little Sparta” and claimed that he knew all its residents by sight. When moderates in the national government redrew Paris’s internal borders in 1790 and
restricted voting to the well-off, the radicals of the Cordeliers formed a club in the neighborhood to continue their militant activities, opening its doors to both bourgeois and plebeian members.

Earlier than anyone else in France, members of the club called for a democratic government based on universal male suffrage, for the replacement of the monarchy by a republic, and for a war of liberation against the rest of Europe. When a young woman stabbed the fanatical Marat to death in 1793, club members orchestrated elaborate funeral ceremonies and, according to one account, suspended an agate urn containing his heart from the ceiling of their meeting hall. A club member declared: “O heart of Jesus, O heart of Marat...you have the same right to our homage.... Their Jesus was but a prophet but Marat is a god.” Only four years before, such a ceremony would have been unimaginable in a country where the Catholic Church still possessed immense land and power and at least the nominal allegiance of nearly the entire population. The intensive radicalization illustrated by the ceremony could only have happened in a place like Paris.

London and New York didn’t experience anything like this degree of radicalization during the Age of Revolution, but both served as crucibles of intense political activity in their own right. London’s 1 million inhabitants (as of 1800) were spread over a much larger area than those of Paris, but much of its political activity took place within the square mile of the City (then, as now, the financial district), which had its own government and police forces. In the 1760s, the City provided the base for the radical politician John Wilkes, who pushed for an expansion of the franchise; instead, they were protesting a set of parliamentary reforms that sought to ease the official persecution of Roman Catholics in Britain. Led by Lord George Gordon, a Scottish peer otherwise well-disposed to political reform, the sectarian Protestant crowds marched from St. George’s Fields to Parliament, and there the protests turned violent. A series of anti-Catholic riots followed, lasting six days, spreading over much of London and taking at least 285 lives. Some of the rioters burned to death after they invaded a Catholic-owned distillery where 120,000 gallons of gin exploded, destroying some 20 houses as well as the distillery building. “Streaks of blue liquid flame ran over the paving stones and down the gutters and gathered in fiery pools,” Rapport writes.

Many observers blamed the Gordon riots on the earlier reform movement. Edmund Burke, with his signature vituperative eloquence, wrote of “much intestine heat” and “a dreadful fermentation. Wild and savage insurrection quilted the woods, and prowled about our streets in the name of reform.” But, in fact, most middle-class Wilkesites looked on with horror at the rioters’ violence and attacks on property. Wilkes himself, now a London alderman, took personal command of armed patrols and helped defend the Bank of England. In his diary, he recorded: “Fired 6 or 7 times on the rioters...killed two rioters directly opposite to the great gate of the Bank; several others in Pig Street and Cheapside.” As Rapport perceptively observes, in London the events of 1780 badly fractured the sort of connection that the Cordeliers in Paris was able to nourish a few years later between plebeian crowds and middle-class radicals.

New York, with a population of about 25,000 in 1776—less than one-twentieth the size of London at the time—offers a very different case from the two European cities. Its role as a nursery of unruly revolutionary radicalism was also limited by the fact that soon after the proclamation of American independence, the British Army dealt George Washington his worst defeat ever in New York and then occupied the city until the end of the Revolutionary War. Philadelphia, a more important American city at the time and the site of more extensive radical political activity, might have made a better choice for Rapport.

Even so, the denizens of New York did experience their own version of political radicalization. Here too, as Rapport notes, particular spaces took on outsized symbolic and practical importance. He singles out the Common, a large open area on the site of today’s City Hall Park, close to what was then New York’s northern edge. In 1766, after the British Parliament had repealed the much-hated stamp tax, a militant group known as the Sons of Liberty celebrated the event by dragging an old ship’s mast from the docks and planting it in the Common, then decorating it with slogans. It soon became known as the Liberty Pole. A few months later, angry British soldiers hacked it down. Over the next year, two more Liberty Poles suffered the same fate, until the Sons put one up with an iron-plated base and a permanent watch. But on January 16, 1770, following new colonial protests against British policies, a group of soldiers stole by the guards in the early-morning hours, drilled a hole in the pole, filled it with gunpowder, and blew it up. That incident provoked what New Yorkers long remembered as the Battle of Golden Hill, in which soldiers with drawn bayonets fought angry rioters. On February 6, 1770, a crowd of thousands applauded as a team of horses dragged yet another set of masts from the shipyards to the Common. The result was the most impressive Liberty Pole yet, standing 68 feet high, anchored 12 feet into the ground, and protected along two-thirds of its height by iron casing.

The duel between the Sons of Liberty and the soldiers, comic as it may seem in retrospect, played a crucial role in radicalizing the ordinary people of New York, giving them an object lesson in the importance of political symbolism. Not coincidentally, six years after the last Liberty Pole went up, the Common became the place where an aide to Washington read the Declaration of Independence to New Yorkers, with Washington himself pres-
ent. No sooner had the reading concluded than crowds of New Yorkers and Continental Army soldiers hurried a mile down Broadway to Bowling Green, where they tore down a two-ton statue of George III on horseback—the lead would be melted into bullets. Even a decade earlier, such an action would have struck most New Yorkers as near sacrilege.

As Rapport notes, conflicts like these resonated far beyond the borders of New York, Paris, and London, threading these revolutionary cities together. Following the example of Liberty Poles and Liberty Trees in the United States, a virtual forest of liberty sprang up across revolutionary France. John Wilkes was a hero in New York as well as London, and clubs like the Cordeliers had imitations in both cities. In June 1793, when the French ship *Embuscade* arrived in New York Harbor festooned with revolutionary slogans, a large crowd marched down to the waterfront to greet it singing “La Marseillaise.” Although it would be an exaggeration to speak of a “radical Internationale” in the late 18th century, networks of revolutionaries certainly did exist, and the printing press, in this golden age of pamphleteering and political journalism, made the spread of ideas between these revolutionary cities all the easier.

But while the networks and the newspapers could spread the word of radical politics, they could not, by themselves, generate radicalization. For ordinary people in these cities to adopt political positions thoroughly at odds with what they themselves had believed only a few years before—to revolt against legitimate sovereigns, social hierarchies, and even established religions—they needed more than just to hear about other people doing the same thing somewhere else. They needed the visceral, intense experience of sustained political involvement, day after day—marching, shouting, arguing, fighting, and sometimes risking their lives. This is what 18th-century cities could provide: It was in the hot house of urban politics—that the Age of Revolution turned truly revolutionary, and that the crises of empires could be translated into a new and audacious promise of human liberation.

However much the global turn in history can add to our understanding of this period, we should not lose sight of this fundamental point. And as examples as different as the Occupy movement and Kiev’s Euromaidan should remind us, even in this age of social media and sophisticated political-party operations, urban environments still possess an unsurpassed ability to foster radical political change.

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**WITHOUT WARNING**

Margins and the mainstream at the New Museum’s “Trigger”

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Sometimes it happens that you meet someone briefly and then say to yourself, “I want to get to know that person better.” Usually, though, it doesn’t happen. Maybe you’re too shy to follow up. Or the person just inexplicably disappears from the scene. Something similar can happen on a less personal level: You read about someone who strikes your imagination, and you think to yourself, “I must find out more.” But maybe your research leads to a dead end. Or, more likely, you get distracted by other things; your resolution fizzes, and you regret it later.

In 2015, when the Whitney Museum opened its new building in Manhattan’s meatpacking district, among the works that caught my imagination in its first show was Hans Haacke’s notorious conceptual piece *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971.* When this collection of photographs and text was originally set to be shown, at the Guggenheim, the museum canceled the show and fired its curator, claiming that this documentation of more than 100 slum properties and their tangled ownership couldn’t be art. After seeing the work at the Whitney, I went to view some of the tenement buildings whose facades Haacke had photographed. A number of those on the Lower East Side, where I lived at the time, had disappeared; some had changed with gentrification; and a few looked pretty much the same as they did in 1971.

I became curious about something that Haacke had bracketed out of his documentary project: the life behind those facades. Who’d lived there? What had their lives been like? When Haacke made the work, it must have seemed self-evident that the slumlords who owned those buildings were ruthless...
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exploitors of their impoverished tenants. But the subsequent upscaling of the neighborhood is unlikely to have dramatically improved the renters’ housing conditions, or those of their children.

Unfortunately, in the time I spent preparing my response to the Whitney show, I wasn’t able to find out much about the individual inhabitants of the tenements whose ownership Haacke traced to the Shapolsky organization, but I did find something striking. It was an announcement from 1972: “Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries meet Friday at 6:00 p.m. at Marsha Johnson’s, 211 Eldridge Street, New York, N.Y., apt. 3. For information write: S.T.A.R., c/o Marsha Johnson, at the same address. Power to all the people!” I particularly liked that final twist on the famous slogan: not “all power to the people,” as the Black Panthers used to proclaim—which seems to imagine the people as unitary—but “power to all the people,” which recognizes that the people are many rather than one.

Who was this Marsha P. Johnson, I wondered, whose ideas of power and of the people were so much more forward-looking than most of those in circulation then (and now)? I found out a bit: that she was an activist and drag queen, a fixture on the downtown scene; that she was involved in the great uprising at the Stonewall Inn in 1969; that she died under mysterious circumstances in 1992, when she was just 46 years old. Her death was initially declared a suicide, but later the cause was changed to “undetermined.” And that’s where my investigation trailed off. There was plenty more information out there, but I had other work to do, other research to follow up on, and Johnson slipped to the back of my mind with a note attached: “I’d like to know more about her.”

### Love Meetings

I would have died for our sins
Honey, I would be a zombie
I’d have turned my sisters in
If I wanted to be a saint
I would sleep when it was dark
I’d be a loyal to the law
Not the queens in the park

Johnson’s inspiring defiance is undercut by melancholy—with the weariness brought on by struggle, and a sense of the brutal difficulty of existence. Then there’s a final fore-shadowing of her death in the Hudson River:

I’m not sayin’ that it’s easy
To shine, to love, to twirl
I’m not sayin’ it don’t hurt
To be awake in this world
But the river keeps on flowing
The water’s cool, deep, and blue

The film cuts briefly to found footage of the real Marsha Johnson, somehow looking more intense, a bit tougher and more serious, than the glamorous figure cut by Taylor. This deliberate underlining of the disparity between performer and subject—or, rather, between Taylor’s performance of Johnson and Johnson’s performance of herself—poignantly highlights the unceaseness behind even the most confident presentation of self.

If the film’s obvious takeaway is about the pain one suffers “to be awake in this world,” there’s a subtler implication that such wakefulness is not to be found on the right side of the law, but in defiance of the diurnal round and in making common cause with the people whose lives play out in the park, at night, rather than behind closed doors. If there’s any truth to that, then we have to wonder, as Taylor’s Johnson looks straight out at us from the video: How awake can we be in an art museum?

It’s a question posed more bluntly in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz’s 2012 video installation Toxic—also a reenactment of sorts, and equally concerned with its own theatricality and artifice. Set on a stage filled with potted plants and glittering tinsel—when one of the characters tries to sweep it up, she seems only to spread the mess around—the video ends with a re-creation of a 1985 interview with Jean Genet broadcast on the BBC. But in Boudry and Lorenz’s version, the French novelist and playwright is replaced with a nervously smoking drag queen (played by Werner Hirsch). In the original, Genet wonders why the film crew remains silent and unseen, and demands to know why they don’t revolt and take his place before the camera—in other words, why do they submit to the illusion? Toxic, then, is a clever appropriation and restatement of Genet’s message. But then it emerges that for the drag queen, just as for the French writer, being the subject of an interview—far from a desirable sign of status—is more akin to the police interrogations that she experienced as “the thief I was 30 years ago.” Hirsch’s drag queen herself outnumbered: She says she wants to “break the order” of things, explaining, “On one side, there is the norm—the side where you are, and also outside of this room, the producers of this film, the editors, et cetera. And on the other side, there is the margin, where I am…. Yes I am afraid to enter the norm. And if I am annoyed right now, it is because I am in the midst of entering the norm…. But I am not angry against you…. I am angry at myself because I accepted to come here.”

For viewers of the video, Hirsch seems to be saying that the norm is where we are as we’re watching it—that is, in the museum itself, as well-behaved museumgoers who implicitly accept the order of things. What does it mean that the once and seemingly still subversive gender identities revealed or evoked by the works in “Trigger” are becoming part of the norm? I’d like to see that as progress, but Genet, as channeled by Hirsch, warns me that this too might be an illusion. People who have been pushed to the margins—the gender-nonconforming among them—have had to invent, of necessity, their own worlds, alternative cultures. Can the vitality of these cultures persist when they are, however tentatively, coaxed out of the shadows where they have flourished?

A partial answer to such questions emerges from another of the video works on view: Sharon Hayes’s Ricerbe: three (2013), a 38-minute group interview with some students at Mount Holyoke College. The students make up an ethnically mixed group whose self-identifications range from straight to gay to trans to not sexually active, encompassing all points in between. Straightforwardly shot, Ricerbe: three seems almost artless, though it also has a specific artistic model: It’s an update on Pier Paolo Pasolini’s 1965 documentary feature Comizi d’Amore (Love Meetings), for which he interviewed groups of Italians about their views on love and sex. Some of Hayes’s questions are the same as Pasolini’s, but of course the answers are different. What emerges from the students’ varied responses is the extraordinary diversity—and, in many cases, the happy ambiguity—of the ways that young people claim their sexuality and identity (or don’t identify) their gender. Needless to say, Mount Holyoke students may not be typical of American youth, but if one tries to imagine how different the answers to Hayes’s questions would have been in Pasolini’s day, there’s something heartening in their openness to expressing the differences
among themselves without a need to resolve them. “We’re talking about different we’s,” says one, and here, at least, it seems that possibly noncongruent identities can be sharpened, rather than worn down, through contact.

I may be giving the impression that “Trigger” is primarily a video exhibition. In part, my focus on the works by Gossett and Wortzel, Boudry and Lorenz, and Hayes mostly reflects the fact that I found them so striking in themselves. But it also reflects my feeling that all of the words flowing in and out of such pieces make it easier to explain how the show’s themes are threaded through them. Nevertheless, one of the exhibition’s strengths is the range of mediums and styles it encompasses: sculpture, painting, and photography, both representational and abstract, which don’t need words to make their point—and those points are in contention. Another of the show’s strengths is how it allows the works as much earnest and thoughtful disagreement among themselves as there was among the students in Ricerche: three.

In some instances, I was left wondering what the works even had to do with the topic of gender. That’s not necessarily a problem: The show asks its viewers to ponder whether gender always has to be something that can be rendered visible. I remember seeing Ulrike Müller’s paintings for the first time at last year’s Whitney Biennial. I liked her modest enamel-on-metal abstractions with their blunt, almost graphic patterns and forms that lightly hint at biomorphism without quite indulging in it. But I remember thinking that the Whitney’s wall label, which insisted on the paintings as referential to the female body, was too heavy-handed. By contrast, the labels at the New Museum accord with my experience by allowing whatever referential features may be there to remain at the level of suggestion by focusing on form and process (“Composed along a central axis, each work is charged with a magnetic asymmetry; delineations between colors are blurred in the process of melting the powdered enamel pigment into glass”) and by relying on Müller’s biography (her work with a genderqueer collective) to prompt viewers to wonder what exactly gender might have to do with what we see in her paintings—if anything at all. That sense of wondering is more powerful than any didactic lesson. The “magnetic asymmetry” between what we can know and what we can only imagine is as powerful as the formal asymmetry that gives Müller’s simple compositions their inner dynamism.

More overtly concerned with the female body are the fabric-collage paintings of Tscha-}

halala Self: expressionist images of ecstatic figures pieced together from mismatched parts, like happy Frankenstein monsters. There are echoes in Self’s work of a host of (mostly female) midcareer artists, from Nicola Tyson to Wangechi Mutu; but Self’s approach to figuration feels more demonstrative, more theatrical than theirs. One always senses that her figures are performing themselves, and this is what, for me, makes it credible to see them in one context with the likes of Marsha Johnson. “My work does not comment on stereotypes and generalizations about the Black female body, my practice absorbs these fantasies,” Self has explained. “The work is celebratory because one must thrive despite destructive rhetoric”—restating in her own way a determination “to shine, to love, to twirl” despite the hurts of the world.

Nearly as abstract as Müller’s paintings are some photographs, made last year, by Paul Mpagi Sepuya, which venture into a different terrain from the ones I wrote about in these pages not so long ago. These works, each titled Exposure followed by a sequence of numbers, appear to be images in which the object has been reduced to little more than a blur—color photographs with all the color drained out. It makes me think of what the poet and theorist Fred Moten, who’s been dwelling on the notion of “blur” recently, and who participated in a discussion included in this show’s catalog, has called a “radical indistinctness that actually radicalizes singularity.” Sepuya’s photographs achieve something similar to the blurring of colors that occurs in Müller’s enamel paintings where two hues touch—but his blurring seductively invests nearly the whole surface. Each of Sepuya’s photographs also contains some kind of cut where a slightly less or more differently blurred image shows through, in which one can make out a reflection of the photographer himself at work. In these pictures, the withheld promise—or foiled desire—to stabilize an image that can be identified evokes a fog of longing.

I was so heartened by what I saw in “Trigger” that it’s hard for me now to remember that I came to the show a skeptic. It’s not that I didn’t think gender “beyond the binary” was a timely topic in contemporary art, but rather that the title and subtitle put me off. Have our contemporary feelings about gender drifted so far away from the territory of pleasure and love, I wondered, that we now talk about it using words associated with work and war? Or is that just a problem with the art world?

Fortunately, the title turned out to be a red herring. But it’s worth thinking about why the subject turns out to be more than merely topical. In November, the following headline appeared in The New York Times: “Danica Roem Wins Virginia Race, Breaking a Barrier for Transgender People.” But the story, which told of Roem’s election to the State Legislature and her defeat of a vocal opponent of trans rights, also noted, ominously, that “killings of transgender people are on the rise.” We live in an age of never-ending wars, metaphorical wars with real bodies in them—on drugs, on terror, and so forth. Another of these is the so-called culture war—that decades-long, ever-changing, but always paranoid struggle about who gets to make a full claim to American identity. Today, the front lines of this war appear to be at the bathroom door: Who gets to use which one, and why?

But art is something other than journalism and punditry; and while it might seem obvious why artists today would be as exercised about gender issues as anyone else, what takes more explaining is how and why gender lends itself so readily to becoming the substance of works of art. Why is it, in other words, that gender turns out to be much more than one topic, among many others, for artists to consider? Let me put it like this: Art is not a tourist in the realm of gender, but rather a native.

It’s worth turning back to Judith Butler’s groundbreaking 1990 book Gender Trouble, which, as “Trigger” curator Johanna Burton explains in her essay for the exhibition’s catalog, “ushered in a seismic shift in discussions of and around gender.” Butler convincingly argued that gender is performative, which is to say that “gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts” that produce a “stylization of the body.” Or, as Butler explained, it is “a fantasy, institutionalized and inscribed on the surface of bodies,” and therefore something that “can be neither true nor false.” This is why, as one of Oscar Wilde’s characters observed, “To be natural is such a very difficult pose to keep up.”

As a performance, as a stylization, as an effect on a body’s surface, and above all as something that confutes the distinction between fact and fiction, gender—any formation of it, trans or cis—is fundamentally congruent with art and aesthetics. It is not identical to either, but it is, one might say, proto-artistic, and therefore ripe for artistic handling. And, it might be added, the more original the stylization, the more extreme the effect on the surface, the more profound the blur of nature and artifice, then the more aesthetically charged any performance will be—whether of art or gender.
**Puzzle No. 3454**

**JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACROSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Lewis’s bun (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Quite a lot of boxes (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 007’s beginning to wear right shirt to rest for the night (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 State flower (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Criminals related to some electric guitars (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Make fun of a speaker’s drinks (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Vegetable decay (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Faced a prosecutor: “Thanks for what the NSA collects about your phone calls” (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Ultimate value: ten nuts (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Favorite rug (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Cut a bit of leather into a belt (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 With what a right triangle has… (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 …one should not be upset with a small program (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Darn photograph (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Springsteen agent adopts adolescent (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>DOWN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 You hit me with a frame (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Support orator’s itinerary from East Greenbush, NY, to Portsmouth, NH (+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Completely fried a donut in public (3-3-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Loudly compare composite organism (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Fondles curves (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Cook ortolan, set evenly (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hug family (how adorable) heading to attractive Pacific island (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Burn face of Swedish playwright (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Fallen angel occupies a large expanse of the world with lack of pain (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Real gold subsequently leads to twitching (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Fast, hard shell (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Test most of court declaration, for instance (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Bribed with a bit of pecuniary help to eccentric (4,3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Soak up songbird’s note (4-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Quiet at the rear part of a mine (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Animal tails in fish biology evolve between millennia (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACROSS**

1 PRE-TEND 2 VISA + VIS\[a\] 4 TAR + PAUL + IN 10 CHO\[a\]MP 9 rev. hidden 12 HUM + ILLIATE (ang.) 11 LOU\[d\][i]\[d\] INT SQUAT + ORZE (ang.) 16 ref. 8D 21 NARC + B S 5 U.S. 24 DRAIN 25 PIN TO 26 ALP HABITS 27 TIO (ang.) RIUM rev.) 28 NO + SEG\[a\] + Y

**DOWN**

1 PI + T(I)ABLE 2 E + Z\[RAP]OUND\[a\] 3 E\[NAME\]\[a\]LS 4 ang. S\[L\[V\]][\[V\]]-ENOM (rev.) 6 SECU\[L\[A\]][\[R\]] (ang. curse) 7\[t\]/\[t\]- EN (ang.) 8 SU\[PER\] 14 ang. 15 ENG + RATING 16 STANDS + BY 18 N + AIR + ORI 19 END + EARS 20 INKPO (ang.) + T 22 RON + DO 23 SPAS + M

29 Road congestion, which we reduced by adjusting nine clues (7)

**SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3453**

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